

She's Next Hackathon 2025

Rules of Engagement

Overview and theme

She's Next Hackathon 2025 (hereinafter referred to as "the Contest"), is a 10-day, fully virtual innovation sprint designed to empower **women entrepreneurs from 17 countries** across Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and the Western Balkans.

Theme: *Smart strategies for bold growth*

Format: 100% online

Language: English

The territory of the Contest is the She's Next website: <https://shesnext.emerging europe.org/>

As a promotional marketing activity, the Contest aims to increase awareness of the Visa brand (hereinafter referred to as "Visa"), and Reinvantage (hereinafter referred to as "Reinvantage"), which are the initiators of the Contest, and to promote the campaigns, banking, and other products of Visa and Reinvantage.

The Organizer of the Contest is Reinvantage.

The Sponsor of the Contest is Visa.

Timeline

- **Registration open until:** September 2, 2025 (midnight CEST)
- **Educational Webinars:** September 3 – 15, 2025
- **Final participant confirmation and team matching:** September 17, 2025
- **Hackathon kick-off:** September 18, 2025
- **Hackathon Mentorship sessions:** September 19 – October 1, 2025
- **Project submission deadline:** October 1 at 18:00 CEST, 2025
- **Grand Finale Event** (with Live Pitch & Awards Ceremony): **October 3, 2025**

All actions outlined in these Rules will be performed and recorded by the Organiser based **on Central European Summer Time (CEST)**, from 00:00:00 to 23:59:59 inclusive, corresponding to each calendar day within the specified period, unless otherwise stated. Any time mentioned in these Rules refers to CEST.

Platforms and tools

All hackathon activities will take place online.

Key platforms include:

- [She's Next platform](#): main communication, team channels, updates.
- Zoom: webinars, mentorship sessions, pitch day
- Microsoft Sharepoint: submission templates and resources.

Participation and eligibility

This hackathon welcomes:

- Women aged 18+ **who are nationals** of one of the following 17 countries: **Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.**
- Individuals or teams (you may join solo or as a team of max 5 members; you may form or join a team before the application submission deadline)
- Participants from all backgrounds and stages of business
- Women-led teams (men can participate but must be in supportive/minority roles)

🌐 Note: *The She's Next Hackathon 2025 is tailored for our growing community of women entrepreneurs across Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia—represented by the 17 countries listed above. This regional focus and nationality requirement helps us provide targeted support and relevant opportunities.*

In addition, the participant's business or business entity must be registered or intended **to be registered in one of the 17 eligible countries**. While participants may reside elsewhere, both their nationality and the business registration (or planned registration) must align with one of the eligible countries.

Employees and representatives of the Contest Organiser and Sponsor, their affiliated persons, and immediate family members of such employees and representatives are not eligible to participate in the Contest.

The following companies are not eligible to participate in the Contest:

- Companies that manufacture/provide products and/or services that are harmful to human or animal health and to the environment (e.g., ethyl alcohol and alcoholic beverages, tobacco and tobacco products, natural fur, etc.);
- Companies associated with dangerous goods and services (e.g., recreational drugs of chemical or plant origin; psychotropic substances; drug paraphernalia; weapons, ammunition, explosives, and fireworks; instructions for making explosives or other hazardous devices and materials, etc.);
- Companies engaged in unethical or fraudulent activities (e.g., counterfeit goods, software and instructions for hacking systems, services for artificially increasing website traffic or ad clicks, fake documents, services designed to deceive educators and examiners, etc.);
- Companies providing high-risk financial services (e.g., pyramid schemes, investment and brokerage services, online casinos, slot machines, gambling and betting services);
- Companies producing artificial breast milk substitutes;
- Companies involved in residential buildings (either under construction or already in operation) that do not comply with the approved classification of residential buildings as per project documentation;
- Unregistered religious associations, religious educational institutions, and destructive religious cults or sects;
- Manufacturers or distributors of pharmaceutical products, dietary supplements, or medical equipment;
- Providers of traditional or folk medicine (healing practices);
- Esoteric services, including tarot, numerology, magic, fortune-telling, etc.

Individuals who do not meet the **eligibility criteria for participation** in this Contest are not entitled to participate or to receive a prize.

Participants of the Contest are obligated to perform all actions related to participation in the Contest and the receipt of Prizes within the timeframes established by these Rules.

Upon termination of the Contest, the Organiser shall publicly announce such termination by publishing a corresponding notice on the Contest Website.

By participating in the Contest, Participants confirm their full understanding and acceptance of these Rules and provide their consent to the processing of their personal data, including but not limited to the collection, storage, and use of data such as full name, contact details, email address, place of employment (if applicable), and for finalists, passport details and residential address, for purposes related to the Contest. These Rules may be in any way altered and / or supplemented by the Organiser at any time during the Contest. The updated edition of the Rules becomes effective immediately upon publishing at the Hackathon official landing accessible via the link <https://shesnext.emerging europe.org/hackathon2025/>.

The Organiser shall take all necessary measures to protect the Participant's personal data from unauthorised access and disclosure. Participants retain the right to access their personal data and to request information about who has accessed or used their data and for what purposes. Participants are informed that they may withdraw their consent to the processing of personal data at any time in accordance with applicable legislation.

Participants may exercise their right to access their personal data by submitting a written request to the Organiser at the following email address: shesnext@emerging europe.org.

Participants are informed of the terms and conditions of the Contest through the publication of relevant information and these Rules on the official Contest website at <https://shesnext.emerging europe.org/hackathon2025/>

From applicant to participant

Registration on the She's Next platform is the first step in the hackathon journey.

- All applicants who sign up to the platform will be granted access to four live educational webinars. These sessions are designed to help applicants strengthen their ideas, refine their pitch, and prepare for the hackathon process.
- Attendance at three out of four webinars is **mandatory** for those wishing to become formal participants in the hackathon.
- Important: Applicants who do not attend will **not** be considered for final participation.

After the webinars, the organising team will assess applicants based on:

- Participant criteria, set forth in the "Participation and eligibility" Chapter of this Rules.
- Reputational check
- Attendance or watch in recording 3 out 4 educational webinars
- Quality of submitted application (motivation, relevance, clarity)
- Fit with the hackathon's goals and values

Applicants who meet these criteria will receive a formal acceptance email, confirming their status as hackathon participants. Only these confirmed participants (teams) will be eligible to access mentorship.

Educational webinars

All applicants will take part in four live educational webinars, designed to help them strengthen the concept, refine the pitch, and boost their overall confidence as founders.

Attendance at three out of four webinars (either live or via recording) is mandatory for all participants (individuals and teams).

Team formation and mentorship

- Team formation: finalised before the kick-off day
- Mentorship model: hybrid — some matches arranged and/or suggested, others chosen by participants
- Mentorship access: each team is entitled to 1 (one) mentor session on first-come, first-served basis.
- Mentors: experienced founders, advisors, and innovation experts

Submission requirements

Each team must submit:

- A pitch deck (max 10 slides, PDF format)
- A live pitch (3 minutes), followed by Q&A with judges
- An optional short video (1 min) for visibility on the She's Next platform
- **Project submission deadline:** October 1 at 18:00 CEST, 2025

Preselection process for the Grand Finale

When submitting the pitch deck, teams are required to complete a Google Form for the purpose of selecting teams eligible to present their projects at the Final event. The Form must be filled out by the team lead. **Submission deadline: October 1, 2025, at 18:00 CEST.**

The preselection process will consist of two stages:

Stage 1 — Compliance: Verification that teams meet all eligibility criteria (country, attendance at webinars), checked manually.

Stage 2 — Automated preselection: Evaluation based on responses to ten self-assessment questions provided by the organisers in the Google Form.

Based on the answers, 10 teams will be selected to pitch their projects at the Grand Finale event. Additionally, 10–20 reserve teams will be selected, depending on the final number of participants, in case any of the primary teams are unable to participate.

The teams eligible to pitch their projects will be notified via the email and announced in the official Hackathon group on the She's Next platform on October 2, 2025, by 19:00 CEST

* Full scope of preselection criteria is provided in the appendix (for Hackathon participants)

Pitching rules

Pitch delivery: all finalists will pitch live to the jury.

Streaming: pitches will be streamed on the She's Next platform.

Q&A: judges will ask live questions after each pitch

Optional resources

Teams will be provided with:

- A pitch deck template
- Challenge guidelines
- Links to recommended tools (e.g. business model canvas, lean startup templates)

These are optional but encouraged to help structure your submission.

Judging process

Judges: VC fund managers, successful female entrepreneurs, and ecosystem experts

Pitch order: random draw, scheduled by the organisers

Criteria (equal weighting):

- Clarity of problem and opportunity
- Originality and creativity
- Feasibility and readiness
- Potential for economic or social impact

All judging decisions are final. In the rare case of disputes, participants may contact the organisers, who will review the issue and provide a final response.

*Judging criteria are in the appendix

Awards and recognition

Cash awards:

- Best Idea – \$10,000
- Most Innovative Idea – \$5,000
- Best Social Impact – \$5,000

Cash awards will be disbursed **exclusively to legal entities**. If the winning individual or team is not yet registered as a legal entity at the time of announcement, a **reasonable timeframe will be provided** after the hackathon to complete the registration process. The legal entity must be registered in one of the 17 eligible countries.

Within **ten (10) calendar days** from the date of notification by the Organiser, Winners must provide the following documents and information, in the manner specified in the notification, in order to claim the monetary grants corresponding to their categories.

High-resolution scanned copies or photographs of a valid identity document indicating nationality of one of the participating countries, containing the full name, date and place of birth, date of issue, and issuing authority;

All digital photographs or scanned copies must be of sufficient quality to ensure that all text and numbers are clearly legible. Passport copies must include the passport series and number, issuing

authority details (including the department code), date of issue, full name, date and place of birth and nationality. Digital images must not show evidence of technical manipulation (such as editing or retouching), except where such modifications are made solely to improve image quality.

In order to receive cash prizes, the winners of the Competition **are required to sign a document** – the **Certificate of Receipt of Income in the Form of Winnings** – generated by the Competition Organiser and provided in Appendix.

Substitution of prizes with other prizes, provision of prizes in any other form, or transfer of prizes to third parties is not permitted.

The total number of Contest Winners is limited by the Contest Prize Fund.

Each Participant, upon fulfilling the Contest conditions and being recognised as a Winner, is entitled to receive **only one prize**.

Contest Winners are required to use the awarded monetary grant **exclusively for the purposes declared within the Contest**. Prizes may not be used for personal or other unrelated needs that do not pertain to the development of an existing or the creation of a new business.

The Contest Organiser and its partners **reserve the right to verify the intended use of the grant** at any time, request additional documents, or seek clarifications on the reports. In case of misuse of funds, the grant recipient must return the grant amount in full or in part, depending on the extent of the violation.

Upon submission and acceptance of the final expense report by the Winner, all relations between the Contest Organiser and the prize recipient are considered complete, provided that the grant has been used as intended according to the Contest rules.

Additional recognition for winners:

- Post-hackathon three-month mentorship with industry leaders
- Extended visibility across the Visa She's Next and Reinvantage platforms (with a total of 9 content features, with equal representation for each team over the course of 12 months, presented in various formats such as for example interviews)
- Visibility at future She's Next events
- Participation certificates for all eligible entrants
- Features on social media and blog content (ongoing visibility through Reinvantage social media posts, features within the She's Next community platform, and inclusion in the She's Next newsletter)
- Mentions in an official press release distributed across media outlets throughout the CISSEE region

Note: The organisers reserve the right to modify the award structure or allocation if necessary. Any changes will be communicated clearly to all participants.

Intellectual property

All ideas developed during the hackathon remain the property of the individuals or teams who created them. However, by participating, participants grant the organisers the right to showcase the teams' work for promotional and educational purposes (e.g. in videos, blogs, or reports).

The participant confirms that the Business Plan submitted is their original work or that they have full legal rights to use and present any third-party materials included. They further confirm that the submission does not infringe upon any third-party intellectual property rights, including but not limited to copyright, trademarks, or related rights. Participants agree that in the event of any confirmed violation, they may be disqualified from the Contest and shall bear full responsibility in accordance with the intellectual property laws applicable to them based on their nationality or jurisdiction of legal residence.

By participating in the Contest, the Participant gives consent for the use of their image and intellectual property created within the framework of the Contest by the Organiser, Reinvantage, the Sponsor, Visa, and/or third parties authorised by the Organiser, for the production of any advertising/informational materials. These materials may be used on the Website, on radio, television, other media, and on the companies' social media pages, without any compensation, and without any time or territorial limitations. The Participant also grants permission for the use of their contact information by the Contest Organiser for communication purposes during the Contest, including for clarification of details, etc.

Code of conduct

This is a safe and inclusive space for women innovators. We follow global best practices on inclusivity and safety.

Disqualification grounds include:

- Harassment, discrimination, or misconduct
- Plagiarism or use of undisclosed AI-generated content
- Failure to pitch live without prior approval
- Late or incomplete submissions

* Full scope of Code of Conduct in appendix (for participants & mentors)

After the hackathon

Winning teams will receive continued visibility and promotional support through Visa She's Next platform, and Reinvantage channels.

Appendix

1. Due diligence framework for hackathon participants:

As part of the **team registration process**, each participant must provide the following:

- **Full legal name** (as stated on their official ID)
- **Nationality**
- **LinkedIn profile** or professional website
- **Email address**
- **Phone number**

- **Self-declaration** confirming they:
 - Are **not under criminal investigation**, and
 - Are **not subject to any international sanctions**
(to be submitted as a simple Yes/No statement)
 - *Has read and agrees with the rules of the She's Next Hackathon*

2. Preselection criteria

Google form

I confirm that I am a citizen of one of the 17 eligible countries.

I confirm that my idea is aligned with at least one of the hackathon themes.

I confirm I have participated in three out of four webinars.

I confirm that my English proficiency is sufficient to present my idea live and respond to questions from the Jury.

Self-assessment questions: Provided in the Google Form shared with participants on 30 September by the Contest Organiser.

3. Judging criteria:

Each team will be evaluated using the following scoring system:

One point — Poor — Unclear, no rationale or potential shown

Two points — Fair — Some merit but major gaps

Three points — Good — Solid foundation, room to improve

Four points — Very Good — Well developed, promising idea

Five points — Excellent — Clear, compelling, high potential

Five scoring categories

1. **Problem clarity and market relevance** (max 15 points) — How well does the team define the problem and show market understanding?

- Problem definition — Is the problem clearly defined, specific, and compelling?
- Target audience — Does the team understand who is affected and why?
- Market context — Has the team demonstrated awareness of the broader market or ecosystem trends?

2. **Innovation and differentiation** (max 15 points) — How original, bold, and strategically sound is the solution?

- Creativity — Does the solution approach the problem in a novel or bold way?
- Uniqueness — Is the concept differentiated from existing solutions?
- Strategic fit — Is the idea aligned with the hackathon theme?

3. Feasibility and business readiness (max 15 points) — How realistic and actionable is the solution?

- **Viability** — Can the solution be implemented with reasonable resources?
- **Business model** — Is there a clear understanding of how the concept could be monetised or sustained?
- **Next steps** — Does the team show awareness of what needs to happen next (e.g. MVP, partnerships, funding)?

4. Potential for social impact (max 15 points) — What is the scope of positive change this idea could bring?

- **Potential for social impact** — What is the scope and depth of positive change this idea could bring, especially for disadvantaged or underserved communities?
- **Social value** — Does the concept create meaningful value for its users, particularly women or vulnerable groups?
- **Scalability** — Can this idea grow, replicate, or expand across geographies, sectors, or communities with similar needs?
- **Alignment with She's Next goals** — Does the project contribute to female empowerment, inclusive entrepreneurship, or business resilience?

5. Pitch quality (max 10 points) — How effectively was the idea communicated?

- **Clarity and structure** — Was the pitch clear, well-paced, and logically organised?
- **Confidence and engagement** — Did the team show conviction, preparedness, and presence?

Total: max 70 points

1. **Awards mapping**
2. **Best idea** – Highest total score across all five categories (judges may also consider cohesion, story, and overall merit)
3. **Most innovative idea** – Highest score in Category 2: Innovation and differentiation
4. **Best social Impact** – Highest score in Category 4: Potential for social impact

4. Code of conduct (extended)

Hackathon Code of Conduct: participants & mentors

Purpose:

To create a respectful, inclusive, and supportive environment that fosters learning, innovation, and collaboration between hackathon participants and mentors.

1. General principles

- **Respect and professionalism**

All participants and mentors are expected to interact with mutual respect and professionalism at all times.

- **Constructive collaboration**

Mentorship is offered to support participants' learning and project development during the hackathon. Feedback should be constructive and helpful.

- **Inclusivity**

This is a safe space for all participants regardless of gender, race, background, or business stage. Discrimination or inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated.

2. Boundaries of mentorship

- **Non-commercial interaction**

Mentorship during the hackathon is **non-commercial** in nature.

Mentors and participants are not allowed to enter into any financial agreements, offers of paid services, or business contracts during the hackathon period.

- **No solicitation**

Mentors may not pitch or promote their paid services to participants. Similarly, participants should not solicit mentors for funding, business services, or commercial deals.

- **Confidentiality**

Any sensitive information shared during the mentorship sessions must be treated as confidential and not shared outside the hackathon setting without explicit consent.

3. Expectations from mentors

- Provide guidance within the scope of the hackathon.
- Respect participants' ideas, regardless of their level of development.
- Avoid leading conversations toward personal or commercial interests.

4. Expectations from participants

- Come prepared with clear questions or areas where they seek input.
- Respect mentors' time and boundaries.
- Avoid requests for personal favours, funding, or partnerships.

5. Reporting concerns

If a participant or mentor feels that this Code of Conduct has been violated, they are encouraged to report it confidentially to the organising team at shesnext@emerging europe.org.

6. Consequences of breach

Any violation of this Code of Conduct, especially in relation to financial agreements or inappropriate conduct, may lead to disqualification from the hackathon or removal from the mentorship programme.

Certificate of Receipt of Income in the Form of Winnings

EXAMPLE

ACT OF RECEIVING MONETARY PRIZE & DECLARATION OF USE

Date: ____ [DD/MM/YYYY]

This document confirms that:

Reinvantage Ltd, a company registered in the United Kingdom with registered address at 7 Bell Yard, London, WC2A 2JR, hereinafter referred to as the “Prize Provider”,
and

[Full Name of Recipient],

holder of identity document/passport number: _____,

issued on: _____, by: _____,

residing at: [Full Residential Address],

hereinafter referred to as the “Recipient”,

have executed this Act as follows:

1. Prize Confirmation

The Recipient has received a monetary prize in the amount of:

[Amount in figures and words],

awarded as part of their participation in the **She’s Next Hackathon 2025**, organised by Reinvantage Ltd in collaboration with Visa.

The amount has been transferred in full via [Bank transfer / Other – specify], and the Recipient has provided all required documentation to enable the transfer.

2. Declaration of Use

The Recipient declares and agrees that:

- The full amount received shall be used **exclusively** for the business project or initiative presented during the Hackathon.
- The funds will **not** be used for personal consumption, unrelated business ventures, or prohibited activities as outlined in the official Rules of Engagement.
- The Recipient agrees to submit an **expense summary and brief impact update** within [e.g., 60 days] of receiving the funds, if requested by Reinvantage.

- Reinvantage reserves the right to verify the appropriate use of the grant and may request clarifications or supporting documentation.
- In the case of confirmed misuse of the prize, the Recipient understands that Reinvantage may require **partial or full reimbursement** of the disbursed funds.

3. Tax Responsibility

The Recipient acknowledges that any applicable taxes, including income or local taxes related to the prize, are their sole responsibility and must be addressed in accordance with the laws of their country of residence.

4. Final Acknowledgement

The Recipient confirms that the prize has been received in full and that no further claims shall arise between the parties unless a violation of the Contest Rules or this Declaration is identified.

Signed:

For Reinvantage Limited

Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Recipient

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____