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Women TechEU: The Blueprint

How-to build successful gender focused support programmes for deep tech business

Policy Paper



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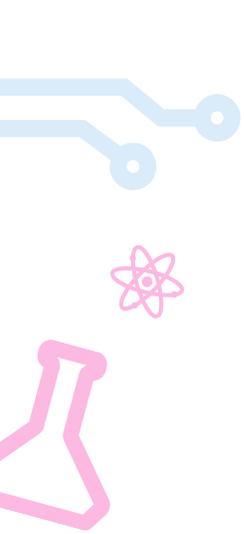
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Track record of WTEU	6
Target and outreach	7
Application experience	9
Selection and evaluation	10
Cascade Grant Mechanics	11
Non-financial support	11
Data and KPIs	13
Governance and Coordination	14
Operations	14
Budget adequacy	15
Lessons learnt	16
Replicability	17
Common themes	18
Operational Recommendations	19
Replicability and scaling: some guidelines	22
Conclusion	25



Executive Summary

Women TechEU (WTEU) has established itself as a highly valued instrument supporting women-led deep-tech ventures across Europe. This integrated report brings together insights from two complementary evidence bases: **consortium partners**, who provided a programme-level view of design, delivery and operations; and **successful applicants**, who offered first-hand accounts of the application process, the usefulness of the service programme and the catalytic impact of the grant. By analysing these perspectives side by side, the report identifies what worked well, where friction arose and which elements are most suitable for replication and scaling in a future iteration of WTEU or similar programmes.

Across sources, several shared conclusions emerge. The demand far exceeded supply, highlighting both the attractiveness of the instrument and the structural need for targeted support for women innovators in deep tech. Also, a proportion of unsuccessful applications failed not on merit but due to avoidable eligibility and procedural misunderstandings.

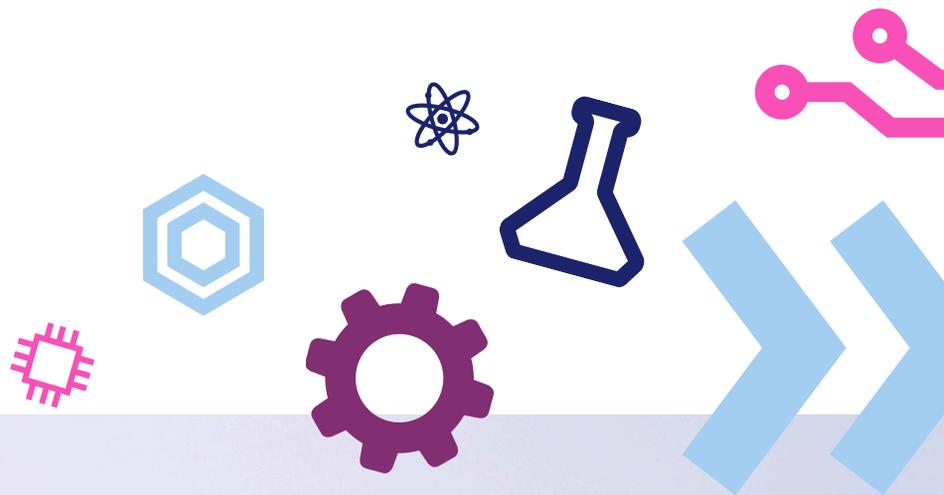
The six-month programme of services was consistently viewed as a high-value component. **Beneficiaries** reported tangible changes in their practices, such as refining pitch decks, enhancing IP management and strengthening investor pipelines. The **consortium partners** noted the need for funded mentor procurement, improved matching mechanisms, and continuity through a structured alumni network. When content was overly generic or mentors were overstretched, the value diminished, indicating a need for sharper focus and measurable objectives.

Both perspectives agree that while the WTEU grant is catalytic, it is insufficient on its own to cover heavy deep-tech milestones such as CE-marking, patent filings or hardware validation. The grant reliably funded enabling tasks such as freedom-to-operate (FTO) analysis, legal advice for IP licensing, targeted validation, travel to investor events. It also, in some cases, it extended runway to key milestones. However, **beneficiaries** highlighted that targeted IP/legal and regulatory assistance, along with earlier and structured investor integration, are needed to translate programme readiness into follow-on financing.

Ultimately, the integrated evidence indicates that WTEU has delivered real value and is well-positioned for scaling. Future iterations could strengthen clarity for applicants at entry, deepen hands-on support, introduce and link up with targeted complementary instruments and embed investor pathways from the outset.

Introduction

WTEU provides non-dilutive funding and a structured programme of services to women-led deep-tech startups. This integrated analysis synthesises two bodies of evidence: written responses from consortium partners describing outreach, evaluation, operations, governance, services and replication; and structured questionnaires completed by awardees, detailing discovery routes, application experience, service value, networking outcomes, and the grant's impact on company trajectory. Content has been anonymised, written in the third person, and organised to emphasise convergent findings and pragmatic implications for instrument design.



Track record of WTEU

The Women TechEU DataHub provides a clear statistical picture of the scale and reach of the initiative. Across all calls included in the platform, the programme has supported **160 winners**, each receiving a **€75,000 non-dilutive grant** to advance their deep-tech ventures. In addition, 80 start-ups have been awarded the Badge of Honour, a distinction granted to high-ranking applicants whose proposals demonstrated strong innovation potential, even if they were not selected for funding.

There were a total of 4 calls. Applications per call were as follows: Call 1 – 820; Call 2- 827; Call 3 – 1038; and Call 4 – 1107. A total of **3792 applications** have been received during the course of the two years.

A total of **3792** applications received over 2 years



The dashboard statistics provided in the datahub of the project website confirm the breadth of engagement across Europe, with applications originating from a wide range of countries and sectors. Indeed, applications have been received from **44 eligible countries, 28 of which were widening countries**. Winners likewise represent a diverse European footprint, as showcased in the participant listings, which highlight entrepreneurs from numerous countries across the EU and associated states. Together, these statistics illustrate both the high demand for Women TechEU and its growing impact in identifying, empowering and elevating women leading deep-tech innovation across Europe.



3792 applications from across

44

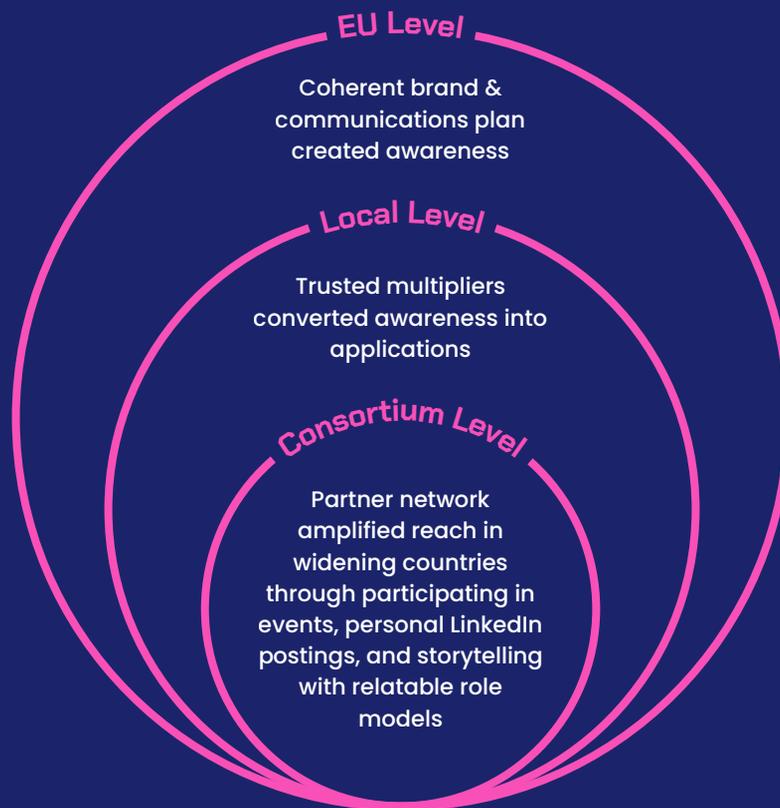
eligible countries

28 of which are
widening countries



Target and outreach

A multi-layered outreach architecture proved decisive. At the EU level, a coherent brand and communications plan created awareness. At the local level, trusted multipliers such as National Contact Points (NCPs), the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), regional innovation agencies, universities, accelerators, climate and manufacturing communities, and women-founder associations converted awareness into applications. The **consortium partners** emphasised the value of formalising multiplier relationships to make outreach repeatable rather than ad hoc. Where NCPs were actively engaged, both application volume and eligibility quality improved. At a regional level, the partner network amplified reach in widening countries through participating in events, personal LinkedIn postings, and storytelling with relatable role models.



Awardees identified NCPs, LinkedIn, grant advisors, and peer founders who had applied in earlier pilots as the main source of information about WTEU. Repeated exposure and second attempts increased the probability of success as teams internalised expectations. Founders consistently affirmed that prompts from trusted intermediaries, rather than generic portals, were most likely to translate awareness into action.

Effective outreach is one that is trusted, proximate and repeatable. Formal ecosystems of multipliers and successful applicants should be maintained and targeted toward widening regions. Role-model storytelling should continue to reduce psychological barriers for first-time applicants, and local partners should be equipped with templated materials and data dashboards to maintain message fidelity and to course-correct in real time.



Application experience

Three frictions recurred across calls. First, definitions: what qualifies as deep tech; how to evidence women's leadership and ownership; and how to apply age and funding thresholds. Second, the three-minute video: despite guidance, some applicants uploaded marketing cuts, inaccessible links, or the wrong language. Third, self-declarations: mis-ticking a binary eligibility box triggered automatic ineligibility before external evaluation. Partners recommend a staged process, rapid eligibility pre-check followed by the full form, supported by clear examples (compliant video, ownership evidence), dynamic FAQs, and frequent info-days.

Applicants described the form as manageable, though space constraints demanded concise drafting. The most time-consuming tasks were producing the three-minute video and adapting a pitch deck to WTEU expectations. Ambiguities persisted for some around the meaning of 'high-quality thresholds' for advancing to external evaluation and the scope of the ethics self-declaration. **Beneficiaries** suggested early feedback to non-advancing applicants and clearer ethics scope notes with examples.

A two-gate process (eligibility first, then application) with public exemplars and explicit definitions would reduce avoidable attrition and raise evaluation quality. Publishing two or three short founder-video exemplars (hardware, healthcare, climate) and a standard pitch-deck outline tailored to non-dilutive grants would anchor expectations and reduce rework.





Selection and evaluation

Eligibility, not merit, drove many rejections in early calls. Evaluation quality benefitted from structured criteria, cross-jurisdiction reviewer assignment to reduce familiarity bias, and a transparent, time-bound appeal mechanism that reopened cases where process errors were identified. Consistency post-deadline was seen as essential to avoid bias creeping into the process. Requiring minimally sufficient application detail (business model, plan, milestones) improved evaluator oversight without overburdening early-stage applicants.

Repeat applicants reported learning what constituted a strong submission after their first attempt, these being: credible fundraising plan, concrete technology roadmap, and near-term milestones. Some teams brought in professional support to tighten narrative logic, while NCPs helped interpret programme rules. **Beneficiaries** supported a fast eligibility 'yes/no' gate to avoid wasted drafting when basic criteria were not met.

Overall, bias-aware selection requires standardised rubrics, diverse and trained evaluators, and a lean appeal process. Throughput and fairness both improve when eligibility gates are fast, unambiguous, and clearly separated from full technical evaluation.



Cascade Grant Mechanics

The grant is catalytic but undersized for deep-tech realities. **Consortium partners** suggested envelopes in the €100–250k range per startup. Disbursement was broadly smooth, though lead times occasionally stressed beneficiary cash-flow. Proposed improvements included a single block payment upon completion of the services programme (conditional on KPIs) and earlier integration with private capital so public money bridges into blended finance. If budgets are fixed, partners prioritised protecting per-company impact over maximising the number of awardees.

Successful applicants found the grant reliably funded enabling steps often excluded from R&D budgets, FTO analyses, IP-licensing legal and targeted validation, and covered travel to partnering and investor events. In several cases it extended runway to reach milestones and credibly time a pre-seed. However, regulatory milestones (e.g., CE-marking) commonly cost €150–200k, far exceeding the award. Applicants therefore favour targeted financing (IP/legal and regulatory) and clearer routes to follow-on capital.

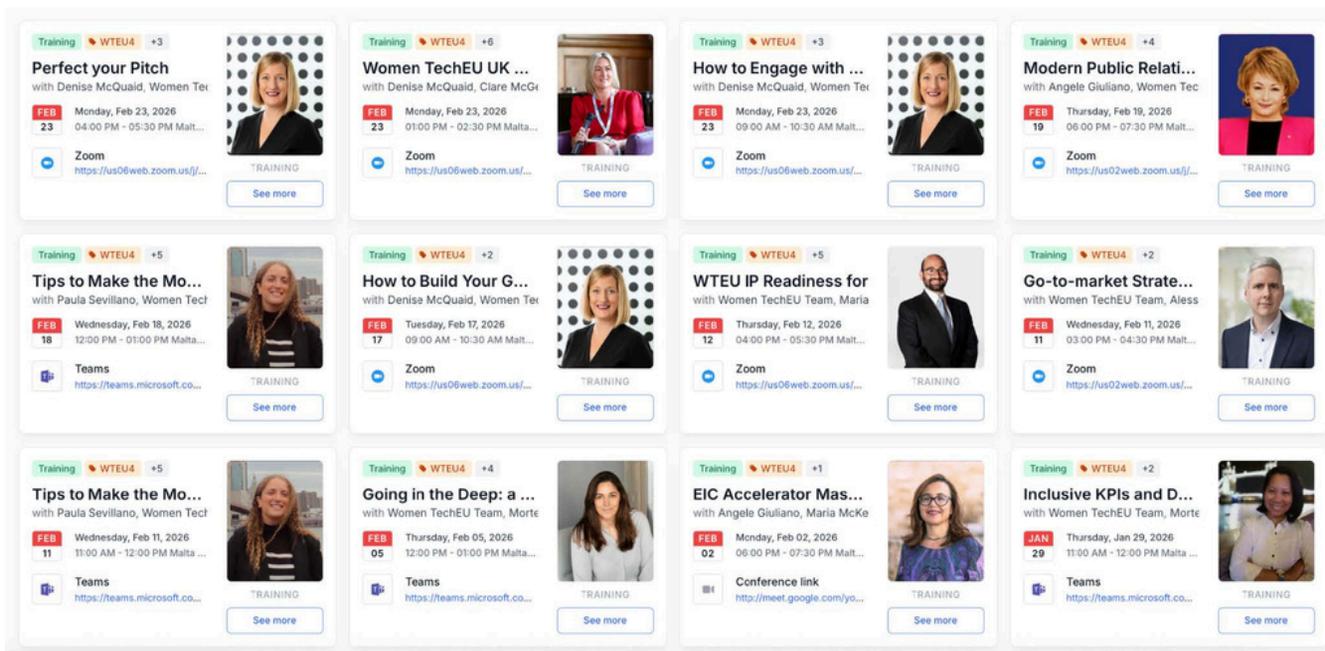
Overall **both consortium partners and applicants** favoured increased catalytic power by pairing a meaningful grant with targeted financing and explicit investor pathways. Where budgets cannot increase, prioritising impact per startup and strengthen connections to blended finance vehicles so that the grant functions as an on-ramp rather than an endpoint.



Non-financial support

Mentoring, networking and cohort learning were central to programme value when aligned to sector needs and investor expectations. One-to-one mentoring and chapter-style gatherings delivered high satisfaction; workshops delivered by active investors and exited founders awardees fundraising readiness. Gaps included mentor procurement when unfunded (limiting diversity and continuity), limited alumni infrastructure, and over-generality in some sessions. Remedies include better budgeted mentor pools, sector-challenge matching, and an alumni layer (chapters, peer circles, periodic showcases).

Awardees attended double-digit online sessions and multiple mentoring meetings. High-value content included investor-readiness (including EIC Transition/Accelerator preparation), IP strategy and regulatory clinics. Several teams adopted immediate practice changes, based on IP mentoring. Structured matchmaking introduced founders to new investors; peer sessions and in-person chapters sustained motivation. **Beneficiaries** requested more hands-on formats (live deck reviews with written feedback; investor-mapping sprints) and short on-site bootcamps per cohort to compress learning and network formation.



Services should privilege hands-on formats with measurable objectives and well-funded mentors, complemented by an infrastructure that extends benefits beyond six months. Investor matching activities should be introduced early and tracked with light CRM so intros become commitments rather than adjacencies.



Data and KPIs

Measurement varied by role. Communications teams tracked digital reach and media; programme teams tracked participation in workshops, investor meetings and pitches; regional nodes tracked applicant and winner counts by country and prior engagement links.

Partners proposed a standard KPI spine across:

- 1 reach and inclusion (with widening focus)
- 2 quality and progression (eligibility pass-through, conversion to award, TRL change, milestone delivery)
- 3 capital and market traction (follow-on equity and grants, pilots/partnerships)
- 4 experience (uptake and satisfaction)
- 5 equity (disaggregated and intersectional data)

Publishing light dashboards at cohort close would normalise transparency and learning.

Beneficiaries focused on practical outcomes: increased investor interactions, clarified regulatory/IP pathways, accelerated milestone delivery, and meaningful network expansion. They noted that financing outcomes may lag programme delivery, particularly for later cohorts that enter investor pipelines close to programme end.

Overall adopting a KPI spine that captures both reach/quality and lived outcomes, with intersectional lenses and post-programme follow-up to trace longer-tail financing effects, is favoured. Where feasible, link a small portion of grant disbursement to verified delivery of near-term milestones to strengthen accountability without creating excessive reporting burden.



Governance and Coordination

A small, empowered core with clear work-package ownership and weekly/bi-weekly cadences was an enabler. Slack/email updates with concise next steps, shared templates, and predictable peer-review loops kept velocity high, during open calls and evaluations. Twice-yearly in-person consortium meetings helped trust building. **Partners** that had less responsibilities reported initial information gaps that diminished as routines matured. Overall, the governance approach delivered accountability without excess overhead.

Governance was largely invisible to applicants, but its effects were evident in timely communications, consistent messaging, and the presence of a community backbone. **Beneficiaries** valued continuity, knowing what would happen next, where materials can be found, and how to access mentors and recordings on demand.

It is recommendable to keep governance lean and predictable and ensure that internal coordination translates into external clarity for founders. 'Single source of truth' artefacts, guides, calendars, repositories, are governance expressed as service.



Operations

Consortium partners reported operational friction clustered in two areas: EU-style administrative load (procurement, committee cycles, documentation) and the limits of a platform serving applicants, mentors, evaluators and partners simultaneously. Mitigations created during project lifetime included role-specific onboarding, recorded walkthroughs, permanent resource hubs, progressive simplification across calls, and hardened helpdesk policies (FAQ automation, cut-offs for queries, and standardised appeal forms). Helpdesk volumes were substantial and justified dedicated staffing from day one.

Beneficiaries felt that operations were smooth when materials were current and recordings were accessible. Ambiguities on specific things such as eligibility, ethics, and the video, generated repeat contacts and some stress. A visible single source of truth (FAQs, exemplars, timelines) reduced uncertainty, saved time, and prevented repetitive errors.

Overall investing in knowledge management and delineating roles is beneficial. **Partners** recommended that platforms should be selected for people (with embedded guidance, recordings and templates) rather than for forms alone; integrate the helpdesk and knowledge base to reduce repeated queries.



Budget adequacy

With **+50%** budget, **partners** would:

- increase grant size/volume,
- deepen investor integration,
- extend mentoring/training, and
- fund presence in under-represented regions.

With around **-20%** budget, **partners** would:

protect the grant envelope and the quality of evaluation/mentoring while trimming non-core activities. Small allocations for alumni showcases would keep the community active between calls.

Beneficiaries say that while the grant is valuable, it rarely covers heavy deep-tech costs; targeted complements (IP/legal and regulatory vouchers) and explicit investor pathways would materially increase impact. **Applicants** prefer protecting per-startup grant size over expanding cohort breadth if budgets are fixed.

Prioritising per-startup catalytic power while protecting core service quality is important. The possibility to deploy small, high-leverage complements where bottlenecks are systemic (IP and regulatory) would be helpful.



Lessons learnt

Partners outlined that the main lessons learnt are the importance to:

plan for very high demand

professionalise the helpdesk

make eligibility in a staged format

bring investors in earlier

lengthen runway

make mentoring sector-specific and measurable

operate with a small, empowered core

Beneficiaries identified that

clarity with concrete examples prevents avoidable errors

hands-on formats outperform generalist lectures

the grant functions as a bridge that requires investor integration and vouchers

peer communities and in-person touchpoints provide motivation and practical problem-solving

Positive outcomes which are equal for all improve when clarity, proportionality and community are designed in from the start. The instrument should reduce friction up-front and concentrate resources later, where they move the needle on readiness and finance.





Replicability

Essential, portable components include a visible non-dilutive grant with transparent, bias-aware selection; a structured services stack; strong branding and role-model storytelling; and trusted local multipliers. Context-dependent elements include in-person intensity, depth of bespoke services, and mentor-administration model. Lean replications should protect meaningful grant size, use micro-grants with group mentoring, adopt curated mentor marketplaces, and rely more on local partners where they outperform central delivery.

For **beneficiaries** portability hinges on sector-credible mentors and trusted intermediaries who can vouch for the programme. In thinner ecosystems, curated mentor directories with programme oversight and modest travel stipends help preserve value without heavy central overhead.

Overall portability is seen in this sequence: starting with a portable core (grant + bias-aware selection + mentor network + alumni), then tailoring event intensity and service depth to ecosystem maturity. Protecting grant size over breadth is important to maintain credibility and catalytic power.



Common themes

Four themes resonate across both the **consortium** and the **beneficiaries**.

1

Credibility and clarity are mutually reinforcing

A visible EU-level brand paired with example-rich guidance lowers psychological and informational barriers, especially for first-time applicants and teams outside capital hubs.

2

Proportionality matters

Early, light-touch gates (eligibility, ethics) paired with heavier support later (mentoring, investor access) reduce wasted effort while maximising value at the right times.

3

Synchronisation is decisive

Grants unlock enabling steps; services accelerate readiness; investor pathways convert readiness into finance; alumni structures sustain momentum.

4

Increased Widening Participation

Widening is achievable when trusted local intermediaries and alumni grouping anchor outreach and community in context, not abstraction.



Operational Recommendations

ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION PLAYBOOK

The objective would be to minimise avoidable attrition and concentrate evaluator effort on viable proposals without inflating burden for founders.

> Two Gate intake

A two-gate intake can be contemplated whereby Gate 1 will comprise an automated pre-check which validates company age, prior funding ceilings, founder ownership and a self-contained deep-tech definition backed by short examples. Turn-around is immediate with a short message that includes links to exemplars for teams that fail. Gate 2 would be the full application focused on technology merit, problem/solution fit, near-term milestones, and the use of funds, with strict character counts to keep drafting time proportional.

> Guidance assets

The following guidance tools can be used to make things easier for the beneficiaries and reduce strain on the helpdesk:

- publishing a **living FAQ**;
- a five-minute **'what good looks like' video**;
- three **compliant founder-video exemplars** (hardware, healthcare, climate); and
- a **standard pitch-deck outline tailored to non-dilutive grants** (budget, KPIs, evidence of readiness).

Housing everything in a single resource hub that is referenced in all emails and webinars.

› **Ethics clarity**

This would include providing a one-page scope note that distinguishes programme-bound ethics from company-wide practices, a decision tree for common edge-cases, and signposting to low-cost advisory options. Tracking recurring questions and folding them back into the FAQ and templates.

› **Appeals**

Keeping appeals time-bound and rubric-based, handled by a triad independent from outreach. Publishing an annual anonymised appeals summary to demonstrate fairness and improve upstream guidance.

SERVICES AND MENTORING MODEL

› **Mentor/trainers procurement**

It would be advisable to allocate a larger budget for mentors/trainers, this would strengthen an aspect of the programme that was seen as very valuable for the beneficiaries and broaden expertise across sectors and stages. Publish mentor/trainer terms of reference, expected outcomes per session, and a simple feedback loop that informs future matching.

› **Matching logic**

Combine a sector-challenge matrix with founder-stated objectives. Allow self-selection from a curated mentor pool with programme oversight to preserve quality and avoid over-matching to a small 'known' subset. Rotate mentors to balance continuity with fresh thinking.

› **Format mix**

Prioritise hands-on clinics, which would include live deck reviews with written feedback, investor-mapping sprints, regulatory/IP, while maintaining modular content libraries for repeat demand (EU funding, PR, data/AI compliance). Track uptake and outcomes and retire low-utility modules.

› Alumni and chapters

Establish additional city/region chapters that host quarterly peer circles and coordinate participation at European events. Maintain a light CRM to track alumni progress and to invite them back as role models and near-peer mentors for new cohorts.

INVESTOR PATHWAYS AND BLENDED FINANCE

› Engagement timeline

Run investor-led workshops in month one to set expectations; curate 1:1s in months two to four; and stage cohort showcases in months five to six (one virtual, one at a European event).

› Capital stack

Clarify the funding sequence for public, blended, and private funds. Where appropriate, explore collaboration with public financial institutions or regional co-investment vehicles; encourage angel syndication; and ensure that grants point to a plausible source for each company profile.

› Tracking

Use a light CRM to log investor interactions, intros and outcomes. Assign follow-ups and feed anonymised pipeline analytics back into service design (e.g., which sessions correlate with warm intros or term-sheet progress).



Replicability and Scaling: Some Guidelines

Below are practical tools that translate the report's recommendations into actionable steps, particularly for the replicability of the programme not only at a European level but also in other forms.

KPIs

› Reach & Inclusion

Track applicant and winner distribution by country; share from widening regions; first-time applicant ratio; and participation by under-represented groups using intersectional categories where legally and ethically appropriate.

› Quality & Progression

Monitor eligibility pass-through rates; conversion to award; TRL shifts; and delivery against near-term milestones that were defined in the application and refined during the service programme.

› Capital & Market Traction

Record follow-on equity and grants; number and quality of investor interactions; pilots/proofs-of-concept; paying pilots; partnerships and revenue-adjacent signals.

› Experience

Capture uptake and completion of mentoring and clinics; mentor/mentee satisfaction; net promoter scores; and qualitative testimonials that frequently reveal nuance missed by numeric measures.

> Equity & Integrity

Track diversity of evaluators and mentors; bias-aware training completion; appeals rate and outcomes; and the time-to-close of ethics flags.

RISK AND MITIGATION

Hereunder are universal risks, which have been identified and their mitigation.

> R1. Eligibility gaming and mis-declarations

Mitigation: automated checks on age/funding/ownership, binary attestations, random audits, and clear disqualification rules for manipulation attempts.

> R2. Bias in selection

Mitigation: diverse, trained evaluators; standardised rubrics; strict separation of outreach and decision-making roles; transparent, time-bound appeals.

> R3. Platform constraints and outages

Mitigation: role-aware configuration, offline fallbacks for critical steps, permanent resource hub, and defined service-level expectations for incident response.

> R4. Mentor availability and quality variance

Mitigation: mentor ToR, structured feedback loops, rotation policy, and conflict-of-interest declarations.

> R5. Founder time constraints

Mitigation: modular content, recordings, office hours, and an optional bootcamp week that compresses effort into an intense but finite window.

POSSIBLE 12 MONTH IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP FOR SIMILAR PROGRAMMES

Months 0–2

Confirm governance and decision-rights; select or upgrade the platform; publish eligibility exemplars and the ethics scope note; recruit a mentor pool; pre-wire the investor cohort; define KPI dashboards and data flows.

Months 3–4

Launch call with eligibility pre-check; run info-days; begin mentoring and investor-led workshops; start logging investor interactions into the light CRM; establish the first peer circles in priority regions.

Months 5–6

Finalise evaluations and choose awardees. Deliver clinics and office hours; run curated investor introductions; hold chapter meet-ups; stage a mid-programme progress check and prepare the end-of-cohort showcase(s).

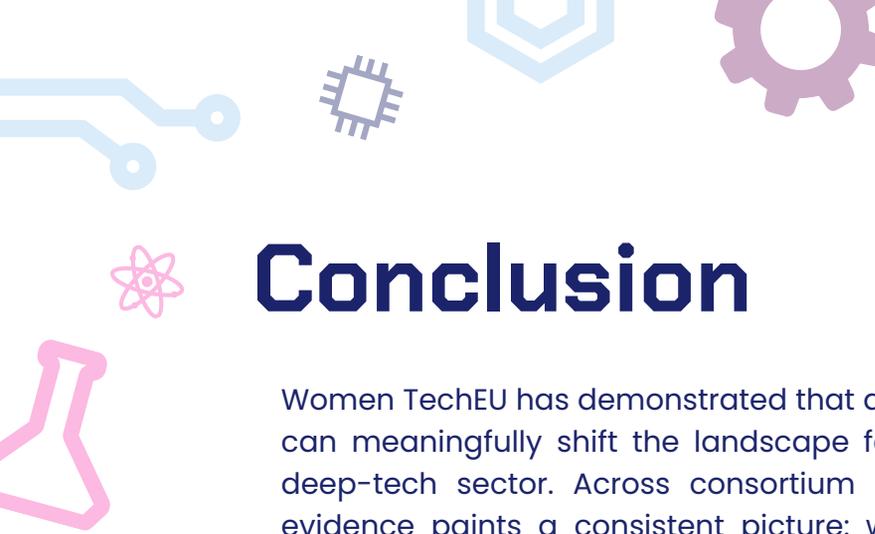
Months 7–9

Disburse block payments upon KPI-verified completion; publish light dashboards; hand over to alumni chapters with a simple benefits pack; open feedback loop into the next call cycle.

Months 10–12

Iterate guidance assets; refresh the mentor pool; expand the investor network with lessons learned; adjust runway length and voucher allocations based on KPI evidence.





Conclusion

Women TechEU has demonstrated that a focused, mission-driven initiative can meaningfully shift the landscape for women innovators in Europe's deep-tech sector. Across consortium members and beneficiaries, the evidence paints a consistent picture: when a programme combines a visible and trusted EU brand with targeted resources, structured support, and credible community-building, it does more than allocate funding, it creates opportunity, confidence, capability and momentum for women founders who are otherwise structurally underrepresented in high-growth, deep-tech entrepreneurship. The insights gathered through this evaluation offer a holistic view of how the instrument has operated in practice, and more importantly, how it can be strengthened into a next generation model with higher equity, efficiency and impact and how it can act as a blueprint for similar programmes.

1 A first major conclusion concerns access and clarity. Both **consortium partners** and **beneficiaries** emphasised that demand for the programme far exceeded supply, indicating strong interest and significant unmet need across Europe. At the same time, a portion of unsuccessful applications failed not because of merit but due to misunderstandings of eligibility criteria, incomplete or misinterpreted self-declarations, or uncertainty about what constitutes a competitive proposal. These frictions suggest that early-stage barriers, particularly around definitions (deep tech, founder leadership, age and funding thresholds) and ethics declarations, can unintentionally exclude eligible and promising founders. Streamlining the front door through a two-gate eligibility system, supported by clear examples and updated guidance, would reduce attrition and ensure that evaluators engage primarily with high quality, fully compliant applications. In essence, clarity early on increases equity later.

2 A second conclusion relates to the transformative potential of the service programme. **Beneficiaries** consistently reported that the six-month package (including mentoring, investor readiness, IP/regulatory guidance, masterclasses and peer sessions) was more than an add-on: it was a fundamental accelerator of their readiness to navigate European innovation systems, fundraising environments and regulatory pathways. Where mentors were sector-specific, and sessions were hands-on, founders changed core practices within days or weeks: formalising invention disclosure processes, refining

technology roadmaps, reshaping pitch decks, or establishing structured investor pipelines. Conversely, where content was overly general or mentors/trainers were overstretched, the value diminished. **Consortium** perspectives echoed these findings, highlighting some challenges with mentor procurement, uneven session engagement and gaps in alumni continuity. This dual perspective points toward a redesigned service model that invests in higher paid mentors and trainers, prioritises depth over breadth, and sustains its community through formal alumni chapters and regional peer groups.

3

Third, respondents converge on the reality that funding alone is insufficient for deep-tech ventures. The WTEU grant is catalytic, it is critical for activities that traditional R&D programmes often overlook, such as freedom-to-operate searches, legal work for licensing agreements, participation in investor events and the small but essential milestones that improve fundraising readiness. Yet the costs of early-stage deep-tech development, particularly for regulated sectors, regularly exceed the available budget by orders of magnitude. CE-marking efforts, patent filings across multiple jurisdictions, or hardware validation phases cannot be financed with a €75k grant alone. Both **consortium partners** and **founders** independently emphasised the importance of pairing the WTEU grant with targeted assistance (for IP, regulatory or certification services) and early, structured investor integration, including curated introductions and European showcase opportunities. In this way, the grant becomes a bridge—not the destination—in a more integrated capital stack.

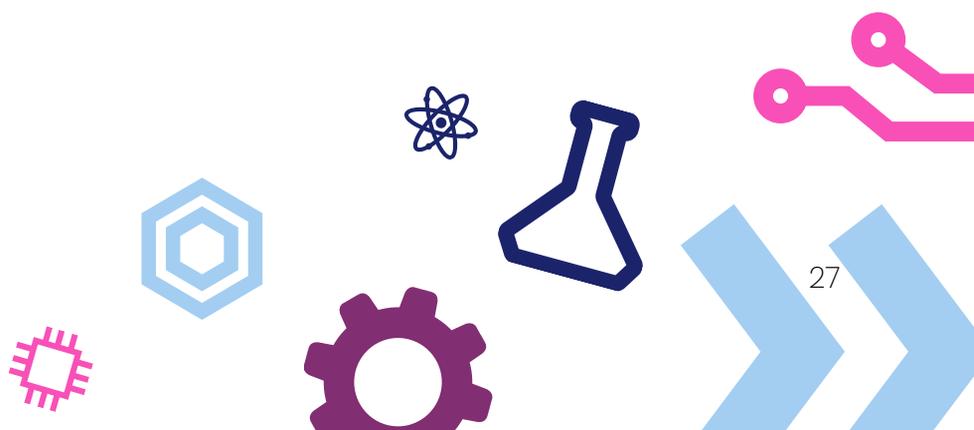
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Another important lesson is the profound role of ecosystems and intermediaries. Across widening regions, local multipliers such as NCPs, regional agencies, alumni and thematic communities were instrumental in converting awareness into applications and supporting early-stage entrepreneurs. Their role underscores that WTEU's success is not based solely on funding or content, but on trust, shaped by who communicates, who validates, and who accompanies founders through complex processes. Strengthening this decentralised ecosystem by providing structured templates and feedback loops, and by linking them closely to alumni chapters, can significantly expand the programme's reach and replicability.

5 Operationally, the evaluation shows that governance and tooling matter. A lean, empowered core team with clear ownership produced agility and consistency, but the platform’s limitations and high helpdesk volumes highlighted the need for better tooling, a unified resource hub and proactive knowledge management. These operational insights, while less visible to beneficiaries, are essential for scaling the programme without proportionally increasing overhead.

6 Finally, the integrated perspective highlights that replicability is achievable and maturity dependent. Elements such as transparent selection criteria, structured mentoring, investor pathways, role-model storytelling, KPI frameworks and alumni chapters, are portable across regions and organisational setups. Other elements, such as event intensity, depth of bespoke services or local mentor availability, must be adapted to the ecosystem maturity. The combination of a strong, portable core with adaptable, context-sensitive components provides a blueprint not just for a future WTEU, but for similar gender-equity initiatives across Europe and beyond.

In sum, Women TechEU has shown that with the right combination of clarity, community, capital and capacity-building, Europe can identify and elevate women innovators who operate at the frontier of science and technology. The evidence from consortium partners and beneficiaries converges on a shared vision: a future iteration of WTEU that is clearer, more equitable, more integrated into Europe’s investment and innovation ecosystems, and more explicitly geared toward scaling scientific excellence into globally competitive ventures. Implementing the recommendations outlined by the respondents would not only strengthen the next cycle of WTEU but also serve as a blueprint for gender-responsive deep-tech innovation policy across the EU. The opportunity now is to build on what works, correct what does not, and scale what is promising so that more women entrepreneurs in deep-tech, in more regions, can turn breakthrough science into companies that solve real-world problems and contribute to Europe’s technological sovereignty.





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