WOMEN**4IT**

3 September 2020, BRUSSELS

Women4IT Webinar:
Involving young women in the digital economy

On 7 July 2020, Women4IT expert partner, DIGITALEUROPE, organised a the Women4IT Webinar: Empowering young women into the digital agenda. The event brought together international stakeholders: digital skills experts, training providers and EU institutions representatives as well as women's empowerment and youth organisations.

During the webinar, the participants discussed the role of digital skills training and bringing young women into the tech sector in the context of the Women4IT project.

The event started off with a welcome and introduction speech from DIGITALEUROPE's Project Manager, Katarzyna Udała. Ms. Udała highlighted that **the number of digital jobs is constantly growing, and it is estimated that 9 out of 10 future jobs will be digital; nonetheless, we are still lacking women in the tech sector, with females now constituting roughly 20% of all ICT specialists in Europe**.

Following this intervention, Vita Vitola from the project leader, LIKTA, introduced the Women4IT initiative – **a pan-European project with the core aim to empower young women from disadvantaged backgrounds with tailored digital skills training and job placement assistance**. The goal of the project is hence two-fold: it seeks to create strong societal impact and bring more women into the digital sector.

The next stage focused on the presentation of project tools by partners, who showcased:
- the Digital Job Profiles developed based on the extensive desk research and expert consultations conducted at an early stage of the project;
- Profiling Platform with its self-assessment tools and job profile matching system;
- The fully customisable Training Roadmaps showcasing training curricula and an innovative way of tracking students' progress

- The Employment Toolkit, providing guidance on the employment process both for young women interested in getting a job in digital and for employers who will want to bring more female talent into their organisations and the tech sector.

To better understand the relevance and interdependence of presented tools, the participants followed the story of Ana – a young mum from Ireland, who is currently unemployed, and doesn't attend any educational courses.

Ana discovers Women4IT through an advertisement at her local community centre. She contacts the Irish Women4IT organisation and heads to the Profiling Platform to take the digital literacy test and the aptitude test, matching her with a job profile training that would fit her personality and already possessed skills best. She then embarks on a hybrid-learning course and continues to work with the trainer and mentor regularly, should a personal issue arise. The trainer and mentor's job is to figure out how to help her in the process and adjust the training to meet her needs (e.g. by organising online classes, allowing for submitting class tasks from home, etc.), so that she can complete it. Lastly, Ana has access to the Employment Toolkit, where she will find guidelines on how to approach CV writing and participating in job interviews.

The second part of the webinar was moderated by an external facilitator and focused on the participants' reflections, feedback and ideas for the next stages of the project. After a lengthy discussion, they concluded that:

- **Blended-learning approach** is of key importance and that is how the project stands out.
- The mechanism for the project is very well designed but the implementation might prove to be a challenge, especially during Covid-19 times. To make sure the project work, **dialogue and collaboration** with other organisations (training centres, employment agencies etc.) are needed.
- Dissemination efforts should focus on **engaging various community groups in the outreach activities**, and that diversity should be one of the factors when choosing said groups.
- Building a **relationship with the trainees** and ensuring a truly individual approach will require getting the **students to trust their support system** – the national organisation, the trainers and the mentors.
- Project partners should cooperate with each other and share what works and what doesn't. This could also result in **sharing a best practice catalogue at the end of the project** for other organisations to be able to scale this initiative locally and nationally.
- The **holistic approach to the training process** – not only teaching specific skills but also supporting the trainees personally and individually, as well as focusing on the training's impact on their future – is what gives the project a big added value.

The participants have also **widely expressed their readiness to support the project and its dissemination**. They would also be **interested in bringing Women4IT to their own countries** in the future or implement a similar initiative themselves at a national or local scale.

The meeting was a great success and we are very grateful to our guests for providing invaluable insights. We have evaluated them, and they will now feed into the strategy for course implementation, dissemination and scaling.