

Social innovations to transform challenges to opportunities in employment and social inclusion of women fleeing from Ukraine



Guidelines and materials for the Ukrainian Women's Day

Workshop 2 “How Local Business Could Help for UA Women's Integration into the Labour Market”

Social
Innovation (+)
Initiative



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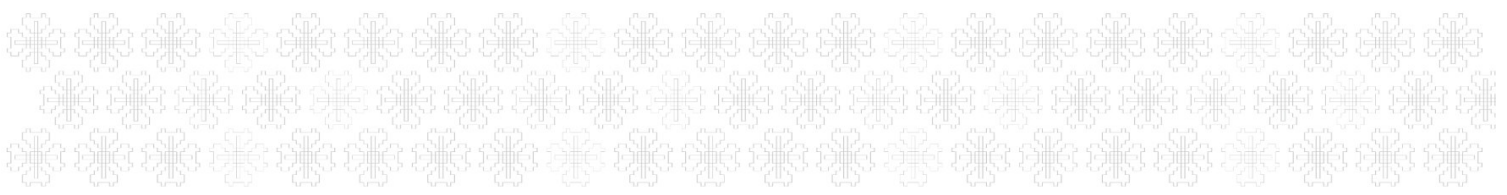
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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Many Ukrainian women in host countries face difficulties entering the labour market due to language barriers, limited recognition of qualifications, lack of professional networks, and the need to balance work with family responsibilities. Despite these challenges, many possess entrepreneurial skills, professional experience, and creative capacities that can be successfully applied in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS), offering flexible pathways to economic independence and professional fulfilment.

Local businesses play a crucial role in supporting this process. Through mentoring, networking opportunities, practical guidance on business registration and administration, and cooperation with employment services, businesses can help Ukrainian women better understand the local economic environment and develop viable entrepreneurial initiatives.

1.2 Purpose of Workshop 2

Workshop 2 addresses the economic dimension of integration, with a clear focus on employability and self-employment in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS). Its main aim is to actively involve local businesses and Employment Services offices in supporting Ukrainian women's transition to the labour market in the country of their temporary residence.

Building on the outcomes of Workshop 1, this workshop shifts the focus from social inclusion to concrete labour market pathways, highlighting self-employment in CCS as a realistic and empowering opportunity for Ukrainian women, particularly in relation to ensuring work-life balance and economic autonomy.





By creating connections between Ukrainian women and the local business community, the workshop aims to encourage partnerships, exchange of knowledge, and concrete opportunities that facilitate labour market integration and strengthen inclusive local economies.

1.3 Structure of Workshop 2

The workshop is structured around three thematic blocks, which guide the learning and cooperation process.

The three thematic blocks are:

- Ukrainian women's situation in the labour market: possibilities and challenges for starting a business in CCS, including self-employment as a solution for work-life balance.
- Support from local businesses: good practices and guidance on legal registration, accountancy, and marketing for self-employment in CCS.
- Matching Ukrainian women with local businesses: presentation of business ideas developed in the e-Studio, ethical principles of cooperation, and use of Letters of Intent.

The learning materials support interaction between Ukrainian women, representatives of local businesses, employment services, and national authorities, and contribute to concrete, action-oriented outcomes.

The total duration of the workshop is approximately **4 hours**.

1.4 Learning approach and methodology

The workshop follows a participatory and dialogue-based methodology that encourages active engagement of participants and builds on the learning approach used in Workshop 1. The learning process is based on principles of adult education, experiential learning, and peer exchange, allowing participants to explore practical pathways to labour market integration and self-employment.





Participants are encouraged to share experiences, discuss challenges, and collaborate with representatives of local businesses and Employment Services in identifying opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Particular emphasis is placed on practical interaction, networking, and the exchange of ideas related to self-employment in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS).

The methodology combines:

1. short facilitator inputs presenting key information about Ukrainian women's situation in the labour market, including common barriers and opportunities for employment and self-employment,
2. guided discussions involving Ukrainian women, representatives of local businesses, and Employment Services on how to improve access to labour market opportunities,
3. small-group exchanges exploring practical support mechanisms for starting and developing a business in CCS,
4. interactive activities such as business idea presentations and feedback sessions with local business representatives,
5. networking and matching activities aimed at connecting Ukrainian women with potential mentors, partners, or supporters from the local business community.

This approach supports knowledge exchange, strengthens cooperation between participants, and helps identify concrete pathways for Ukrainian women's economic integration through employment and self-employment.

1.5 Expected learning outcomes

After completing Workshop 2, participants are expected to:



6. better understand labour market opportunities in the country of their temporary residence, particularly in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS).
7. increase awareness of self-employment as a possible pathway towards economic independence and work-life balance.
8. understand the role that local businesses and Employment Services can play in supporting Ukrainian women's access to employment and entrepreneurship.
9. gain practical insights into the basic steps of starting a business, including available support mechanisms, mentoring opportunities and administrative requirements.
10. present and discuss their business ideas developed during the e-Studio training and receive constructive feedback from local stakeholders.
11. establish initial connections with representatives of local businesses, institutions and employment services that may support their professional integration.

These outcomes contribute to the broader objective of whole workshop “Ukrainian Women’s Day”, which is to support Ukrainian women in strengthening their social and economic integration and in developing realistic pathways towards employment or self-employment.

2. Session 1

UA women’s situation in the labour market in a country of their temporary residence with possibilities to start their business in CCS.

2.1 Context

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, millions of Ukrainian citizens – most of them women and children – have received temporary protection across the European Union. Entering the labour market in a new country, however, can be challenging. European



labour market analyses show that although many Ukrainian refugees have found employment, their integration into the labour market remains uneven.

Across Europe, the labour market integration of refugees from Ukraine has progressed, but important inequalities remain. A recent Europe-wide analysis found that 57% of Ukrainian refugees were employed, yet they still remained 22 percentage points behind host-country nationals, and 60% were working below their skill level. Earlier EU research also shows that labour market participation is strongly shaped by barriers such as language difficulties, lack of information, limited social networks, problems with recognition of qualifications, and lack of accessible childcare – a particularly important issue because many displaced people from Ukraine are women with children. At the same time, EU rules under temporary protection explicitly give access not only to employment, but also to self-employment, which is important when designing realistic pathways into work.

This broader European picture is also visible in the project partner countries. In Romania, women and children represented 71% of refugees from Ukraine with temporary protection in May 2024, and IOM data from early 2024 showed a gender gap in employment, with employment rates higher among men than women. Romanian measures allow displaced Ukrainians to work without a work permit, to engage in self-employed activities, and to register with the National Employment Agency for free support. In Lithuania, UNHCR reported that around 53% of working-age refugees from Ukraine were employed in 2024, while lack of local language knowledge was identified as an important barrier; Lithuania also allows people displaced from Ukraine to work or pursue self-employed activity without a work permit. In Cyprus, more than 24,000 refugees from Ukraine had applied for temporary protection by the end of 2024; temporary protection there also provides access to employment and self-employment,





and the Public Employment Services offer registration, job-search support, counselling and referrals to training and vacancies.

Self-employment in the Cultural and Creative Sectors offers one promising pathway for labour market integration. The CCS includes activities such as design, crafts, arts, digital content creation, cultural services, creative education, and community-based cultural initiatives.

For many Ukrainian women, these sectors provide opportunities to build on existing talents, skills and professional backgrounds. Creative and cultural activities often allow small-scale entrepreneurial initiatives that can start gradually and grow over time.

Self-employment in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS) offers a high degree of flexibility in terms of working hours, location, and the organisation of tasks, making it particularly suitable for women balancing professional and family responsibilities. Unlike more structured employment, creative work can often be organised around personal schedules, carried out from home or shared spaces, and adapted to periods of availability throughout the day. This flexibility is especially valuable for women with childcare or caregiving duties, as it allows them to remain active in the labour market without compromising family needs. At the same time, CCS activities often align with the concept of lifestyle entrepreneurship, where personal interests, talents or hobbies – such as crafts, design, photography, baking, or cultural activities – can be gradually developed into income-generating businesses. This pathway not only supports a better work-life balance, but also enables women to build professional identity, gain economic independence, and strengthen confidence by transforming something meaningful and familiar into a sustainable source of livelihood.

Local businesses and institutions can play an important role in supporting this process. Through mentoring, sharing business experience, providing practical advice on





registration and administration, and offering networking opportunities, they can help Ukrainian women better understand the local economic environment and develop sustainable business initiatives.

In this way, self-employment in CCS is not only a source of income, but also a pathway towards work-life balance, confidence, visibility and longer-term integration.

2.2. Key messages

1. Ukrainian women in Europe face labour market barriers, but they also possess strong skills, motivation and entrepreneurial potential.
2. Self-employment can provide a realistic pathway to labour market integration when traditional employment is difficult to access.
3. The Cultural and Creative Sectors offer flexible and accessible opportunities for developing small business initiatives.
4. Cooperation with local businesses, Employment Services and community organisations can significantly support Ukrainian women in transforming ideas into viable economic activities.
5. Supporting entrepreneurship among Ukrainian women contributes not only to their economic independence but also to more inclusive and dynamic local economies.

2.3. Practical activity – facilitated discussion.

From Challenges to Opportunities: Labour Market Pathways

Purpose:

To help participants better understand the pathways to employment and self-employment in the local context by reflecting on real challenges and identifying practical opportunities.



How it works:

The facilitator introduces the question one by one and asks participants to reflect on it:

1. What are the main barriers that Ukrainian women face when trying to access employment or start a business in your country?
(For example: language, recognition of qualifications, childcare, access to information, or professional networks.)
2. Which skills, experiences or talents do Ukrainian women bring that could be valuable for local businesses or the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS)?
3. What types of employment opportunities currently exist for Ukrainian women in the local labour market, particularly in creative or cultural fields?
4. What kind of support do Ukrainian women need most in order to start a small business or self-employment activity in CCS?
5. How can Employment Services support Ukrainian women more effectively in finding jobs or starting entrepreneurial activities?
6. What role can local businesses play in supporting Ukrainian women – for example through mentoring, internships, partnerships, or sharing professional knowledge?
7. What practical information is most important for Ukrainian women who want to start a business (e.g. registration procedures, taxation, marketing, networking)?
8. How can cooperation between Ukrainian women, local businesses, and institutions be strengthened to support labour market integration?
9. What examples of successful cooperation or good practices already exist in your community that could be shared or expanded?
10. What concrete actions could be taken after this workshop to help Ukrainian women move closer to employment or self-employment?



Employment Services representatives contribute practical perspectives. Representatives of local businesses contribute by sharing practical insights on market needs, providing feedback on ideas, and identifying potential opportunities for cooperation, mentoring, or employment.

Why it works:

It connects real labour market perspectives with participants' experiences, making the discussion practical, relevant, and oriented towards concrete opportunities and solutions.

3. Session 2

The support of local businesses for UA women to recognise the opportunities and overcome challenges for self-employment in CCS

3.1 Context

Employment Services play a key role in supporting Ukrainian women in accessing employment and self-employment opportunities in their host countries. They provide guidance on available pathways, offer individual counselling to help women assess their skills and career options, and connect them with relevant training, mentoring programmes and labour market schemes. Employment Services can also support women in understanding administrative requirements, accessing financial support measures, and identifying suitable job vacancies or entrepreneurship opportunities. By acting as a bridge between individuals, employers and public support systems, they help ensure that Ukrainian women receive structured, reliable and accessible support throughout their integration process.

Local businesses also play an important role in supporting Ukrainian women's integration into the labour market, particularly in the field of self-employment in the





Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS). While many Ukrainian women have strong ideas, skills and motivation to start their own initiatives, navigating the business environment in a new country can be complex. Local businesses can act as valuable partners by sharing practical knowledge, offering guidance, and helping women better understand how to transform their ideas into viable and sustainable activities.

Good practices across European countries show that local businesses can support Ukrainian women in several practical ways. One key area is **guidance on business registration under national laws**. This includes explaining different legal forms of business (such as sole trader or small enterprise), outlining registration procedures, and helping women understand their rights and obligations. Clear, simple explanations from experienced business representatives can make this process less intimidating and more accessible.

Another important area is **basic accountancy and financial management**. Many women may be unfamiliar with local taxation systems, invoicing requirements, or financial reporting. Local businesses can provide practical advice on how to organise basic accounting, manage income and expenses, and plan financially in the early stages of a business. Sharing simple tools, examples or personal experiences can be particularly helpful in building confidence.

Support in **marketing and reaching customers** is equally important. Local businesses can offer insights into how the local market works, what customers expect, and which communication channels are most effective. This may include advice on branding, pricing, use of social media, or building a customer base. For women starting small-scale creative activities, understanding how to present and promote their work is often a key factor for success.





Beyond technical guidance, local businesses can also contribute through mentoring, networking and informal support. By sharing their own experiences, including challenges and lessons learned, they provide realistic and relatable examples. In some cases, businesses may also identify opportunities for cooperation, partnerships, or support services.

An important part of this workshop is the presentation of business ideas developed by Ukrainian women during the e-Studio training (WP3). During this session, participants are invited to present their ideas related to self-employment in CCS to representatives of local businesses and Employment Services. These presentations create an opportunity for constructive dialogue, where women can receive feedback, ask questions, and refine their ideas based on real market perspectives.

3.2. Practical activity – presentation of Ukrainian women business ideas.

Purpose:

To provide Ukrainian women with the opportunity to present their business ideas and receive initial visibility before deeper discussion and networking.

How it should be organised:

1. The facilitator briefly explains the purpose and structure of the session, clarifying that presentations are short and will be followed by further discussion in the next activity.
2. Simple rules are introduced, such as keeping within the time limit, listening respectfully, and focusing on key points.
3. Each Ukrainian woman presents her business idea (approx. 2–3 minutes per person), focusing on the core idea, target group, and main value of the product or service.



4. The facilitator ensures that all participants have equal time and that the session runs according to schedule.
5. At this stage, feedback is kept minimal (e.g. 1–2 short clarifying questions if needed), as more detailed discussion will take place during the following World Café activity.
6. The facilitator supports a positive and encouraging atmosphere, helps participants feel comfortable, and keeps the session focused and efficient.
7. The facilitator briefly summarises the diversity of ideas presented and introduces the next activity (World Café), where participants will have the opportunity to discuss ideas in more detail.

Why it works:

It gives visibility to all ideas, ensures equal participation, and prepares participants for more in-depth interaction in the following activity.

4. Session 3

Matching local businesses with UA women's presented business ideas in CCS.

4.1. Context

The matching of local businesses with Ukrainian women's presented business ideas in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS) is designed to move from discussion to practical cooperation. This activity creates a structured opportunity for direct interaction, where women can explore the real potential of their ideas through dialogue with experienced business representatives and Employment Services. Its purpose is to help participants test the feasibility of their ideas, receive targeted feedback, and identify concrete forms of support such as mentoring, partnerships, or access to networks and resources. This process is particularly useful because it transforms initial concepts into more realistic



and actionable plans, while also building connections that can support further development beyond the workshop. At the same time, it encourages mutual understanding between Ukrainian women and local stakeholders, strengthening collaboration and contributing to more inclusive and dynamic local economies.

4.2. Activity: Local businesses showcasing

The local business showcasing session provides an opportunity for representatives of local businesses to briefly introduce their organisations, activities and areas of expertise. During these short presentations, participants can highlight what their business does, the types of products or services they offer, and their experience in the local market, particularly in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS). This activity helps Ukrainian women better understand the local business environment, identify potential partners or mentors, and recognise opportunities for cooperation. At the same time, it allows businesses to present their interests, values and possible areas of support, creating a foundation for more targeted interaction and networking in the following activities.

4.3. Activity: Matching and Networking

World Café

Purpose:

To facilitate direct interaction between Ukrainian women, local businesses and Employment Services, enabling deeper discussion of business ideas, exchange of practical advice, and identification of potential cooperation opportunities.

How it should be organised:





1. Introduction of the activity: the facilitator explains the World Cafe format, timing, and purpose, highlighting that the goal is to explore ideas, ask questions, and identify possible next steps or support.
2. Each Ukrainian woman is assigned a table where she presents her business idea. She remains at her table as a “host” throughout the activity. Representatives of local businesses and Employment Services move between tables.
3. Participants are divided into small groups. Each group visits a table for a short discussion (approx. 5 minutes), after which they rotate to the next table. The facilitator signals when it is time to move.
4. At each table, the Ukrainian woman briefly presents her idea, followed by questions, feedback and suggestions from participants. Discussions should focus on practical aspects such as feasibility, market potential, support needs, and possible cooperation.
5. The facilitator manages time, ensures smooth transitions between tables, and encourages active and respectful participation.
6. Participants or table hosts may take short notes on key feedback, ideas or contacts to support follow-up.
7. At the end of the activity, participants are invited to briefly reflect on key insights, interesting ideas, or potential collaborations identified during the discussions.

Why it works:

It creates dynamic, focused interactions, allows each participant to receive diverse perspectives in a short time, and helps transform ideas into concrete connections and potential cooperation opportunities.



4.4. Ethical Principles of cooperation between Ukrainian women and local businesses

1. Respect

All participants treat each other with dignity, valuing diverse backgrounds, experiences and ideas.

2. Equality

Cooperation is based on equal partnership, recognising that each party brings valuable knowledge, skills and perspectives.

3. Integrity

Participants act honestly and in good faith, ensuring that communication and actions are trustworthy and reliable.

4. Responsibility

Each party takes responsibility for their actions, commitments and contributions within the cooperation.

5. Confidentiality

Information shared during cooperation, including business ideas and personal data, is treated with care and not disclosed without consent.

6. Inclusion

All interactions are free from discrimination and respectful of cultural and social diversity.

7. Empowerment



Cooperation should strengthen the independence, confidence and decision-making capacity of Ukrainian women.

4.5. Code of Conduct for Cooperation between Ukrainian Women and Local Businesses

1. Clear communication

Participants communicate openly about expectations, roles, timelines and possible outcomes of cooperation.

2. Voluntary engagement

All cooperation is based on mutual agreement and can be continued or discontinued at any time by either party.

3. Respect for commitments

Agreed actions, meetings or follow-ups should be respected. If changes occur, they should be communicated in a timely manner.

4. Constructive interaction

Feedback and advice should be practical, respectful and solution-oriented.

5. Confidential handling of information

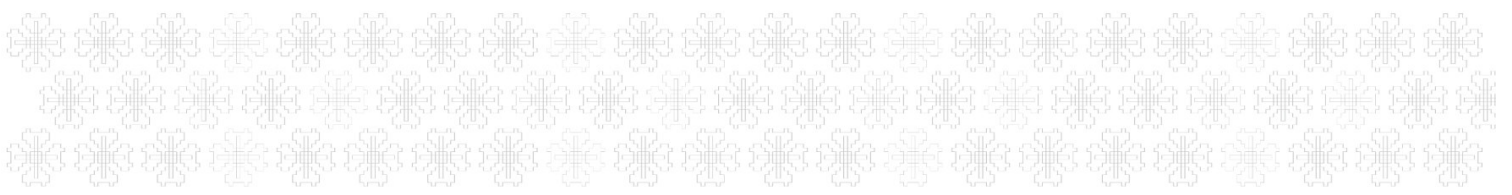
Sensitive information shared during cooperation should not be used or shared without permission.

6. Avoidance of conflicts of interest

Participants should act transparently and avoid situations that may create unfair advantage or misunderstanding.

7. Realistic expectations





Both parties should ensure that commitments and expectations are achievable and clearly understood.

8. Focus on sustainable cooperation

Interactions should aim to support long-term development rather than short-term or unclear outcomes.

4.6. Letter of Intent for Cooperation between Ukrainian Women and Local Businesses

1. Title: Letter of Intent for Cooperation in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS).
2. Parties involved

This Letter of Intent is made between:

3. Ukrainian participant:

Name:

Contact details:

Business idea / activity:

and

4. Local business / organisation:

Name:

Representative:

Contact details:

Type of business:

5. Purpose of cooperation

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The purpose of this Letter of Intent is to express the willingness of both parties to explore potential cooperation related to the development of a business idea in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS), presented during the “Ukrainian Women’s Day” workshop.

6. Scope of cooperation (to be selected or specified)

The parties express interest in the following forms of cooperation:

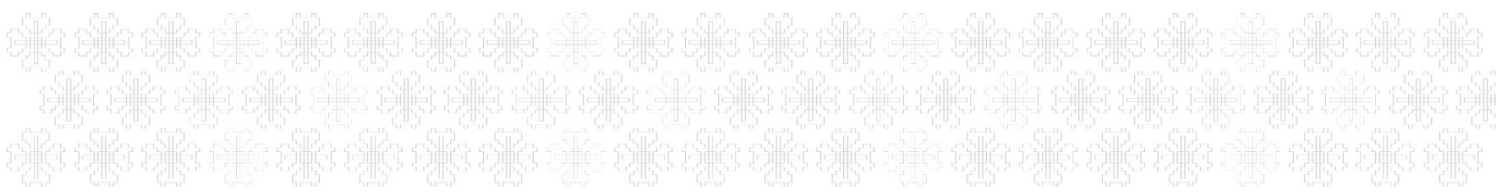
- ☐ Mentoring and guidance
- ☐ Sharing business experience and knowledge
- ☐ Support in business registration and administration
- ☐ Advice on marketing and customer development
- ☐ Networking and contacts
- ☐ Internship / job-shadowing opportunities
- ☐ Potential partnership or collaboration
- ☐ Other: _____

7. Principles of cooperation

The cooperation is based on the following principles:

- mutual respect and equality,
- voluntary participation,
- transparency and clear communication,
- confidentiality of shared information,
- commitment to constructive and supportive collaboration.





8. Next steps (optional)

The parties agree to consider the following next steps:

- follow-up meeting / contact (date or timeframe): _____
- specific support or action to be explored: _____
- other: _____

9. Non-binding nature

This Letter of Intent is not legally binding. It reflects the interest of both parties to explore possible cooperation and does not create formal obligations.

10. Signatures

Ukrainian participant: _____ Date: _____

Local business representative: _____ Date: _____

Why it is useful:

This template helps structure initial cooperation in a simple and transparent way, clarifies expectations, and supports the transition from discussion to concrete follow-up actions.

4.7. Activity: Developing Recommendations to Strengthen Business Support for Ukrainian Women

Purpose:

To consolidate the insights from the workshop and translate discussions into concrete, shared recommendations that can improve support mechanisms for Ukrainian women's labour market integration and self-employment.



How it should be organised:

1. The facilitator explains that participants will work together to develop practical recommendations based on the discussions, experiences and ideas shared throughout the workshop.
2. Participants are divided into small mixed groups (Ukrainian women, local businesses, Employment Services and, where possible, national authorities). Each group reflects on key challenges and possible improvements in supporting Ukrainian women.
3. Groups may consider: What support is most needed? What barriers should be addressed? What works well? What could be improved or introduced?
4. Each group prepares a small number of clear and actionable recommendations (e.g. 3–5), focusing on practical solutions and possible actors involved.
5. Groups present their proposals. The facilitator clusters similar ideas and encourages discussion to identify common priorities.
6. Based on the plenary discussion, the facilitator (with input from participants) formulates a consolidated set of shared recommendations that reflect the collective views of all stakeholders.
7. The final recommendations are briefly reviewed and validated by participants, and their potential use (e.g. reporting, follow-up actions, policy input) is explained.

5. Session 4

Feedback and Evaluation

5.1. Context



The closing session is designed as a structured feedback and evaluation moment, bringing together reflections from both Workshop 1 and Workshop 2 and ensuring that participants' experiences are systematically captured. Rather than focusing on individual action planning, this session serves to collect collective feedback, assess the relevance and usefulness of "Ukrainian Women's Day", and support continuous improvement of the learning materials and methodology.

The session reinforces the understanding that "Ukrainian Women's Day" represents a starting point for continued engagement, while also fulfilling the project's evaluation and reporting requirements.

At the end of the session the participants fill-in the event evaluation questionnaire.

5.2. Activity: Questions for Evaluation and Feedback

1. What was the most useful or valuable part of today's workshop for you?
2. What new knowledge, ideas or insights are you taking away from this experience?
3. Do you feel more confident about your opportunities for employment or self-employment after this workshop? Why or why not?
4. What could be improved in the organisation, content or format of the workshop?
5. What would you like to do as a next step after this workshop (e.g. develop your idea, contact a business, seek support)?

6. References

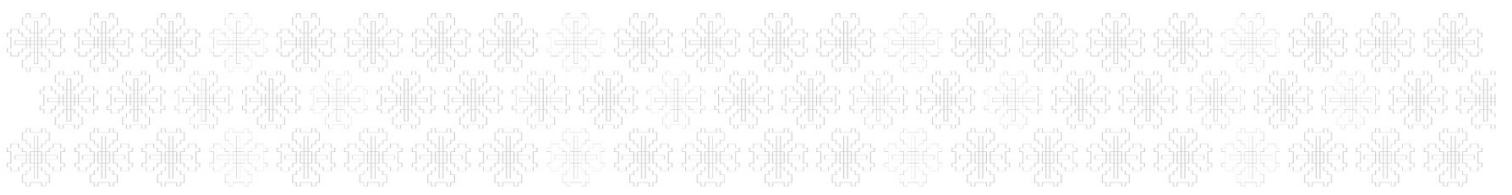
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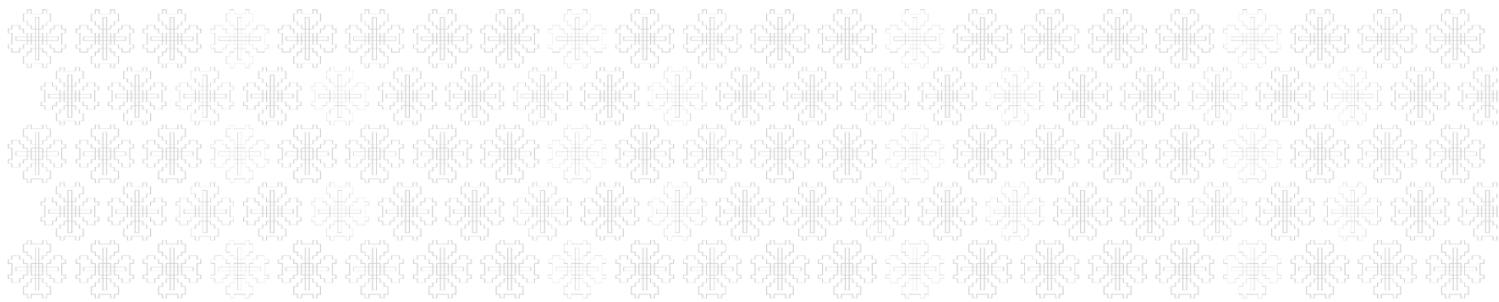
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