

Tallinn Creative Incubator



Tool 8 – Export Speed Mentoring

Export Speed Mentoring was a one-day event that brought together fashion designers and mentors from Estonia, Sweden, Poland and Germany to support Baltic Sea Region designers to enter new markets and learn about circular principles.

The event was organised by Tallinn Creative Incubator, which has been operating since 2006 and has helped develop over 350 companies. Currently, the incubator serves as a growth platform for 40 companies from both creative and circular economy industries.

The organising partners included Hamburg Kreative Gesellschaft, Westpomerania Region, Media Evolution and Media Dijain.

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Aim and target group

The general aim of Export Speed Mentoring was to support Baltic Sea Region designers to enter new markets and adapt to sustainable principles. The event allowed young fashion designers to learn about internationalisation and potential markets and get individual feedback from market experts.

The event's goal was to enable all participating project partners to both offer and gain skills and knowledge. Each partner had beneficiaries - designers who wanted to learn about other markets, as well as contributors - market experts who helped designers to assess their potential in a local market.

As environmental problems become more critical, fashion brands need to change their business models and adopt more sustainable practices to remain current and responsible. Export Speed Mentoring focused on helping young designers to think about the impact of their products. Participants received individual feedback and ideas from circular economy experts about making their business models more sustainable.

Export speed mentoring in figures

22 fashion brands
21 mentors
5 partner organisations
4 countries
5 talks
84 mentoring sessions

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The program

The event lasted four hours and was held online on the Zoom platform. The event started with an inspirational talk by Irbe Šmite (Gateway&Partners) and Kadi Kenk (Let's Do it Foundation). Export consultant, Šmite, shared her experience of working with young fashion brands entering foreign markets and gave the designers advice on what to consider when doing business abroad. Kadi Kenk explained why brands today should reconsider their business models and adopt circular principles.

Individual mentoring sessions took place in Zoom breakout rooms and each session lasted 30 minutes. Each designer had mentoring sessions with three foreign market experts and one circular economy consultant.

After the first two mentoring sessions, the program hosted three speakers who shared their internationalisation experiences, learnings and success stories to inspire and encourage others to reach their goals. The speakers included Kriss Soonik from Kriss Soonik Lingerie (Estonia), Elena Gasulla Tortajada from Liebre Style (Poland), and Juliana Holtzheimer and Anna Bronowski from Jan N June (Germany).

The organisers created a shared excel file where participants could optionally add their contact information. Participants gave feedback using the MIRO platform.

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Event schedule

9.30 – 10.00 Opening

Introduction from Tallinn Creative (Nele Plutus and Margaret Aidla)

Young Fashion Brands Entering Foreign Markets
(export consultant, Irbe Šmite)

Why Should Fashion Brands Adopt

Circular Principles?

(Societal Change Management Expert Kadi Kenk)

10.00 – 10.30 Mentoring

10.30 – 10.35 Break

10.35 – 11.05 Mentoring

11.05 – 12.05 Program (success stories)

Kriss Soonik from Kriss Soonik Lingerie (Estonia)

Elena Gasulla Tortajada from Liebre Style (Poland)

Juliana Holtzheimer and Anna Bronowski from Jan N June (Germany).

12.05 – 12.35 Mentoring

12.35 – 12.40 Break

12.40 – 13.10 Mentoring

13.10 – 13.30 Wrapping up

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Image

The program

Communication

Five partner organisations were involved in the organisation of the event. The partners had three initial online organisational meetings, as well as communication via phone and email.

The goal of the main organisers was to include one partner from each country. The partners had some contacts in the creative industries within their home country. Tallinn Business Incubator coordinated the communication and took care of the program, confirming the participants and all the other aspects of the event.

Tallinn Creative Incubator prepared the general marketing material, which included

Details of the event (time, place etc)

Content of the event

Criteria for the participants

Application forms for the participants

The event was not widely marketed because it was closed with a limited number of places. However, each partner was free to market the event in their home country however they saw fit.

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Testimonials from participants

“I think you are doing a fine job promoting our local design and also speaking with foreign designers and helping them by giving different advice from real life.”

“Great mentors and very professional and precise advice! Exporting is all about making a decision, a plan and lots of action! Every market has its own face and specifics. Talk to people!”

“Thank you for this occasion to talk to experts “out there” – it opened my mind to several steps I have to take, things I need to change – shortly and first of all: to get out of my comfort zone!”

“A day filled with inspiration, knowledge and generous people letting us in on their stories. Good contacts and talks. Super!”

“A real pleasure and incredibly interesting to get the opportunity to humbly share my experience and knowledge.”

“It was that kind of event that you wish you would have joined when you were at the early stages of creating your own brand. Everybody was willing to share, help and support with specific and doable tips and suggestions.”

Images
The participants

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Lessons learnt

Have a clear target group The idea for Export Speed Mentoring was initially to target young designers, but it soon became clear that the target group needed to be more specific. The designers could cover many fields - furniture, fashion, graphics, etc, but if the fields were too broad, it would make it hard to find mentors to match them all. On the flip side, if the target group was too narrow, for example jewelry, the number of the potential participants would become too small and there could be a more competitive edge.

Local contacts To attract the right target group, it is essential that all participating organisations have contacts within the industry. Otherwise, it can be very challenging to attract the right participants.

Program Participants gave positive feedback about the program. However, as it was very intense, they suggested having longer breaks next time. During the 30-minute mentoring sessions, participants receive a lot of new information and they need more than five minutes to absorb it and prepare for the next session. Thus, the optimal time for the breaks could be about 15 minutes.