

# WOMEN4IT

## 2022



### Report on young women's empowerment workshops

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## Report on Young Women's Empowerment Workshops

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The project Nr.2017-1-094 "YOUNG-ICT WOMEN: Innovative Solutions to increase the numbers of EU vulnerable girls and young women into the digital agenda" benefits from a 2.714.304 € grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment. The aim of the project is to increase the numbers of EU vulnerable girls and young women into the digital agenda.

Project implemented by:



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the evaluation of the Empowerment workshops methodology and delivery by young beneficiaries and mentors. It presents survey data from 249 participants and focus group discussions organized in 6 partner countries with 16 mentors and peer mentors: Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Spain, and Romania.

It seems that the WOMEN4IT project as it has been developed through the trainings, mentoring and empowerment seminars, which young women cannot easily distinguish and perceive it as an overall initiative, was appreciated by the beneficiaries because it created a supportive environment for young women to feel safe and open-up to educational opportunities and challenges and helped them not only to learn but prompt them to discover new, satisfying career paths.

Another point that emerges from the beneficiaries' comments and testimonials is the sense of community cultivated by mentors, mentees, trainers and the formation of networks to support each other pointing to the ways women connect which could be different from those of their male counterparts.

And finally, the data from our samples point towards the advantage in adopting gender sensitive policies that respond to the needs and interests of young women.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

WOMEN4IT is a multi-stakeholder partnership funded by the EEA Grants and the Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment aiming at raising awareness about digital skills and the gender gap, and at promoting concrete, innovative partnerships, and solutions to increase the numbers of EU vulnerable girls and young women into the digital agenda.

The project is being implemented by 9 partners: LIKTA, Latvian Information and Communication Technology association, Latvia (Coordinator), FUNDACIÓN PLAN INTERNATIONAL, Spain, CRETHIDEV, Creative Thinking Development, Greece, Tech.MT, Malta, BETI, Baltic Education Technology Institute, Lithuania, ICS, ECDL Ireland Ltd., Ireland, EOS, Educating for an Open Society, Romania, ECWT, European Centre for Women and Technology, Norway, and DE, DIGITAL EUROPE, Belgium.

The project has developed the digital competences of young women who were at risk of exclusion from the labour market by improving their employability through an alternative, integrated approach. The proposed innovative practices included upskilling young women on the technical skills and soft skills necessary to find a job. The project achieved recognizable results during both periods of implementation (2018-2021 and 2022- 2023) regarding the acquisition of digital competencies, and the promotion of employment of beneficiaries, but it also increased awareness in the target populations through the profiling and employment tools.

One of the key success factors of the project has been the mentoring which included the support provided by experienced mentors to the young trainees for the purpose of the mentee's growth, learning, and career development in one-to-one or group sessions. Participants reported that the WOMEN4IT training not only improved their knowledge, but it also provided the support required to change their mentality and make them feel more confident to pursue a career in a male dominated sector such as the tech sector.

During the first phase of WOMEN4IT implementation, tutorials were also provided by the mentors on the development of soft skills necessary to search, find and secure a job. Because these tutorials were very much appreciated by the mentees, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project implementation Empowerment Workshops with specific topics connected to employability aspects were introduced and organized by all piloting partners for, at least, 40 young women beneficiaries per country, participants of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project implementation.

This report will present the evaluation of the Empowerment Workshops methodology and delivery by 2 target groups: the mentors and the young women since mentoring is a reciprocal and collaborative approach. It will build on data collected from surveys, focus groups and interviews with mentors, peer mentors and mentees in the 6 piloting partners countries: Latvia, Spain, Greece, Lithuania, Romania, and Malta.

## Aim of the Empowerment Workshops

The main aim of the empowerment seminars is to support the employability of young beneficiaries and encourage them to find and secure a job in the ICT sector. More specifically, the goals of the workshops are to:

- complement the training/mentoring of WOMEN4IT
- develop social skills/attitudes and self-confidence
- set professional goals and take actions
- improve their job searching strategies
- take responsibility/control over their professional lives
- enhance the mentorship community by being part of a women's supportive network in the tech.

To achieve these goals the empowerment seminars covered specific topics which were selected after research on the needs of young women aspiring for a career in the ICT sector and verified through the beneficiaries' needs analysis during the mentoring process, focus groups and impact evaluation of the first phase of the project implementation.

The content of the workshops seeks to cover the needs of both participants who have not been employed as well as those who have little work experience, and they include the following 9 units<sup>1</sup>:

Unit 1: Introduction to the program and the meaning of Employability

Unit 2: Personality: Self-Knowledge & Resilience

Unit 3: S.M.A.R.T. Goal setting

Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market

Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis

Unit 6: Job Search Strategy

Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn profile

Unit 8: Preparing for a job Interview

Unit 9: Transition to the world of work

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the workshops' structure and content see: "Methodology for Empowerment Workshops", March 2022, W4IT deliverable.

## 2. DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

The empowerment workshops took place in all piloting countries from April to September 2022. In the Table below, the number of participants per workshop and country is presented:

*Table 1: Participants per Empowerment Workshop per country*

Empowerment Workshops							
	Unit	Number of participants per workshop					
		Latvia	Spain	Greece	Lithuania	Romania	Malta
1	Introduction to the program - Employability	53	30	48	30	49	45
2	Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience	53	32	46	39	36	45
3	Smart Goal setting	53	31	56	38	31	45
4	Key skills for the labor market	52	28	40	39	29	45
5	Tech job profile analysis	51	31	49	39	28	45
6	Job Search Strategy	49	28	49	39	28	45
7	Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn	50	26	34	34	28	45
8	Preparing for an Interview	48	31	40	36	32	45
9	Transition to the world of work	51	31	24	38	28	45

To assess the effectiveness of the empowerment workshops data have been collected from workshop participants through a survey (ANNEX 1) and through focus groups with mentors and peer mentors (ANNEX 2) in the 6 piloting countries, as follows:



Partner Country	No of survey participants	Focus groups / interviews with mentors/peer mentors
Latvia	40	✓
Spain	43	✓
Greece	41	✓
Lithuania	40	✓
Romania	40	✓
Malta	45	✓

## 3. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

### 3.1 Survey Results

#### 3.1.1. Demographic characteristics of the survey participants

The survey data have been collected after the completion of the 9 empowerment seminars in all piloting countries. As shown in Figure 1, overall, 249 young women participated in the survey: 41 from Greece, 40 from Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania, 43 from Spain and 45 from Malta.

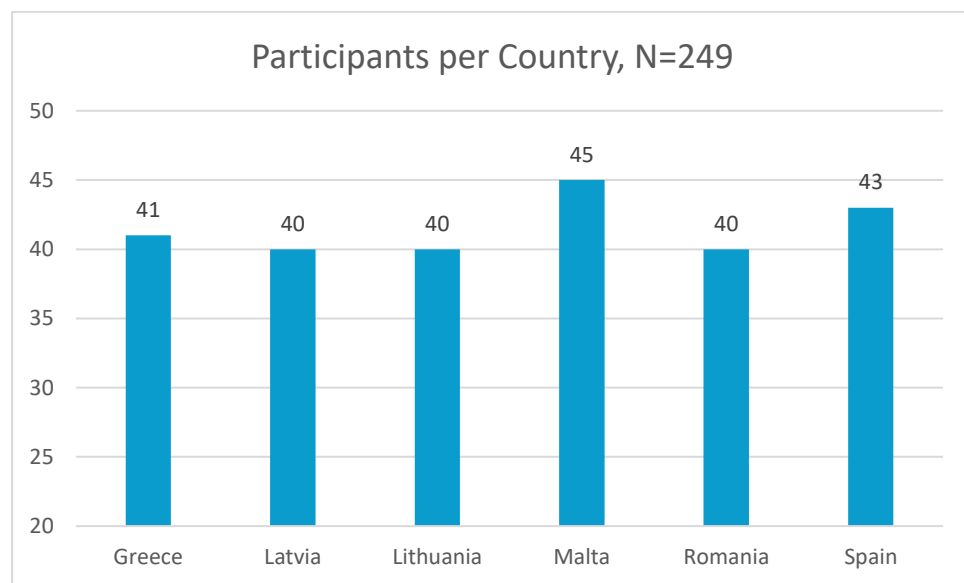


Figure 1: Survey participants per country

Regarding the job profile attended, as shown in the Figure below, 56 reported that they have completed the Project Coordinator training, 52 the Tester training, 49 the Digital media Specialist training, 42 the Junior Web Developer training, 26 the Data Analyst training, 20 the Customer Service Support training and 6 have reported “Other”.

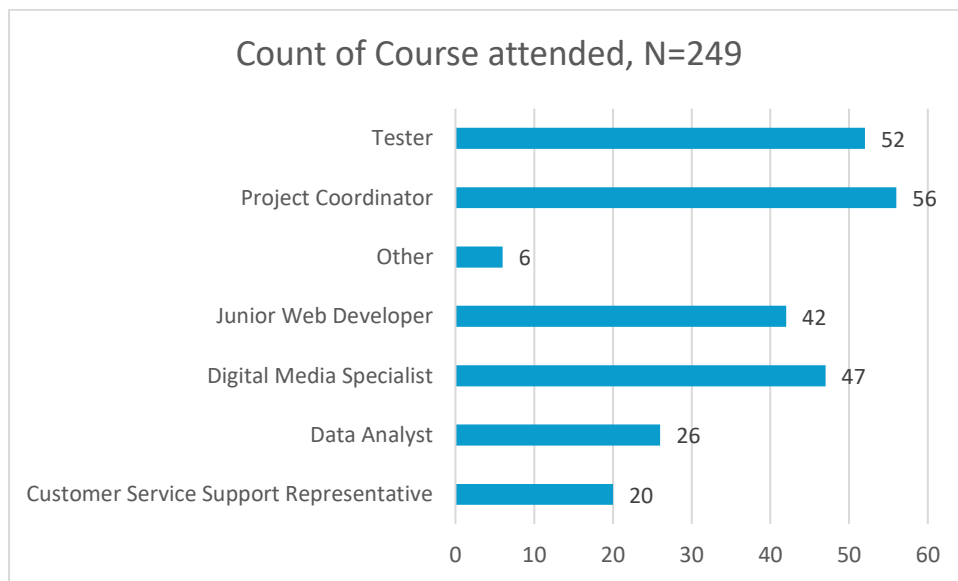


Figure 2: Survey participants per job profile

Partner countries offered training in different job profiles based on national labor market needs as follows:

Countries	Job Profiles offered					
	Tester	Project Coordinator	Junior Web Developer	Data Analyst	Digital Media Specialist	Customer Service Support
Latvia	✓	✓			✓	
Spain		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Greece		✓			✓	
Lithuania		✓	✓	✓		✓
Romania	✓		✓			
Malta	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

According to Figure 3, most survey participants (168) have reported that they belong to the 25-29 age group, 59 participants belong to the 21-24 age group, 17 participants to the 18-20 age group, and 5 participants are 30 years old.

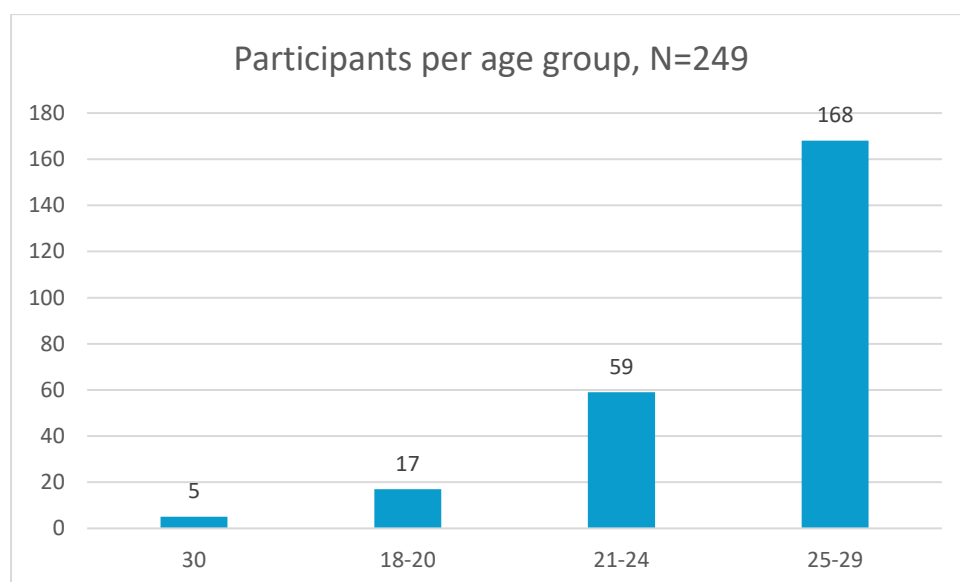


Figure 3: Age groups of survey participants

Frequencies of age groups per partner country are shown below:

Countries	Age Groups			
	18-20	21 - 24	25 - 29	30
Latvia	2	3	34	1
Spain		14	28	1
Greece	2	12	25	2
Lithuania	2	12	24	2
Romania	7	11	22	
Malta	4	7	34	

### 3.1.2 Qualitative Analysis of data

The second part of the survey questionnaire includes questions regarding the quality of the offered by the project service such as the structure, content, frequency of the empowerment workshop, as well as their delivery and organization and how are these perceived by the participants.

A basic question when a new service is introduced is how satisfying it is for the audience it is addressed to and whether it has met the expectations that participants have built before experiencing it. The vast majority of the participants (94%) have reported that the empowerment workshops have met their initial expectations to a great extent ("5" and "4" on a 5-point scale), only 5% are indecisive ("3" on a 5-point scale), and 1 participant stated that her expectation were not met ("2" on a 5-point scale), as shown in Figure 7 below.

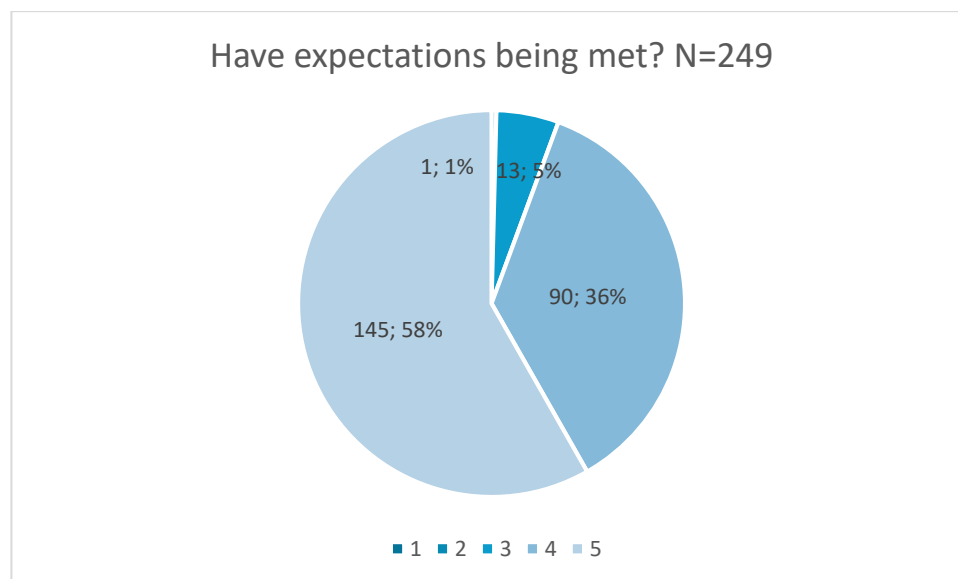


Figure 4: Overall, to what extent has the empowerment workshops met your initial expectations? (1=Not at all, 5=Very Much)

Regarding country profiles the data are as follows:

Countries	Degree of expectations met				
	1	2	3	4	5
Latvia			6 (15%)	17 (42.5%)	17 (42.5%)
Spain 43			3 (6%)	24 (55%)	17 (39%)
Greece 41			3 (7%)	12 (29%)	26 (64%)
Lithuania			1 (2.5%)	11 (27.5%)	28 (70%)
Romania		1(2.5%)		1(2.5%)	38 (95%)
Malta			1 (2%)	25 (56%)	19 (42%)

Overall, individual country profiles are in accordance with the consortium average. However, Romania exhibits the highest positive percentages and 95% of the participants stated that their initial expectations regarding the workshops have been completely met ("5" on a 5-point scale).

To gather more information to improve the new service, participants were asked to justify their responses, in case of mark equal or smaller than 3 in certain questions. Although unfavorable responses were few, feedback could point to an area overlooked. But, very few of the participants provided some explanation and of those only 2 offered explanation relevant to the workshops such as:

- more time was needed for the Units that were discussed,
- The first seminars were weaker than the last ones. I am very happy about the seminars in cooperation with NVA, because they were very comprehensive and full of resources (LV).

The other 2 responses described expectations from the training, not the workshops, e.g. that the training was not so difficult, implying that the respondent would appreciate a more challenging training content and that more and different Units were expected for the Data Analytics job profile.

More than 95% of the survey participants, overall and in country profiles, reported that they have attended all 9 workshops. In the Table below, the overall ratings of the survey participants regarding the contents of each workshop are presented in percentages:

Table 2: How do you rate the contents of the following workshops, in % (1=Very Unsatisfactory to 5=Very Satisfactory)

	1	2	3	4	5
Unit 1: Employability	0.5%	1%	6%	29%	63.5%
Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience	0	0.5%	8%	28%	63.5%
Unit 3: Smart Goal setting			9%	27%	64%
Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market		0.5%	9%	28.5%	62%
Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis	0.5%	0.5%	7%	25%	67%
Unit 6: Job Search Strategy	0.5%	0.5%	7%	28%	64%
Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn		0.5%	4.5%	21%	74%
Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview		0.5%	3%	20%	76.5%
Unit 9: Transition to the world of work	0.5%	1%	11%	24.5%	63%

It seems that the majority of the participants have assessed quite positively all the topics of the workshops selecting responses on the positive side of the scale. In the following Tables, frequency scores are shown for each topic, per country, for comparison purposes regarding the perceived content of the workshops.

Table 3: Evaluation of workshops' content by Latvian participants (number of participants)

LATVIA	1	2	3	4	5
Unit 1: Employability			4	20	16
Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience			8	22	10

Unit 3: Smart Goal setting			9	19	12
Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market			6	19	15
Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis			4	17	19
Unit 6: Job Search Strategy			8	18	14
Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn			1	11	28
Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview				11	29
Unit 9: Transition to the world of work		2	6	12	20

Table 4: Evaluation of workshops' content by Spanish participants (number of participants)

SPAIN	1	2	3	4	5
Unit 1: Employability			4	16	23
Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience			4	16	23
Unit 3: Smart Goal setting			6	13	24
Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market			9	15	19
Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis			7	13	23
Unit 6: Job Search Strategy			2	18	23
Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn			7	8	28



Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview			4	8	31
Unit 9: Transition to the world of work			9	13	21

Table 5: Evaluation of workshops' content by Greek participants (number of participants)

GREECE	1	2	3	4	5
Unit 1: Employability			4	10	27
Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience			3	6	32
Unit 3: Smart Goal setting			1	7	33
Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market			3	11	27
Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis			4	9	28
Unit 6: Job Search Strategy			3	9	29
Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn			2	12	27
Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview			2	12	27
Unit 9: Transition to the world of work			4	12	25

Table 6: Evaluation of workshops' content by Lithuanian participants (number of participants)

LITHUANIA	1	2	3	4	5
Unit 1: Employability				12	28
Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience			1	12	27

Unit 3: Smart Goal setting			1	12	27
Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market				9	31
Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis				12	28
Unit 6: Job Search Strategy				10	30
Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn				8	32
Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview			1	7	32
Unit 9: Transition to the world of work			1	10	29

Table 7: Evaluation of workshops' content by Romanian participants (number of participants)

ROMANIA	1	2	3	4	5
Unit 1: Employability		1	1	38	
Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience	1		2	37	1
Unit 3: Smart Goal setting		1	3	36	
Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market		1	4	35	
Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis		1		39	
Unit 6: Job Search Strategy		1	3	36	
Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn	1		2	37	1
Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview	1		3	36	1

Unit 9: Transition to the world of work	1	3	36
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Table 8: Evaluation of workshops' content by participants from Malta (number of participants)

MALTA	1	2	3	4	5
Unit 1: Employability	1		2	27	15
Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience			10	19	16
Unit 3: Smart Goal setting			11	24	10
Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market			2	18	25
Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis				30	15
Unit 6: Job Search Strategy			4	21	20
Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn			6	26	13
Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview			8	17	20
Unit 9: Transition to the world of work			7	27	11

Country profiles, regarding the evaluation of the content of the workshops, do not seem to deviate from the scores of the overall sample, so it is assumed that the procedure was quite standardized and there were not any variations among consortium partners in the delivery of the workshops.

In the following survey question, participants were asked to explain rankings below 3 concerning the content of the workshops. Most of them reported that they hadn't attend the specific workshop, so they selected a "neutral" ranking. Some other answers included:

- "The score of 2 (in Employability and Self-knowledge) because it did not seem to me that there was much point/relevance, if we did not know more about ourselves and the project".
- "As a whole, I expected the sessions to be adapted to the current situation in the labor market and to be presented from an objective perspective".
- "Some seminars were really useful - I reviewed them again and took notes - others - I watched them in listening mode and did not remember much. I lacked practical tools and suggestions on what to do, especially in a seminar about starting work in a new field. I would also appreciate the handouts (if the presentations are sent later)".
- "It seems to me that the girls said a lot of unnecessary words, not about what is necessary".
- "Regarding the job search strategy - in the end, the visualization and lists about the dream job that were mentioned so much started to get annoying. As if yes, it is needed, but it didn't seem like it could be perceived as a job search strategy. I wanted more such real tips & tricks".
- "In general, it was the lectures of the career counselors that seemed the least interesting, I got the feeling that these ladies work in government jobs and don't really want to challenge themselves anymore, so they didn't have their real-life stories, but more of a theory. Of course, some things were also interesting from a theoretical point of view".
- "The lectures, which were from the State Employment Agency, were too general and a bit boring".

When participants were asked to provide their feedback, in free text, on the most useful/interesting part of the workshops, the answers seem to cluster around 3 major themes:

- Practical advice on how to write a CV, develop a LinkedIn profile, how to act during an interview,
- Listening to the experience of others and learn through them, and
- Understand better themselves, realize strengths and skills, identify and set realistic goals, in a safe and supportive environment.

One participant summarizes it all: "All the advice they have given us has been very useful especially from those who are hiring for technological jobs to tell us what they are looking for in candidates. Above all, I really liked those sessions in which we have been put to the test by asking the typical interview questions, and how is the best way to respond. Also, the issue of how to make a good resume and LinkedIn profile. Finally, I would highlight the dynamics of the sessions themselves: very participatory and establishing a dialogue in which we have all felt safe when expressing our fears and insecurities in relation to the world of work. All fantastic, the support of the counselors has been exceptional".

Regarding which of the empowerment seminars participants considered more useful, the overall ranking among all participants is shown in the following Table:

Table 9: Most useful workshops

Workshop Title	Selected by N=249 (in ranking order)
Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn	135
Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview	123
Unit 3: Smart Goal setting	110
Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience	107
Unit 6: Job Search Strategy	103
Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis	94
Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market	83
Unit 9: Transition to the world of work	75
Unit 1: Employability	62

Thus, most useful workshops are considered: Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn (135 votes), Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview (123 votes), Unit 3: Smart Goal setting (110) and Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience (107 votes) which are compatible with the overall tendency of the participants to divide their preferences between practical Units for finding a job (CV, interview preparation) and self-empowerment skills such as Self-knowledge & Resilience, Smart Goal setting.

In the following Table participants' satisfaction regarding the Facilitator of the workshops, the Administration, the duration and frequency of the workshops and their perceived usefulness is presented.

Table 10: Participants satisfaction with the empowerment workshops, in %, (1=Very Unsatisfactory to 5=Very Satisfactory)

	1	2	3	4	5
How satisfied are you with the Facilitator	0%	1%	2%	11%	86%
How satisfied are you with the Administration	0%	0%	5%	18%	77%
How satisfied are you with the duration of the workshop cycle	0%	2%	8%	19%	71%
How satisfied are you with the duration of each workshop	0%	2,5%	6%	24%	70%
How satisfied are you with the frequency of workshops	1%	1.5%	4%	17.5%	76%

In all the above criteria the vast majority of the participants, more than 90%, stated that they are satisfied to a lesser or greater extent, so there is no need to search for country differences as these would be minimal, if any.

The highest satisfaction is expressed for the Facilitator (97% reported Satisfied – Very Satisfied), and the Administration (95% reported Satisfied – Very Satisfied). Especially for the Facilitators, the beneficiaries had only positive comments and they praised their role and compassion. It is very characteristic the remark provided by one of the girls that summarizes the role of the facilitator: “All excellent. I have felt heard and accompanied”.

It could be the creation of this supportive environment that made young girls feel safe, prompt them to open-up, realize their potential and work towards overcoming fears. About 40% of the girls in the question “What are you most proud of during your participation to the workshops?” answered that they are proud they manage to really participate in the workshops and talk about themselves without fear, they are proud because they see themselves evolving, and feeling more confident about themselves and the skills they possess. An equally large percentage (40%) said that they are proud they acquired a lot of knowledge and skills and about 10% report that they are proud they managed to finish their studies which gave them a feeling of accomplishment and achievement. As one of the girls wrote: “During the seminars, quite a lot of my views changed. For example, that you need to

believe more in yourself, in your abilities, not to be afraid of stepping out of your comfort zone, because there is no growth when you are in it”.

Furthermore, the majority of the beneficiaries (96.5% ) say that it is “Likely” to “Very Likely” to recommend these workshops to others (see Table below) implying that they believe their usefulness is quite high.

*Table 11: How likely it is to recommend these workshops to other young women who want to enter tech job world? in %, (1=Very Unlikely to 5=Very Likely), N=249)*

	1	2	3	4	5
How likely it is to recommend these workshops to other young women who want to enter tech job world?	0.5%	0%	3%	20.5%	76%

In the question: “What will be your professional goal and relative actions in the next 3 months?” almost all girls answered to find a job in the sector they have been trained. Even those who are currently studying they said they look forward to finishing the university and start a career in the IT sector. Few participants stated that they want to continue studies (15%), but there is a small, although noticeable percentage (about 10%) which states that they want to “continue evolving”, “acquire more confidence”, etc. placing emphasis on the soft skills and their personal development.

## 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the end of this report, in the ANNEX 3, are presented the testimonials received from the participants, which describes their experience with the project and the empowerment workshops. This type of data collection was selected because, except its usefulness' in creating trust for all parts involved in an initiative or consortium, it is also a form of voluntary, direct evidence with no interference from the side of the researcher which can provide valuable insight for the project results as well as its impact on the beneficiaries.

Based on the testimonials it seems that the WOMEN4IT initiative as it was developed through the trainings, mentoring and empowerment seminars was appreciated by the beneficiaries because it created a supportive environment for young women to feel safe and open-up to educational opportunities and challenges and helping them not only to learn but prompt them to discover new, satisfying career paths. As one of the trainees' states: (in WOMEN4IT...you will) "not only hear the story of how it all started, you will also be able to touch coding and understand its beauty" which can be attributed to the vast exploring opportunities that technology enables young women to unlock and influences in adopting careers in ICT.

Another point that is evident in the beneficiaries' comments and testimonials is the sense of community cultivated by mentors, mentees, trainers and the formation of networks to support each other pointing to the ways women connect which could be different from those of their male counterparts.

And finally, the data from our samples point towards the advantage in adopting gender sensitive policies that responded to the needs and interests of young women. Again, borrowing the excerpt from the testimonial of a mentee it seems that the decision to address the project only to young women could have facilitated interaction and the creation of relationships that allows the sharing of experiences: "I wanted to emphasize the fact that both students and counselors are women. I believe that this factor has been key to the success of the workshops, since it has facilitated the creation of a space in which we feel more comfortable when it comes to expressing ourselves and sharing more personal aspects of ourselves such as our fears, insecurities, or frustrations".



## 5. PRESENTATION OF DATA FROM FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS WITH MENTORS AND PEER MENTORS

### 5.1. Aim of the focus group and participants

The aim of the focus group was to gain a better understanding of the mentoring process and the empowerment seminars since in these groups the Mentors who acted as facilitators participated.

Focus groups were organized in all piloting countries and the data in this section have been collected from mentors in surveys, focus groups, and individually.

### 5.2. Presentation of Focus Group results

#### Organization of the mentoring process in partner countries

In most partner countries each mentor was responsible for 15 mentees with who they had weekly meetings for their empowerment workshops. In some countries to encourage participation they joined forces with State Employment Agencies.

Besides the organization of the empowerment workshops, usually every week, mentors discussed with their mentees using WhatsApp, Viber, videocalls and exchanged emails.

#### The mentoring experience

All mentors agreed that the experience of giving care, knowledge and experience to young girls and receiving positive feelings (trust, respect, relief, satisfaction) from the participants, especially when succeeding in their professional goals was amazing.

To know that they have guided girls to new career paths and to receive positive feedback and thank you letters from the girls, it was described as a unique feeling. It was also mentioned that the empowerment workshops were useful as they covered topics that are very much needed to find a job but there are not offered in schools or universities, and when these young women have to look for a job they don't know where to start. So, they seem to

### **Mentees commitment to the mentoring process**

Mentoring is a two-way professional relationship and both parties have roles and responsibilities to which they should commit. However, mentors reported that not all mentees commit to this process. So, in some groups girls seem to be more interactive while in other girls were more reserved. As it was pointed out, some participants were reserved out of shyness in group sessions, but in when it was one to one discussion & conversation they were really involved. Also, mentors mentioned that with icebreaker games the situation was improved.

### **The needs of the mentees. What did they want to learn more about**

The most common needs expressed by mentees seem to be:

- guidance in preparing the right CVs and job applications for each case,
- how to present themselves in an interview,
- how to keep an updated and representative to their skills digital presence,
- how to find a job that is related to their studies and profile.

But, to design the best CV, it was necessary to work on themselves and identify personality traits. And that was the field that mentors contribute a lot, to support mentees recognize their value and develop self-confidence, but not only as an act for an interview.

A mentor mentioned that being surrounded by women in similar situation they felt supported and empowered to discuss and share deeper thoughts and find out what they really want for their future.

In addition, mentees seem to show genuine interest for the mentors, and they wanted to learn more about mentors' life, experience, expertise in various fields, as well as their career paths.

### **What was the biggest obstacle/ fear of your mentees for their professional life**

In general, it is a matter of getting started in a field where they don't know people and don't have specific role models to follow that scares mentees. Sometimes fears are also related to the courage that is needed to change career paths and understanding that it is possible. As well as having a closer look at understanding what it is done in each specific job.

Among other fears that mentees have reported are:

- The fact that companies are looking for a higher technical skill than the ones they have.
- Looking for a job at a young age, for which employers ask for experience and so they feel disqualified for many of the jobs in the market.
- Fear of not knowing that to do next (how and where to move forward) and sometime lack of confidence in their abilities.
- Taking the first step towards a new profession in the ICT field. There were many girls that were lacking confidence in themselves and their knowledge.

**What specific sources did you use for informing, connecting, or networking with the mentees?**

Mentors usually preferred virtual meetings with mentees on Zoom, MS Teams or similar platforms. They also encouraged the creation of WhatsApp or Viber groups with the participants that allowed them to connect with each other and build support networks.

For searching information statistics, jobs – LinkedIn were preferred.

**What were the 3 best practices that you used as a Mentor**

To empower the mentees and support them in the advancement of specific goals that can improve their lives and careers Mentors use different practices, shown in the Table below:

Table 12: Sets of best practices proposed by Mentors

Best practices proposed by Mentors
Constant communication with them
Engaging workshops
Developing an individual workbook for them to do on their own time
Help them with a Passion
Understand them with Openness
Support - Sharing is caring
Active listening
Empathy
Ability to ask good questions.
Reassurance – their participation is purely for their own benefit and not because they are disadvantaged
Listening – wait to hear what they have to say and ask you
Inquisitive – help them bring out what they would like to achieve in their life
Open communication
Celebrate even small wins
Establish goals and share lessons learned
Active listening & Understanding
Interactive employability webinar
Call for professional goal setting
Confidence building
Get to know yourself and identify what is your professional goal and what's the reason for it. Once that is clear you can identify the best person to help you in the process. Be honest with yourself and organize your time and effort.

### What was the best advice you gave to your mentees to help plan their career?

It is acknowledged that the best advice for young women who want to start a career in the male dominated ICT sector is to seek the support of a mentor who can help them understand better themselves, identify their professional goals and empower them to achieve them.

Although mentoring is a long process, there are some pieces of advice to help the mentees in the process, shown in the Table below:

Table 13: Career advice for the ICT sector

Career advice tips
- A very good self-evaluation of both technical and interpersonal skills along with a clear career objective.
- Girls were encouraged to keep an open mind and to learn from mistakes made, so as not to repeat them in the future.
- Help them with a Passion
- Understand them with Openness
- Support - Sharing is caring
- "Do not be afraid to take a leap for your future"
- "Even if you do not have confidence, act like you do"
- "If you can dream about it, you can do it"
- "Even with small steps you are walking to your goals"
- "Even in such technical lines as engineering, about 15% of one's financial success is due one's technical knowledge and about 85% is due to skill in human engineering, to personality and the ability to lead people."
- "You'll never be criticized by someone who is doing more than you. You'll always be criticized by someone doing less. Remember that."

### **What was the adding value for mentors and mentees**

The benefits of the mentoring relationship especially when progressing the career of young women in a dynamic sector are multiple for both mentors and mentees. According to our focus group participants they include:

- As an organization, it is great to work directly with people who are in their own process of finding a job to identify firsthand what the current needs are and design material adapted for it.
- The added value for me was an upgraded mentor skill. As for the mentees, I felt that the fact that they were listened by someone who gained their trust was helpful.
- At the end of the sessions, girls had more confidence and trust in themselves. It was not easy, but they seemed to have overcome this issue. As for the mentors, it felt rewarding knowing that the sessions left an impact on the girls.
- I just love to see how they are transforming, even if a bit, but they gained their confidence! "A comfort zone is a beautiful place, but nothing ever grows there."
- An experience of a lifetime for mentees' professional paths. So happy to participate and contribute to the small or big successes of our girls.

### **What was the biggest challenge you faced during the mentoring process?**

- Running online workshops and individual processes has a lot of benefits but one of the biggest challenges is to get to know the participants in a better way and help them to connect with each other. Another big challenge is the immediate need for work which makes some of the participants reduce their engagement in the empowerment workshops in order to work on temporary jobs.
- The lack of motivation and interest by some girls.

- Retain 'some' of the participating girls attentive throughout. Being in a small group, one student can easily disrupt the others, hence, continuous conversing with the girls to minimize such situations.
- The most challenging thing for the mentors is to give the girls their best knowledge and experience and equip them with more confidence and skills in such a short period of time.
- The interactive participation of all during the empowerment workshops (open cameras and reply to questions).

**If you could change one thing about the mentoring process, what would it be**

One of the mentors, during the focus group proposed to allow more freedom regarding the number of sessions and their content to adapt them to the participant's needs and availability.

Empowerment workshops were based on a specific methodology developed and tested in 6 partner countries within the context of the WOMEN4IT project. Efforts are made on behalf of the consortium to disseminate project results and methodology in other regions. So, some degree of flexibility could be useful to allow for easier adoption of the proposed methodology by partners outside the consortium.

## 6. MENTORING AND EMPOWERMENT SEMINARS: COMPLEMENTARY APPROACHES

During the Focus Groups, Mentors were asked to provide their opinion on how helpful to the mentoring process were the empowerment seminars. According to their responses, empowerment seminars were considered very helpful, as they allowed mentees to engage in their own process and reflect on things that they don't usually do. They had the chance to work on specific tasks in their own time which helped them focus on their main goal. And, in addition, during the seminars, there were connected with professionals that currently work in the field who were invited as inspirational speakers.

Empowerment seminars were also considered as complementary to the mentoring process and the key to unlock mentees' potential and help them feel more strong, positive, and self-confident to set and achieve professional their professional goals. For some of the beneficiaries they were considered as extremely helpful because they rightly addressed their 'fears'.

Overall, the workshops were thought that they provided a framework and structure to the mentoring process and the schedule and plan of the sessions helped to create a positive routine.

And as a conclusion, a paraphrasis of the comment from a mentor who participated in the empowerment workshops: Even the best of the methodologies relies on the participant's interest and commitment with the process.



## ANNEX 1: Empowerment Workshops Evaluation Survey

- **Are you a Participant or Mentor?\***
  - ☐ Participant
  - ☐ Mentor
  - ☐ Peer mentor
  
- **Age\* (if you are participant please refer to your age. If you are a Mentor, please reply 'other')**
  - ☐ From 18 To 29
  - ☐ Other
  
- **Do you work? \*(if you are participant please respond accordingly. If you are a Mentor, please reply 'other')**
  - ☐ YES
  - ☐ NO
  - ☐ OTHER
  
- **Do you study? \*(if you are participant please respond accordingly. If you are a Mentor, please reply 'other')**
  - ☐ YES
  - ☐ NO
  - ☐ OTHER
  
- **In which digital profile training did you participate? \***  
(if you are participant please refer to the specific training. If you are a Mentor, please reply 'other')

Digital Specialist/Graphic Designer/ Project Coordinator/ Web Developer/ Data Analyst/ Data Protection Officer/ Customer Service Representative/ Software Tester/ Other

- **Overall, to what extent has the empowerment workshops met your initial expectations? \*** From 1=Not at all to 5=Very Much

- **In case of mark equal or smaller than 3 in the previous question, please tell us what else have you expected**

Paragraph

- **In which of the following workshops did you participate?\***

- ☐ Unit 1: Employability
- ☐ Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience
- ☐ Unit 3: Smart Goal setting
- ☐ Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market
- ☐ Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis
- ☐ Unit 6: Job Search Strategy
- ☐ Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn
- ☐ Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview
- ☐ Unit 9: Transition to the world of work

- **How do you rate the contents of the following workshops? \***

- From 1=Very Unsatisfactory to 5=Very Satisfactory

- ☐ Unit 1: Employability
- ☐ Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience
- ☐ Unit 3: Smart Goal setting
- ☐ Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market
- ☐ Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis
- ☐ Unit 6: Job Search Strategy
- ☐ Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn
- ☐ Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview
- ☐ Unit 9: Transition to the world of work

- **In case of mark equal or smaller than 3 in the previous question, please tell us what else have you expected**
- Paragraph
  
- **Which of the following workshops proved to be more helpful for you?\***
  - ☐ Unit 1: Employability
  - ☐ Unit 2: Personality: Self-knowledge & Resilience
  - ☐ Unit 3: Smart Goal setting
  - ☐ Unit 4: Key skills for the labor market
  - ☐ Unit 5: Tech job profile analysis
  - ☐ Unit 6: Job Search Strategy
  - ☐ Unit 7: Strong Curriculum Vitae/ Cover Letter and LinkedIn
  - ☐ Unit 8: Preparing for an Interview
  - ☐ Unit 9: Transition to the world of work
  
- **What was the most useful/interesting part of the workshops for you? \***  
Paragraph
  
- **How satisfied are you with...? \***
  - **Facilitator**
  - **administration**
  - **duration of the workshops cycle**
  - **duration of each workshop**
  - **frequency of workshops**
- From 1=Not at all to 5=Very Much
  
- **If you wish, you may write more about the effectiveness of the Facilitator**  
Paragraph

- **How likely it is to recommend these workshops to other young women who want to enter tech job world? \***
- From 1=Not at all to 5=Very Much
  
- **What are you most proud of during your participation to the workshops?\***
  
- **What will be your professional goal and relative actions in the next 3 months?\***
  
- **Please kindly write your testimonial from participation in the workshops for possible posting on communication channels (social media, website, reports etc). \***  
Paragraph
  
- **Please feel free to write any other comment you wish**  
Paragraph

## ANNEX 2: Focus group/ Interview Questions for Mentors and Peer mentors

1. Are you a Mentor or a Peer mentor?
2. How many mentees did you have?
3. How often did you contact your mentees?
4. How would you describe the whole experience of mentoring?
5. How committed and engaged were the mentees to the mentoring process?
6. What were the needs of your mentees? What did they want to learn more about?
7. What was the biggest obstacle/ fear of your mentees for their professional life?
8. What specific sources did you use for informing, connecting, or networking with the mentees? (etc. blogs, articles, research reports for informing/ social media (e.g. viber) for connecting/ or zoom for interacting with other professionals)
9. How helpful to the mentoring process were the empowerment seminars?
10. What were the 3 best practices that you used as a Mentor?
11. What was the best advice you gave to your mentees to help plan their career?
12. What was the adding value for you and for your mentees?
13. What was the biggest challenge you faced during the mentoring process?
14. If you could change one thing about the mentoring process, what would it be?

### ANNEX 3: Testimonials from workshops participants

- It was very effective, fun and clear. I would recommend this training!
- It was an amazing experience! I feel stronger now to face the market world and do my best to achieve
- The program helped me change my life and find my dream career. The administration, the tutor, the empowerment workshops' facilitator and my mentor helped me throughout the process and I will always be thankful. Their energy and dedication have been a true inspiration.
- It was very effective, fun and clear. I would definitely recommend this training!
- The workshops helped me understand my skills better, improve my personal action plan and made me feel more confident about myself. Thank you!
- My experience during this program was really good. I met new people and expanded my network, I gained valuable knowledge on the Unit of project management from professionals and I am happy that I had the opportunity to participate in it.
- A must-attend short meetings to help you discover the best version of yourself as well as many advice on your professional career.
- Although I have attended several seminars on similar Units in the past, I gained a lot of knowledge, which is valuable, especially when you are in the early stages of your career. The participation of the trainees, the exchange of opinions and experiences and of course our coordinator (Mrs. Makri) certainly helped a lot. I would suggest any young lady who is trying to start her professional life and has this opportunity to attend the empowerment seminars.
- The manual testing course was the perfect amount of theoretical and practical knowledge, being the perfect intro into the IT world, especially testing and not only. The course had a balanced amount of related subjects such as data types and SQL exercises. The trainer, Alin Mocrii, it's the perfect mentor someone could have: he's calm, patient and can explain even the hardest information in a way everybody can understand. Overall, I'm lucky I was part of this and sad it ended so fast. The time flies quickly when you have such a good mentor and team!
- We girls got closer together helping each other.
- I can say that these empowerment sessions made me realize the fact that we need to know ourselves well enough to be able to identify our personal competencies, as, in the first sessions, Nicu challenged us to ask ourselves certain questions, to which, at the moment, I couldn't find the answer. I'm not talking about the fact that, at each session, I learned something new and the class ended with a positive vibe (ps: I always left the class with fantastic energy, even though I had also had a full day at work ). I am glad that I had the chance to participate in this course.

- A beautiful and very useful experience that was worth all the time given. I am glad that I participated in this project that I will recommend to all the people I know.
- I am glad that I was part of this project, it was a very beautiful and interesting experience and I managed to learn many things from a new field.
- The international plan workshops are the best tool to empower women and give them the boost they need to demonstrate that they are capable of achieving their goals.
- Excellent experience, highly recommend for others!
- Very useful experience. Thank you for such an opportunity to improve myself!
- I think I gained more self-confidence in these trainings, they motivated me not to be afraid of innovations and changes
- I highly recommend joining this project if you don't know your strengths and weaknesses well, you don't know your capabilities and you want to learn something new.
- Excellent courses, objective information, competent teachers, organized administration.
- I really liked the project, the seminars are worth paying attention to. It's great that there is no dry theory, but real events and useful advice are told.
- In these seminars, you can learn a lot of useful information and advice that would be useful when working, but it is a pity that they took place at an inconvenient time (at least for me).
- The first part of the seminars is extremely informative and really provides the basics of data analysis. The teacher presented the information very well and clearly in a relatively short time. The second part of the seminars is more intended for people who plan to engage in job searches and change the nature of work. Without having experience in job search, you can get to know in detail what employers expect and what employees can expect. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the seminars!
- I chose the data analytics course out of curiosity. I wanted to know what was hidden under the name and my expectations were justified.
- I received a lot of new and useful information, which (I'm sure) will help me achieve my newly set goals.
- The 'WOMEN4IT' project is aimed at young, unemployed women to find and establish themselves in the IT labor market. I wholeheartedly recommend joining this project, especially the Junior Web Developer program. Dear teach G. Čechamirienė and A. Čechamiras will teach you the basics and more. The program is perfectly coordinated in both theoretical, practical and independent parts. Not only will you hear the story of how it all started, you will also be able to touch coding and understand its beauty.
- I recommend these trainings, because of the excellent knowledge and lecturers.

- The WOMEN4IT project introduced IT technologies. I gained valuable theoretical and practical experience as a web developer. I got acquainted with HTML, CSS, JavaScript, WordPress programs.
- I highly recommend these workshops. Those women who are not confident in themselves, who are afraid and do not dare to take a step forward, these seminars will turn your whole thinking upside down. I studied data analysis, the teacher was very positive and clearly taught what was most important, it was not boring. He always answers all questions. For those who want to start a career in IT, these seminars are a great place to start.
- I was very pleasantly surprised by the large number of lecturers, informative lectures, which took place at a very convenient time. Very nice team, great project. The opportunity to start a new page in your life with new opportunities. Thank you
- The training was interesting, engaging and informative. The teacher studied the Units extensively, we did various practices, which allowed us to delve into the customer service profession even better. The empowerment seminars were also helpful. I am grateful to everyone: the teacher, lecturers, organizers.
- I want to praise Nikolè and Gerda, who do their job perfectly, and the whole team for their organization and the chance to give us new knowledge. It's great when young girls are given the opportunity to make a difference in their lives. Thank you
- These are very useful and informative lectures conducted by people related to the real situation in Lithuania, employees of the Employment Service and not only.
- The workshops were detailed, interesting and, most importantly, practical
- Very dynamic workshops to learn in a general way the technological world that surrounds us.
- It is worth it and much remains to be known about how to face the transition to the world of work.
- A facilitator and practical course where the digital environment is key
- I have been very fortunate to be able to be part of this project, where not only have I had continuous support from the technicians and trainers, but it has also allowed me to acquire new knowledge for my future work.
- The workshops complement the course very well and help to focus the knowledge acquired in a professional environment.
- Good professionals, updated content
- My participation in WOMEN4IT's socio-labour orientation workshops has been an enormously satisfying experience, and I recommend it to any woman who is in a job search situation. I have to admit that they have surprised me for good, because when I started I was not aware of how important it is to have knowledge about the strategies to follow to enter the world of work. On the one hand, the content of the workshops has been unbeatable: we have covered all the areas and even details that I previously



overlooked and thanks to the guidance received I have learned that they really make the difference when it comes to finding a job. I definitely feel much more prepared and confident in myself when applying for jobs and interviewing. On the other hand, the dynamics of the sessions and the aptitude of the counselors have been exceptional. I have loved the personal touch that they have given to the orientation, creating a safe space in which we can express ourselves and receive appropriate advice for our different profiles and situations. In a certain sense, these workshops have made me reflect a lot on myself and on the professional future I want, having helped me clarify my ideas and set goals. They have really been very involved in us, and I am very grateful for the support received. Finally, I wanted to emphasize the fact that both students and counselors are women. I believe that this factor has been key to the success of the workshops, since it has facilitated the creation of a space in which we feel more comfortable when it comes to expressing ourselves and sharing more personal aspects of ourselves such as our fears, insecurities or frustrations.

- The workshops have been very interesting, since we reflected on aspects that help to be clearer about one's own work objectives. The contact with other students from other courses was also interesting.
- Very good initiative with very involved and dedicated trainers
- Tools that are important to know
- They have been a good method to get to know you and develop yourself as a person for your future work
- In high school they made me study social sciences even though I was pretty good at technology and math. I kept the thorn in computer science and programming, but having studied something else I could no longer access the FP. When I found out about this project, I signed up for the Jr. Web Developer course and it is one of the decisions I am most grateful for. I have learned a lot, the team is wonderful and accompanies you all the way, even when you finish. In addition, they prepare different activities for you to get in touch with the sector, and mentoring is a wonderful way to talk face to face with someone who is working on what you want to do. Now it's time to look for a job, but I know that the facilitators are there to help me. Thanks for everything!
- It has been one of the best things about the course since the coordinators are super nice and very professional. I highly recommend it.
- A super useful program, participatory workshops and a team very prepared to help you with the push that sometimes we need to have self-confidence and be able to launch into the world to work and improve professionally.
- They are very productive workshops and are of great help in job orientation
- Thanks to Mentors and speakers for interesting lectures.
- They were very happy to cooperate with the NVA ladies. Really interesting and informative seminars, which I read again and again to take notes.

- Thanks to the girls who gave their time to us.
- Everything is very useful, thank you! :)
- Thank you for this opportunity, for new knowledge and motivation to work further.
- A great opportunity to gain knowledge in a short period of time about a completely foreign, but ubiquitous IT industry
- I knew quite a bit, but probably younger girls had more new information. But also very useful when you are reminded of what you already knew, but you don't know why you didn't apply that knowledge or you forgot that knowledge.
- These workshops were helpful, informative and inspiring. Thank you!
- Thanks for sharing your experiences and stories, it was worth listening!
- All seminars were very motivating and useful, each one had something new and thought-provoking, thank you for your work and huge contribution!
- Project coordination is a complicated but very interesting industry, in which, I think, everyone can find something they like and are close to. From document writing to highly creative works, planning, communication, finance, various systems and other areas that need to be familiar. But you should always remember - You are not alone, there is a team, specialists and other professionals who are nearby or within an e-mail/call distance, to whom you can ask for advice and help. Everything can be solved, you just need to talk. If at first it all seems scary, then as time goes by, everything is "put together" and becomes easier. If you want to learn something new and like working with people, testing your limits and have a great desire to explore new horizons, then it is worth taking the opportunity and learning.
- Thank you for the opportunity to participate in these courses, to change my view of the IT industry. It seems that I am finally in a place that I like and the world needs!
- A lot of useful and interesting information in just 2 months. The view on the development of one's career has changed - a person does not always have to follow a standard path after high school. We are all different and each one is different. There are many opportunities, so you have to know how to use them, and you must not give up at the first failure, because in time it is all a useful experience. I got here quite by accident, accepting a quick idea, which is not typical of me at all, but I am very grateful that now there is a desire to try something, to go outside of my comfort zone, however difficult it is.
- I want to say a big thank you for the time you invested and the knowledge and encouragement you gave!
- A thorough dose of inspiration and motivation! Another encouragement in life to stop sitting in a position that is comfortable for you and to take even small steps, but to go forward. And don't be afraid to communicate with people and make new contacts. As an introverted person, this does not come easily to me, but I understand more and more how valuable this can be!

- Useful and practical information provided in a very supportive environment, enriched with a genuine desire to see and promote the growth of other women, both in their personal lives and in their careers.
  - The WOMEN4IT seminars were a great reminder that you need a clear goal and little by little, look for opportunities, move closer to it. Say yes more, try, look for opportunities. Actively learning all the time, trying everything until I find that one thing that I like more, that excites me more than others.
  - The seminars were inspiring, as well as with useful tips, practical tools, additional materials that could be useful for further development, very valuable personal experiences that really show how things happen, what works, what other people's mistakes are.
  - Thank you very much for the new experience, for the interesting and motivating stories.
- 
- It's a pleasure to see positive, successful and inspiring people - it motivates to do and grow!
  - Thank you for the stories of experiences and the positive atmosphere during the whole study. It was a great pleasure to learn new things with you.
  - The purpose and sequence of each seminar was based on successful integration into the labor market. From realizing yourself and your potential to real success stories. The involvement of various specialists and the presentation of Units each time encouraged more and more that nothing is impossible. At the end of the seminars, there is a feeling that a clear vision of the next steps to completely change one's professional direction has been formed.
  - In general, the seminars gave a huge dose of motivation, there was an opportunity to ask questions to industry professionals, as well as learn about their life journey, how they reached where they are now. And, of course, it reminded me that if you want to be where you are not now, you have to do something different than before. And it's ok to make mistakes. :)
  - The seminars were very useful and informative. The personalities were very bright and each with its own charm. Thank you for the seminars because they inspired me and kept me from giving up. Thanks for all!
  - Help me in job search strategy.
  - I am grateful for the WOMEN4IT as it gave me the push to learn and gain more knowledge.
  - It was a great initiative to encourage more women in the IT world.