The end of the Go Digital Erasmus project: Planting the seeds of the future of gender equality

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how the training activities carried out as part of the "Go-Digital" project have responded to the general need for practices that will transform the digital sector into a gender-inclusive and gender-equal part of the EU labour market. This response took the format of creating a training program for adult educators, who, through the project, would receive tools and knowledge that would enable them to address some of the significant gaps that exist in relation to female employment and the digital sector. The first section of the article explains the basis of the training programme developed, by outlining its main objectives and how they correspond to the greatest challenges faced by women in the digital sector. The second sector proceeds to describe the application of the training package, with emphasis on the piloting events that took place between March-April 2022 in the countries involved in the project. Finally, the third section discusses the impact of the piloting events both at the level of adult educators who directly participated in the events, as well as the indirect impact that those events are expected to have on women's employability and career trajectory within the digital sector. This discussion will also include insights as to what further actions are needed in order to build on the vision of Go-Digital.

Why education matters

In times when progress on establishing and accelerating women's participation in the labour market and leadership in decision making is at stake, we need to ensure that women's contributions reach the table of discussion and that find a fertile ground to be developed and thrive, as widely proven to result in. Educating individuals is a driving force against gender inequality worldwide and is the key to empowered societies and gender-equal societies. There is no doubt that adult education has an impact on many areas of life. Continued learning as an adult plays an important role in unlocking upskilling and reskilling opportunities and pathways to access, and progress in, the digital sector of the labour market.

The main aim of the Go-Digital training program is to develop adult educators' competences to become the coaches for female employment in the digital sector. The training material of the project provides the knowledge and the tools that the coaches need to empower women to build the skills and competencies needed to scale the hurdles women often face on their way to access the digital sector of the labour market.

The objectives of the training program are:
 • to deepen the adult educators' understanding of how to promote gender equality in the access to learning and use of employment in the digital sector;
• to increase the adult educators' capacity to motivate female learners to take part in learning towards employment in the digital sector of the labour market;
• to equip the adult educators with effective coaching and motivation strategies to increase

demand and take-up of re-qualifications of female learners into the digital sector of the labour market.

The pilot sessions were implemented during the period March – April 2022. More than 120 adult educators participated in the piloting of the training course "Coaching for female employment in the digital sector in order to promote gender equality in the labour market" and the "Assessment tool to recognise the adult educators-coaches' competencies and provide them with the digital badges".'

The aim of the piloting sessions:
- To develop adult educators' competences in motivating disadvantaged women to take part in learning towards employment in the digital sector of the labour market.
- To improve recognition and support validation of competences acquired through the non-formal training course "Coach on female employment in the digital sector in order to promote gender equality in the labour market" by using an assessment tool and digital badge.
- To promote gender equality in the access to learning and use of employment in the digital sector by female learners.

In the second phase of the piloting activity, 72 disadvantaged women participated in the piloting of the Set of Open Educational Resources (OERs) for women. Participants were women who mostly face a great deal of discrimination because of their gender. The main obstacles to their participation in economic activities are mainly due to the disparities between women and men, in terms of access to the various sectors of economic activity, and because of their age, geographical obstacles, and physical disabilities. Many of them feel invisible because of their age, and experience age discrimination in hiring thus they face both age and gender bias.

The impact of the piloting activities

The impact of the piloting activities was reached through different dimensions:
• Awareness: the participants were informed of the different challenges in the field and awareness was raised of their impact and therefore, actions were suggested towards their encounter. Also, they have seen this training as a window of opportunity to start reskilling and upskilling their digital skills.
• Mobilization: the participants had the chance to explore different ways for their involvement and engagement towards more equal participation of women in the digital sector through different channels: as mentors, trainers, educators, and members of the society. Through these different roles, critical skills and knowledge was disseminated to mobilize them towards actions for women's empowerment. Finally, they have realized that technological adoption is transforming tasks, jobs, and skills, and they were motivated to

find reskilling and upskilling opportunities and thus seek employment in the digital sector. Some of the participants also prepared their Action Plans to define their goals and make a plan of the steps to be followed.

- Networking: Through the training/meeting, the participants had the opportunity to explore different networks of already established coaches/mentors and understand the importance of alignment of their role and responsibility toward women's empowerment.

The closure of the project – the final conference

In the Final European project Conference in Kaunas participated representatives from LAGs, adult educators-practitioners, representatives from labour exchange offices, employers' organizations, community centers, non-governmental organizations, as well as representatives from higher education, vocational schools, and other stakeholders, associated partners.
The president of the Lithuanian distance and e.learning association welcomed the participants of the Conference with the words of Canadian scientist Tony Bates who stated that technologies are changing faster than teaching methods and it is therefore very important to improve teaching methods incorporating the technology.

The representative from the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, Kaunas district department, presented the situation of the Labour Market and the possibilities for employment in the digital sector.

During the Conference, the Training program for adult educators "Coaching for female employment in the digital sector in order to promote gender equality in the labour market" (MOOC) and the Assessment tool for the "Go-Digital" training course was presented to the participants. The representative of the project partner organization from Romania IVC presented the success stories of women successfully requalified and working in the IT sector developed during the project implementation from all project partner countries.

There were presented the "National Compendiums of (re-)training programs for qualifications in the digital sector of labour market" offering the information, orientation, and guidance for learners-women on possible training programs at the national level needed to be prepared for digital jobs. Participants were very pleased that the content of the training programs existing in different countries was explained and compared and the recommendations were made for integrating the different programs into the national curricula of the project partner countries. The European Recommendations on how to mainstream the results of the project into the national and European education and employment policies were defined by the participants of the Conference.

The simultaneous translation took place, which enabled women from the regions to participate

in the Conference. Participants were interested in the results of the project and expressed the motivation to use them in their daily practice to foster women's employability in the digital sector of the labour market.