

WP2 - A9: WOMENIN Training Course



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Introduction to the WOMENIN Training Course

Nowadays, promoting gender equality and inclusion has become essential in all spheres of society. In the world of entrepreneurship, this need is even more evident. This training course, developed within the WOMENIN project, is a response to this growing demand for a more equitable and inclusive approach to entrepreneurship.

The main objective of this course is to equip vocational education and training (VET) educators with the necessary tools to address not only the technical and conceptual aspects of entrepreneurship, but also the specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. Through this educational program, educators will not only acquire a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs but will also develop essential competencies to effectively deliver this knowledge.

The course is designed with several key objectives in mind. Firstly, it aims to understand women's entrepreneurship in its entirety, including its trends, challenges and opportunities in different countries of the European Union. In addition, it aims to promote gender equality, both in entrepreneurship and in education, empowering trainers to be active advocates for this cause. It also focuses on integrating the gender perspective in a cross-cutting approach at all stages of the training process and in the course content.

The course also aims to develop inclusive communication skills, as well as to prepare trainers to play a key role in the training of women entrepreneurs, giving them the skills and confidence to guide and support the learners. Finally, it addresses the internationalization of women-led businesses, fostering a global vision of entrepreneurship.

Therefore, this 7-module training course is designed with the intention of ensuring that vocational education and training trainers are fully prepared to address the specific challenges of female entrepreneurship and become drivers of change for women entrepreneurs across Europe.

Through a consistent structure and format, as well as specialised modules developed by each of the project partners, this course offers a total learning experience that will equip trainers with the knowledge and skills necessary to guide and empower women entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurial journey.

In the subsequent sections, we will delve into the multifaceted realm of women's entrepreneurship, exploring topics ranging from gender equality and digital enterprise skills to internationalization

strategies, management techniques, inclusive language, and the integration of gender perspectives across various domains.

WOMENIN Training Course



Module 1

Introduction to women's entrepreneurship

Module 1: Introduction to Women's Entrepreneurship

Introduction

This training course is designed to equip VET trainers with the knowledge, tools, and resources needed to effectively deliver entrepreneurship education and support women in realizing their entrepreneurial ambitions. By fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment, we can empower women to overcome barriers, unleash their potential, meet their personal objectives, and thrive as entrepreneurs.

Women entrepreneurs face different challenges than male entrepreneurs, and perhaps bigger ones. In this training course we are going to explore some of the main challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, to help you as a trainer be aware of them and be ready to transfer the knowledge and support your trainees in overcoming them.

Specific objectives

In this module, we are going to provide you a short introduction to women entrepreneur's world, and the specific challenges, so VET educators can be ready to support women in preparing for the and facing them. In this module you will find concrete challenges that the women entrepreneurs face in their path to success. As a trainer or educator, you can use these materials to increase their chance of success. This module offers, as well, a series of practical exercises to be used in the classroom that can help women entrepreneurs to enhance their skill set, to face the challenges they face in their professional path.

Educational content

Chapter 1: Introduction to women entrepreneurship

Who is a woman entrepreneur? One of the definitions of woman entrepreneur is a woman or a group of women that starts and run an organised business.

“Women entrepreneurs are those women who innovate, initiate or adopt a business activity”

Schumpeter

“Any women or group of women which innovates, initiates or adopts an economic activity may be called women entrepreneur.”

Frederick Harbison

All around the world more than a third of the business initiatives driven by entrepreneurship are run by women (GEM 2022/23). Taking that in consideration, as an entrepreneurship or business trainer you need to keep in mind that there are some differences between male and female entrepreneurs. Those are reflected especially in such factors as motivation. It is significant to understand that most of women start their own venture by necessity, related to economic factors or need for autonomy and their initial capital and resources are in many cases scarce (Moore, 1997).

Most of the entrepreneurs starting their entrepreneurship journey have:

- Low incomes,
- Limited facilities,
- Family.
- With that come a certain number of challenges:
- Family is not always supportive.
- Getting financial means is highly challenging (significantly more than for their male peers) especially at the beginning.
- Many of them lack relevant business education and training.
- Lack of working capital, often translating to small margins.
- Women entrepreneurs also:
- Are hardworking which fosters business sustainability and growth.
- Favour security overgrowth.
- Prefer stability to risk.

Those factors are what commonly distinguishes women entrepreneurship and that will impact the entrepreneurial path, performance, and chance for success among business-oriented women. Those need to be accounted for by educators and trainers looking to support women entrepreneurs. But you should consider that some of those challenges can differ from country to country, depending on social and cultural backgrounds, and other local factors. So, you should be attentive to your local specifics and be prepared to adjust your guidance to your specific trainees, their resources, conditions, as well as motivation for engaging into the entrepreneurship (Demneri, 2023).

Chapter 2: Hard challenges

There are more difficult challenges that women entrepreneurs face in their path of entrepreneurship, as they are often out of control of the entrepreneur and are deeply embedded in the environment.

Some of those are especially hard to overcome due to social or professional deeply embedded beliefs and attitudes. Providing support to women entrepreneurs you need to be ready to help them recognise them, understand them and navigate around those difficulties, so they don't struggle so much to overcome them, or don't fail as entrepreneurs as a result of these commonly out of their control factors. Understanding the reality will help increase their chance of success.

Some of those more challenging barriers are:

- **Access to Funding:** Difficulty in securing initial capital or investment for starting their businesses due to gender biases in the investment community.
- **Lack of Networks:** Limited access to professional networks and mentorship opportunities, which are crucial for gaining knowledge and support in entrepreneurship.
- **Gender Bias:** Facing stereotypes and prejudices that undermine their credibility and potential as entrepreneurs, impacting their ability to attract investors and customers.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Struggling to balance the demands of starting a business with family responsibilities and other personal commitments.
- **Access to Resources:** Difficulty in accessing resources such as affordable workspace, technology, and business support services.
- **Market Entry Barriers:** Facing challenges in entering male-dominated industries or industries where women are underrepresented, including access to distribution channels and procurement opportunities.
- **Self-Doubt and Confidence Issues:** Dealing with self-doubt and imposter syndrome, which can hinder their ability to take risks and pursue opportunities.
- **Legal and Regulatory Hurdles:** Navigating complex legal and regulatory requirements, which may disproportionately affect women entrepreneurs, especially in regions with gender-biased laws or policies.
- **Limited Role Models:** Lack of visible female role models and leaders in entrepreneurship, making it harder for women to envision themselves as successful entrepreneurs.
- **Cultural and Societal Expectations:** Facing societal and cultural expectations regarding women's roles and responsibilities, which may discourage them from pursuing entrepreneurship or taking on leadership positions.

Some of these difficulties and acknowledgements in the women business world overlap and connect with the ones described in the previous chapter. In further chapter we are going to address some of those topics and give some tips how to deal with them. Other topics will be treated further in the training course (Moore, 1997).

Chapter 3: Market Entry Barriers, Access to Resources and Funding

The barriers that women face to enter the “Business Market” can vary depending on the industry, region, and specific circumstances. However, some common market entry barriers for women entrepreneurs include:

- **Access to Initial Capital:** most of women bootstrap their business slowly and painfully, this comes from the difficulty to assure investment or funding in the beginning of their journey.
- **Limited Networks and Connections:** women have a more limited or social limited business network which leads to a bigger challenge in building professional networks and connections. Those connections are crucial for accessing industry insights, mentorship opportunities, and potential customers or clients. This smaller network also diminishes their ability to find and access distribution channels and other markets, particularly in sectors where male businessmen lead the industry.
- **Lack of Visibility and Recognition:** women entrepreneurs struggle to get visibility and recognition in markets where they are underrepresented and social “don’t belong”, which limits their growth potential.

You, as a VET trainer should comprehend those barriers and find a way to help the women entrepreneurs to navigate them and be attentive and sensitive to the different kind of business and/or market, your approach and instructions need to be adjusted accordingly (Elam, 2023)

Chapter 4: Legal and Regulatory Hurdles

In this chapter we approach the regulatory and compliance requirements, which by themselves are an additional challenge, more specifically in regions where there are still gender biases policies or laws.

Legal systems and the rules imposed, can be a significant challenge when an entrepreneur is starting its career, as mentioned above there are the gender biases policies or laws, that are still being used in some countries or regions till today; The limited access to legal resources and information makes more challenging for women entrepreneurs to know their rights, the laws and rules they need to comply with, for example discriminatory labour laws or rules to women acquiring properties; Discriminatory licensing and permitting processes, the women entrepreneurs can get their permits or licenses delayed due to unequal treatment, and additional barriers can be raised by authorities to women entrepreneurs; Inadequate protection of intellectual property, the limited resources that women entrepreneurs have at their disposal can be a challenge in this area, together with the complex laws; Barriers in contracting

and procurement, women lead companies maybe have more difficulty to access governmental contracts, public concourses, and opportunities to supply materials or products.

As a VET educator you should be aware of those problems and be ready and prepare to advise the and enlighten the entrepreneurs that come to you for guidance. Having this in mind will make the women entrepreneurs more careful and aware of the possible challenge and be ready to face them, enhancing their capability of success and limiting their risk of failure by charging blind, get their scarce resources even more diminished.

Learning activities

Activity 1: Challenges Mind Mapping

This exercise empowers women entrepreneurs to gain clarity, focus, and strategic insight into their entrepreneurial journey, enabling them to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals with confidence and resilience.

How to develop the exercise:

- Provide participants with a large sheet of paper or a digital mind mapping tool.
- Ask them to brainstorm and map out the various challenges they face as women entrepreneurs, categorizing them into themes such as funding, networking, market access, and work-life balance.
- Encourage participants to identify common patterns and themes among the challenges they face.

Activity 2: Goal Setting and Action Planning

The objective of this exercise is to make the women entrepreneurs understand that goal setting and action planning are powerful tools to translate their aspirations into concrete actions, navigate challenges with resilience, and achieve sustainable success in their entrepreneurial journey.

How to develop the exercise:

- Guide participants through a goal-setting exercise where they articulate specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals related to overcoming their key challenges.
- Encourage participants to break down their goals into actionable steps and create a timeline for implementation.
- Provide opportunities for peer feedback and accountability to support goal attainment.

Activity 3: Visualisation and Affirmation Exercises

This visualisation and affirmation exercises are valuable tools for women entrepreneurs to cultivate a positive mindset, enhance confidence, and align their actions with their goals and values. By harnessing the power of visualization, women entrepreneurs can unlock their full potential and create the future they envision for themselves and their businesses.

How to develop the exercise:

- Lead participants through guided visualization exercises where they envision themselves overcoming challenges, achieving their goals, and thriving as successful entrepreneurs.
- Encourage participants to create personal affirmations or mantras that reflect their resilience, strengths, and aspirations.
- Incorporate visualization and affirmation practices into regular routines to cultivate a positive mindset and foster resilience in the face of adversity.

Activity 4: Peer Mentoring Circles

The peer mentoring circles offer women entrepreneurs a powerful platform for learning, growth, and community building. By harnessing the collective wisdom, support, and camaraderie of their peers, participants can overcome obstacles, seize opportunities, and achieve greater success and fulfilment in their entrepreneurial journey. In this exercise the VET trainer also can reach out to already established women business owners to provide their experience and feedback.

How to develop the exercise:

- Facilitate peer mentoring circles where participants can connect with one another to share experiences, insights, and advice on navigating challenges in entrepreneurship.
- Provide structured discussion prompts or themes related to specific challenges, allowing participants to offer support and guidance to their peers.
- Encourage active listening, empathy, and constructive feedback within the mentoring circles.

Activity 5: Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis

In this exercise we aim to empower women entrepreneurs to leverage their strengths, address their weaknesses, and pursue opportunities aligned with their vision and values. By embracing their unique

capabilities and potential, women entrepreneurs can achieve greater success, fulfilment, and impact in their entrepreneurial endeavours.

How to develop the exercise:

Ask participants to create a list of their personal and professional strengths and weaknesses.

Encourage them to reflect on how their strengths can help them overcome challenges and leverage opportunities in their entrepreneurial journey.

Facilitate group discussions to share insights and strategies for addressing weaknesses and building on strengths.

Activity 6: Role-Playing Scenarios

The Role-Playing Scenarios exercise provides women entrepreneurs with valuable opportunities to develop essential business skills, enhance interpersonal dynamics, and build confidence in their ability to navigate complex challenges and opportunities in the entrepreneurial journey.

How to develop the exercise:

- Develop role-playing scenarios based on common challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, such as negotiating funding terms, pitching to investors, or addressing gender bias in business interactions.
- Divide participants into small groups and assign each group a scenario to role-play.
- Encourage participants to experiment with different strategies and communication styles for effectively addressing the challenges presented in the scenarios.

WOMENIN Training Course



Module 2

Gender equality in entrepreneurship

Module 2: Gender Equality in Entrepreneurship

Introduction

The "Gender Equality in Entrepreneurship" module's introduction provides a basic synopsis of the key ideas that will be closely studied throughout the course. The objective of this module is to examine the various aspects of gender equality in the context of entrepreneurship, highlighting the obstacles, prospects and crucial factors that support the experiences of female entrepreneurs. It is important to create an environment that is fair and inclusive for women who want to start their own businesses. Tailoring its diverse talent pool to its full potential can greatly benefit the European Union, a dynamic economic entity. This module attempts to contribute to the comprehensive understanding and addressing of gender-based disparities in entrepreneurship. Through a thorough analysis and resolution of gender-based differences in entrepreneurship, this module seeks to further women's economic empowerment and foster sustainable development in the EU.

Specific objectives

After the completion of the module, trainers will have a clear and concise set of objectives to help direct the learning process. These goals include understanding gender dynamics in entrepreneurship, assessing the implications of policies in the context of the European Union, promoting inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems, creating business strategies that take gender equality into consideration, exhibiting successful case studies, encouraging networking and mentorship, assessing impact metrics, facilitating open conversations, encouraging collaborative learning and encouraging trainers as advocates for gender equality. Through ensuring that trainers are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to support women entrepreneurs in creating an inclusive, equitable and supportive environment, these goals seek to increase the number of women entrepreneurs who succeed and participate in the entrepreneurial scene.

Educational content

Chapter 1: What is Gender Equality in entrepreneurship?

Gender equality, above all, is a human right. In addition to being a basic human right, gender equality is also an essential requirement for a world that is prosperous, peaceful, and sustainable. Although there has been progress in recent years, gender equality will not be achieved by 2030 if the present conditions continue.

Gender equality suggests that all boys, girls, women, and people of all classes and cultures participate on an equal basis and are of equal worth. They have equal access to opportunities for administration, freedoms and resources. Gender equality refers to the fact that all people are free to develop their personal abilities and make decisions without being constrained by stereotypes and prejudices about gender roles. It also implies that the interests, needs and priorities of men and women, as well as girls and boys, are taken into consideration, acknowledging the variety among various groups. Gender equality refers to the idea that a person's rights, responsibilities, and opportunities should not be determined by their ethnic background, age, ability to care for themselves, handicap, or location—rural or urban.

Women have a right to a life of respect, security and safety. In order to promote development and combat poverty, empowering women and girls is essential. Healthy, intelligent and self-assured women improve the well-being and prosperity of entire families, communities and their countries.

Chapter 2: Benefits of Gender Equality

Communities are safer, healthier and happier when there is gender equality. More connected and greatly benefiting countries are those with higher levels of gender equality. Here's a list of the particular societal advantages of gender equality below:

- **Economic Equality:** Society gains when job opportunities are equal for both genders. Research indicates that a varied workplace—which encompasses gender diversity—is a more productive workplace. The economy benefits from this success at work as well. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a nation increases dramatically, poverty rates decline, communities thrive, and all genders are afforded equal job opportunities.
- **Improved Education:** Every student in the educational system gains from gender equality. Girls who go to school are more likely to be productive and healthy, making more money and providing a better future for their families. This then helps to build an economic system that benefits people of all genders and improves community health. UNICEF reports that a secondary education significantly boosts a girl's lifetime earnings, increases the country's growth rate, reduces child marriage, lowers child mortality, lowers mother mortality, and reduces child stunting.
- **Reduced poverty:** The most impoverished individuals in the world are women and girls. Poverty cycles repeat because they aren't afforded equal access to education, employment opportunities, and income. Equal opportunities for men and women would lift entire families out of poverty and lower the rate of poverty worldwide.

- **Better Health:** Research indicates that disparities in gender have an adverse effect on various health consequences, such as family planning, nutrition, pandemic illness, and the health of mothers and children. Research indicates that when medical systems are redesigned to ensure that all genders have equal access to healthcare, better health outcomes occur. These outcomes include decreased rates of mortality, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), improved self-rated health, and decreased alcohol consumption.

Chapter 3: The relationship between women entrepreneurship and gender equality

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic growth and development, fostering the development of cultural and technological innovations as well as the generation of wealth and jobs (World Bank, 2020). However, there are still a lot of challenges that women entrepreneurs must face as they launch and expand their businesses. They are therefore less able to create new types of value and support entrepreneurial ecosystems (UN, 2019; Kraus and Roig-Tierno, 2020). Gender bias and inequality play a significant role in shaping the entrepreneurial ecosystems. These factors also restrict women's options and hinder their ability to innovate and generate value. Because of this, the advancement of gender equality is gaining the attention and concern of scholars, decision-makers and practitioners. Gender equality can promote entrepreneurship in a variety of ways. Creating new opportunities: According to the OECD (2021a), gender equality can allow women entrepreneurs to access markets, networks, and resources that they had previously been unable to access. This may stimulate business ventures and produce new kinds of value. Diversity of genders can encourage innovation and creativity by bringing new ideas and perspectives to the process of entrepreneurship. By improving gender equality, policymakers and practitioners can encourage creativity and plurality in entrepreneurship, creating new kinds of value and promoting social and technological progress. Boosting social capital: Women entrepreneurs can gain access to systems, coaches, and other supplies that can assist them in starting and growing their businesses by advocating for gender equality (Brush et al., 2018). According to Alam and Devi (2020), gender equality has the potential to expand individuals' perspectives and worldviews, which in turn can stimulate the emergence of novel ideas and solutions.

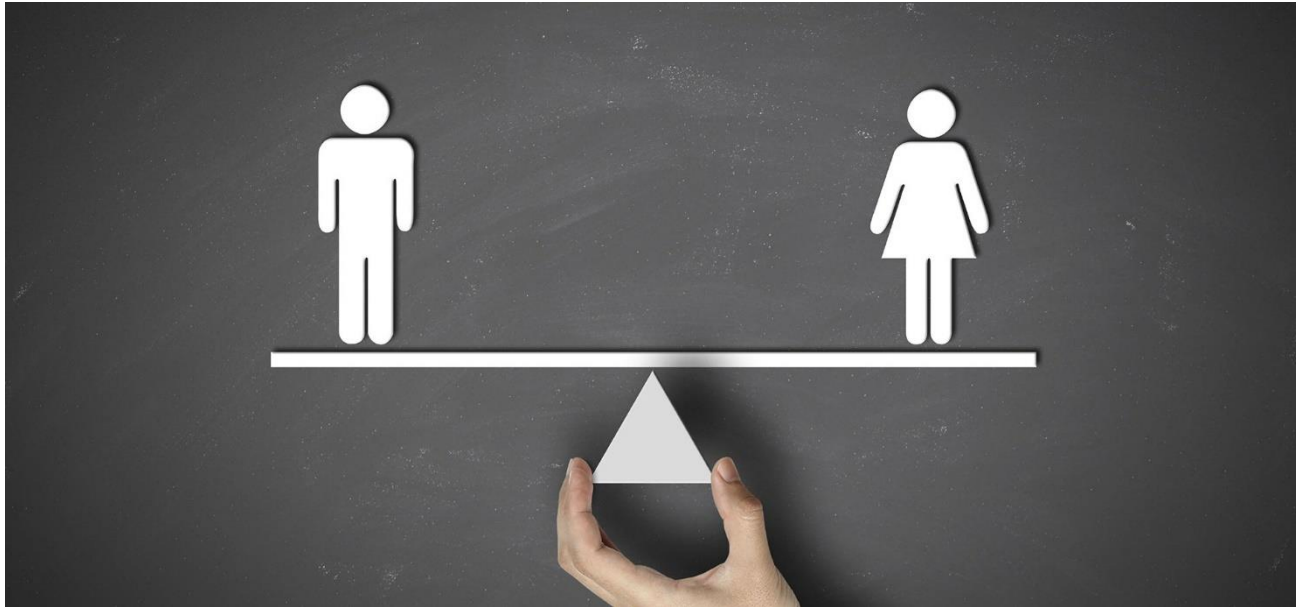


Image source: Safety4Sea (<https://safety4sea.com/cm-women-in-shipping-watch-expert-thinking-on-the-gender-perspective-in-leadership/>)

Chapter 4: Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs

Numerous obstacles that women entrepreneurs frequently face can hinder their success in the business world.

Getting funding is a major obstacle, with women experiencing differences in obtaining financial assistance when compared to men.

The overwhelming fear of failing is made worse by societal norms and the additional demands placed on female business owners.

Managing work and family obligations at the same time is another difficult task that calls for careful balancing.

Women may face gender prejudice in professional settings, which prevents them from taking advantage of important networking opportunities. It becomes a constant struggle to remove deeply rooted gender stereotypes that affect people's opinions of women's competence in the business world.

The obstacle that women entrepreneurs face to be taken seriously is arguably the most widespread. Women entrepreneurs frequently face bias and skepticism, which makes it necessary for them to continuously work to overcome these obstacles and establish their presence and expertise in the entrepreneurial space.

Learning activities

Activity 1: Planning the entry strategies to the international market

Encourage everyone in the group of X participants to take a moment to write on a board and reflect on their individual accomplishments and strengths throughout their entrepreneurial journey. After that, ask them to list any areas they feel still require work such as knowledge or skill gaps that they feel can be filled.

Activity 2: Role-playing scenario

Prepare to put yourself in the position of an entrepreneur! Participants will engage in role-playing exercises that mimic real-world challenges during this entertaining and interactive session. Everyone gets the opportunity to apply their problem-solving and communication skills in a supportive environment, from negotiating funding deals to navigating challenging networking situations. It's a practical approach to build self-assurance and pick up helpful techniques for overcoming typical obstacles faced by entrepreneurs.

Activity 3: Discussion forum

Create a discussion forum where people can post personal reflections, pictures or videos about gender equality in entrepreneurship. Urge them to reply to each other's posts and participate in discussions.

WOMENIN Training Course



Module 3

Digital enterprise skills empowerment & development

Module 3: Digital Enterprise Skills Empowerment & Development

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, leveraging digitalization has become paramount for the success and sustainability of businesses across industries. However, amidst this digital revolution, it is essential to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. Despite making significant strides in entrepreneurship, women continue to encounter barriers to accessing digital resources and leveraging them effectively for business growth. Therefore, empowering women entrepreneurs through tailored digitalization strategies is not only a matter of inclusivity but also a critical step towards their full potential and driving economic growth.

Learning objectives

The main objective of this module is to equip VET trainers with the essential knowledge and skills needed to support women entrepreneurs in managing resources and devising strategic plans effectively using digital tools. Upon completion, trainers will proficiently utilize digital resources to enhance the success of women-led businesses. This module provides comprehensive training in crucial aspects of navigating the digital landscape, including social media strategies, digital content creation, customer feedback analysis, cybersecurity, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques, content marketing, and online communication skills.

Educational content

Chapter 1: The importance of Digitalisation

Digitalization enables women entrepreneurs to expand their market reach, target specific customer segments, improve operational efficiency, and stay competitive in the rapidly evolving business landscape. By leveraging digital platforms, tools, and strategies, women entrepreneurs can enhance their business capabilities and tap into new opportunities. Furthermore, the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected businesses across the globe. To navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic, businesses have increasingly turned to digitalization as a means of adaptation and resilience. This shift has manifested in the adoption of remote work setups, utilization of online platforms for sales, and

implementation of digital marketing tactics.

Chapter 2: How digitalisation can benefit your business

Digitalization refers to the integration of digital technologies to transform business models and create new avenues for generating revenue and value. It entails transitioning towards a digital-centric business approach. The implementation of digitalization can yield significant advantages for any businesses, including those led by women. By harnessing digital technologies and the internet, female entrepreneurs can improve their access to financial services. Furthermore, leveraging digital tools can help women overcome skill and information gaps. Incorporating digital technology into programs aimed at female entrepreneurship and technical skill development facilitates more accessible program delivery, enabling women to participate in extensive in-person trainings that would otherwise be inaccessible. Additionally, online support programs address logistical challenges faced by women, providing training opportunities remotely. Moreover, advancements such as the Internet of Things (IoT) enable small-scale entrepreneurs to engage in international markets, fostering closer connections between suppliers, buyers, and sellers through innovative logistics solutions. This integration of technology into business operations enhances the potential for internationalization and company expansion. In particular, the use of social media and online platforms can benefit businesses regardless of gender. The integration of digital technology can spur innovation in products or services and broaden a business's customer base. As technology becomes increasingly accessible, more women can utilize it to overcome barriers to initiating and expanding their ventures. Technology serves as a tool to mitigate challenges stemming from social norms by facilitating communication and interaction. It enhances women's access to market insights and enables seamless communication across various segments of their enterprises, allowing for flexible working hours and remote work opportunities.

Chapter 3: Online Branding

Defined as “A technique in brand management that uses the internet as a medium to position a brand in the marketplace and enhance its competitive advantage” (Bhasin, 2021). Online branding refers to the process of establishing and promoting a business's identity and reputation through digital channels. It encompasses various strategies, including social media marketing, content creation, and engaging with online communities. One of the significant benefits of online branding for businesses and startups is its accessibility and affordability, especially through social media platforms that offer free marketing opportunities. Additionally, online branding can make a substantial impact by reaching a vast audience and driving brand awareness. Paid marketing opportunities further amplify visibility and reach.

Moreover, online branding enhances engagement and interaction with customers, fostering stronger relationships and loyalty. Furthermore, the integration of AI and chatbots in online branding strategies streamlines customer interactions, providing personalized experiences and improving efficiency. Overall, effective online branding is essential for businesses and startups to establish a strong digital presence, connect with their target audience, and drive growth.



Image source: Animate.mk (<https://animate.mk/marketingcommunications/>)

Chapter 4: Digital Tools

In the realm of digital branding, various tools and platforms empower businesses to craft compelling online identities. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter) offer versatile opportunities for creating engaging content through posts, stories, and live streams. Blogs provide a platform for in-depth storytelling and sharing valuable insights, enhancing brand authority and credibility. Podcasts allow businesses to connect with audiences on a deeper level through audio content, establishing thought leadership and fostering trust. Infographics are powerful visual tools for presenting complex information in a digestible format, increasing audience engagement and retention. Interactive elements such as quizzes and polls on social media platforms or dedicated websites enable businesses to gather valuable feedback and insights while boosting audience interaction. Additionally, newsletters serve as effective communication channels for sharing updates, promotions, and exclusive content directly with subscribers, nurturing long-term relationships and driving customer loyalty. By leveraging these digital tools strategically, businesses can effectively shape their online presence and

strengthen their brand identity. Here are some examples of digital tools for content creation across various categories:

- **Hootsuite:** A comprehensive social media management platform that allows scheduling posts, monitoring engagements, and analyzing performance across multiple social media channels.
- **Buffer:** An intuitive tool for scheduling and analyzing social media posts, offering features like content curation, analytics, and team collaboration.
- **Google Docs:** A cloud-based document editor that enables real-time collaboration, document sharing, and version control.
- **Microsoft Office Online:** Web-based versions of Microsoft Office tools like Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, facilitating collaborative document editing and sharing.
- **Canva:** An easy-to-use graphic design platform with a vast library of templates, stock photos, and design elements for creating visually appealing graphics, presentations, and social media posts.
- **Adobe Photoshop Express:** A simplified version of Adobe Photoshop, offering essential photo editing tools like cropping, resizing, filters, and basic adjustments for enhancing images.
- **Trello:** A flexible project management tool based on the Kanban methodology, allowing teams to organize tasks, collaborate, and track progress through customizable boards and cards.
- **Asana:** A versatile project management platform with features for task assignment, deadline tracking, team communication, and project visualization through timelines and calendars.

By utilising these digital tools effectively, businesses can streamline their content creation processes, enhance collaboration, and elevate their online branding efforts.

Chapter 5: Content Creation

Digital content creation presents invaluable opportunities for women-led startups to establish a strong online presence, connect with their target audience, and effectively communicate their brand message. By understanding their audience and the purpose behind their content, women entrepreneurs can tailor their messaging to resonate with their intended demographic, fostering deeper engagement and loyalty. It's essential to leverage a combination of technical and digital tools to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in content creation, ensuring that the content remains simple, clear, and accessible to all. Respecting creative commons licenses not only demonstrates ethical content practices but also encourages collaboration and community engagement. Additionally, integrating Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) into content strategy enables startups to track and evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts, ensuring alignment with business goals. To write compelling content, women entrepreneurs should focus on maintaining relevance to their brand and values while prioritizing simplicity, clarity,

accessibility, and direct alignment with their target audience's needs and interests. By adhering to these principles, women-led startups can effectively harness the power of digital content to drive brand awareness, engagement, and ultimately, business success.

Chapter 6: Customer Review

Harnessing customer reviews can be a powerful strategy for enhancing your company's performance and reputation. To effectively utilize this valuable feedback, it's crucial to aggregate all data in one centralized location, gathering reviews from various sources such as review sites and social media platforms.

Once collected, it's essential to clean the data, removing any irrelevant or junk information to ensure accuracy in analysis. Categorizing feedback into positive, negative, and neutral categories allows for better organisation and identification of patterns or themes. Analysing neutral and negative reviews provides insights into the root causes of customer dissatisfaction, enabling strategic action to address issues and improve customer experience. Planning future actions based on feedback ensures a proactive approach to addressing customer concerns and optimizing business processes. It's vital to inform your team about the findings and collaborate on implementing solutions. Investing in data analysis automated solutions, such as HubSpot, Integrate.io, Zoho Analytics, or Adverity, can streamline the process and accelerate decision-making, ultimately driving continuous improvement and customer satisfaction.

Chapter 7: Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is a fundamental strategy for improving a business's online visibility and driving organic traffic to its website. At its core, SEO revolves around three key factors: relevance, authority, and volume. Relevance pertains to aligning website content with users' search intent, ensuring that the information provided meets their needs and interests. Authority is established through authoritative sources with rich content, social signals, and backlinks, indicating credibility and trustworthiness to search engines. Volume refers to the monthly search volume generating traffic to the website, highlighting the potential reach and impact of optimized content. To effectively utilize SEO, businesses can start by brainstorming keyword ideas and relative terms relevant to their industry and target audience. Analyzing competitors' keywords provides insights into trending topics and areas for optimization. Creating lists of relevant topics and researching users' intent further informs content creation strategies. Leveraging keyword research tools like Google Keyword Planner, Moz, Ahrefs, and

SEMrush helps identify high-performing keywords and optimize content accordingly. Incorporating keywords strategically and ensuring that content matches the search intent of target keywords are critical for SEO success. Utilizing tools like On-Page SEO Checker (SEMrush) aids in optimizing content structure, meta tags, and other on-page elements. Ultimately, by creating unique, optimized, and high-quality content, businesses can enhance their online presence, attract more organic traffic, and ultimately drive business growth through effective SEO strategies.



Image source: Jasanidarsh3 on Medium (<https://jasanidarsh3.medium.com/briefing-several-fields-in-computer-science-d1c93598aacd>)

Chapter 8: Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity encompasses a range of practices and technologies designed to protect digital systems, networks, and data from cyber threats. In today's interconnected world, where businesses rely heavily on digital infrastructure, cybersecurity plays a vital role in safeguarding sensitive information, maintaining business continuity, and preserving customer trust. It is crucial for businesses to prioritize cybersecurity to mitigate the risks posed by cyberattacks, which can lead to data breaches, financial losses, and reputational damage.

The layers of cybersecurity include critical infrastructure security, ensuring the protection of national frameworks for security, economic health, and public safety. Network security encompasses both wired

and Wi-Fi networks, guarding against unauthorized access and data breaches. Application security focuses on securing software applications and user authentication processes. Cloud security involves encrypting data and configuring cloud environments to prevent unauthorized access. Information security, such as compliance with regulations like GDPR, ensures the protection of sensitive data. End-user education is essential for building awareness and promoting best practices among employees. Risk prevention and management involve implementing response measures to minimize disruptions and ensure business continuity in the event of a cyber incident. Storage security focuses on data resilience and protection against loss or corruption. Lastly, mobile device security involves implementing safety measures to prevent unauthorized access, malware, theft, and other threats to mobile devices used within the organization. By addressing these layers of cybersecurity, businesses can strengthen their defenses against cyber threats and protect their digital assets effectively.

Malware, short for malicious software, refers to any software specifically designed to disrupt, damage, or gain unauthorized access to computer systems or networks. Phishing, on the other hand, is a type of cyber attack where attackers impersonate legitimate entities to trick individuals into providing sensitive information such as passwords, credit card details, or personal data. Preventing cyberattacks such as malware and phishing requires a multi-faceted approach. Employing robust antivirus and antimalware software helps detect and remove malicious software from systems. Regularly updating operating systems, software applications, and security patches helps mitigate vulnerabilities that cybercriminals may exploit. Implementing email filtering and spam detection mechanisms helps identify and block phishing attempts before they reach users' inboxes. Additionally, educating employees about the signs of phishing attacks and the importance of vigilant cybersecurity practices, such as avoiding clicking on suspicious links or downloading attachments from unknown sources, is essential. By combining technical solutions with user awareness and proactive security measures, businesses can significantly reduce the risk of falling victim to malware and phishing attacks.

Learning activities

Activity 1. Online Branding: Create a Social Media Strategy

Choose one social media platform (e.g., Instagram, X) and develop a comprehensive strategy for promoting your business. Define your target audience, content themes, posting schedule, and engagement tactics. Use the principles of simplicity, clarity, accessibility, relevance, and branding to guide your strategy.

Activity 2. Utilising Customer Reviews: Conduct a Review Analysis

Gather customer reviews from multiple sources (e.g., your website, social media, review sites) and compile them into a single document. Clean the data by removing any irrelevant or duplicate reviews. Categorize the reviews into positive, negative, and neutral feedback. Analyze the reviews to identify common themes or areas for improvement. Develop an action plan based on your analysis to address any issues raised by customers.

Activity 3. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO): Keyword Research and Content Creation

Choose a topic relevant to your business and conduct keyword research using tools like Google Keyword Planner or SEMrush. Identify high-volume keywords related to your topic and incorporate them strategically into a piece of content (e.g., a blog post or webpage). Optimize the content structure, headings, meta tags, and images for SEO. Track the performance of your content over time using analytics tools.

Activity 4. Cybersecurity: Cybersecurity Risk Assessment

Conduct a cybersecurity risk assessment for your business. Identify potential threats and vulnerabilities across different layers of cybersecurity, such as network security, application security, and information security. Evaluate the likelihood and potential impact of each threat. Develop a risk management plan that outlines preventive measures, response strategies, and contingency plans. Implement security controls and regularly review and update your cybersecurity policies and procedures.

WOMENIN Training Course



Module 4

Internationalisation of women-led companies

Module 4: Internationalisation of women-led companies

Introduction

Nowadays, the internationalisation is a big driver of growth and success for women-led companies, especially in the European Union. In addition, in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the role that women entrepreneurs play in driving economic growth and innovation. However, despite their significant contributions, women-led companies still face numerous barriers when it comes to internationalisation. Understanding and addressing these barriers is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and prosperous entrepreneurial landscape in the EU.

In this module, we develop the significance of expanding women-led businesses beyond national borders, exploring both the opportunities and challenges inherent in this process. By equipping VET trainers with the knowledge and tools to support women-led businesses in their internationalisation efforts, we can contribute to building a more gender-inclusive and globally competitive entrepreneurial ecosystem in the European Union.

Learning objectives

The specific objectives of this module are to equip VET trainers with the knowledge and skills necessary to support the internationalisation of women-led companies effectively. Trainers will gain insights into the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in expanding their businesses globally, learn strategies to overcome these obstacles, and develop the ability to provide tailored guidance and mentorship throughout the internationalisation process. By fostering a gender-inclusive approach and promoting a global mindset, trainers will be empowered to facilitate the success of women-led businesses in the European Union and beyond.

Educational content

Chapter 1: Internationalisation of women-led companies

The internationalisation of companies refers to the process by which a company expands its operations and activities beyond national borders, seeking access to new markets and opportunities in the global arena (Study Smarter, 2019). This strategy can take various forms, ranging from exporting products and services to opening subsidiaries or establishing strategic alliances in foreign markets.

For women-led companies, internationalisation represents a unique opportunity to boost their growth and increase their competitiveness in a global context. Often, these companies face additional

challenges in their local markets, such as gender discrimination, limited access to finance, and smaller networking. Internationalisation can offer them access to new resources, wider markets and greater risk diversification (Ilia, 2021).

Among the key benefits of internationalisation for women entrepreneurs are the expansion of the scope of their business, the increase in visibility and recognition at the international level, the possibility of accessing new sources of financing and capital, as well as the learning of new skills and knowledge in diverse cultural environments.

In fact, these are the main advantages of internationalising the company:

- Use either all or a large part of the production capacity. In the case of highly seasonal products, for example, internationalisation makes it possible to sell the product in low season in other countries with the opposite climate.
- Access to a wider market. It allows to extend the life cycle of the product because while in some markets a product might be in its mature or decline stage, in others it might be in introduction or growth. This sometimes allows to achieve scale economies, cost savings, negotiation advantages, lengthening the product's life cycle...
- It improves the image (internal and external) of the company. From a marketing perspective, the presence in several countries reinforces the company's image with both domestic and international customers.
- Diversification of risks.
- Continuous learning.

Chapter 2: Analysis of the context to internationalize women-led companies

Entering a different market may seem like a simple task, but there are several aspects that must be investigated and evaluated in order to be able to make the right decision and internationalize the company successfully. In this section, we will delve into the process of analysing the context for the internationalisation of women-led companies, providing VET trainers with the necessary tools to properly understand and evaluate opportunities and challenges in global markets.

To begin with this process, it is essential to understand the global and regional trends that impact the internationalisation of women-led companies. This involves analysing demographic, economic, commercial, etc. to identify areas of potential growth and demand for products and services.

For VET trainers, it is crucial to understand how to conduct a thorough analysis of the international environment surrounding women-led companies, as this provides a solid foundation to guide students in their business internationalisation process. By equipping VET trainers with this educational approach to analyse the context of the internationalisation of women-led companies, their ability to guide students in their business internationalisation process is strengthened, thus promoting greater diversity and equity in the international business field (Nextoport Advisors, 2022). This is an educational approach to carry out this analysis:

- **Identification of relevant market trends:** It is essential to begin by exploring and analysing current trends in international markets that are relevant to the sector in which the women-led company operates. This may include researching demand for specific products or services, economic growth in specific regions, and emerging consumer trends (Market research and competitive analysis, 2024). The VET trainer should encourage active research and critical analysis of relevant information sources, such as market reports and sector studies.
- **Assessment of PESTEL factors** (political, economic, social, technological, ecological and legal): It is essential to help students understand how these factors, such as trade policies, international regulations and currency fluctuations, can affect the viability of a company's internationalisation. VET trainers should encourage discussion about how these factors can create opportunities or challenges for women-led companies and how associated risks can be mitigated.
- **Analysis of competition and market demand:** It is essential to encourage students to research and analyse international competitors in the specific sector they are interested in entering. This involves assessing the competitive position of existing companies, identifying potential market gaps and understanding customer preferences and needs in international markets.
- **Assessment of barriers and opportunities for women entrepreneurs:** It is important to guide students to identify the specific barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in the internationalisation process, such as limited access to funding or the lack of business support networks. VET trainers can encourage reflection on how these barriers can be overcome through inclusive strategies and the exploitation of specific opportunities for women entrepreneurs in international markets.

Chapter 3: Specific challenges in internationalisation for women-led companies

In identifying the specific challenges in internationalisation for women-led companies, it is crucial to recognise the diversity of obstacles these women entrepreneurs face in expanding their businesses on a

global scale. One of the main barriers that has been consistently observed is the difficulty in accessing cross-border financing. This obstacle not only limits the growth of women-led companies, but also perpetuates gender inequalities in access to capital, a problem that VET trainers need to proactively address in their training.

In addition, it is essential to consider the cultural and linguistic challenges that may arise from internationalising a woman-led company. These entrepreneurs can face cultural differences in target markets that require deep understanding and strategic adaptation. Therefore, VET trainers should provide entrepreneurs with tools and skills to effectively navigate these differences and promote intercultural competence as an integral part of their training.

Another specific challenge lies in adapting to commercial and legal regulations in international markets. Women-led companies may encounter regulatory barriers that vary significantly from country to country, hindering global expansion. Therefore, VET trainers must empower female entrepreneurs to understand and comply with legal and regulatory requirements in different international contexts, providing them with the knowledge and confidence necessary to successfully face these challenges.

Additionally, the difficulty in accessing global networks of contacts and business partners represents another major obstacle in the internationalisation of women-led companies. Often, these entrepreneurs face exclusions or limitations in male-dominated business networks, which can hamper their ability to establish strong international business relationships. Therefore, VET trainers should empower women entrepreneurs in building effective networks and negotiating strategic alliances at the global level, thus encouraging their active and equal participation in the international market.

Chapter 4: Effective strategies for the internationalisation of women-led companies

To achieve a successful internationalisation of women-led companies, it is essential to have effective strategies that address the specific challenges faced by these companies in global markets. Here are some of these strategies that VET trainers can pass on to their students to help guide female entrepreneurs in this process:

- **Comprehensive market research:** Starting the internationalisation process with a thorough investigation of the target market is essential. Educators should teach female entrepreneurs to

analyse market trends, identify competition, and understand consumer preferences in the target country or region (Market research and competitive analysis, 2024).

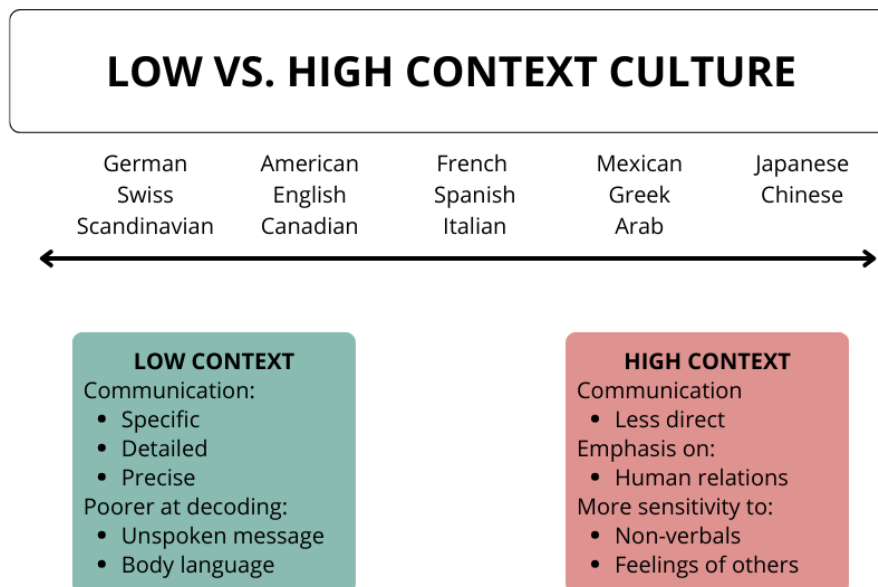
- **Development of strategic alliances:** It is important to encourage the creation of strategic alliances with local partners in international markets as they can facilitate entry and adaptation to the new business environment. Trainers should teach entrepreneurs to identify and build strong relationships with local business partners who can provide key knowledge and resources.
- **Product or service adaptation:** It is essential to adapt the product or service offered to the needs and preferences of the target market. VET educators must train women entrepreneurs to make adjustments in their supply, taking into account the cultural, regulatory and demand differences of the international market.
- **Use of digital technology and platforms:** In the digital age, leveraging technology and digital platforms can be a powerful tool for international expansion. Trainers should teach entrepreneurs to use digital tools for the promotion, distribution and management of their products or services in global markets.
- **Access to international financing:** It's important to get funding for international expansion can be a challenge for women entrepreneurs. Trainers should guide women entrepreneurs on the different financing options available at the international level, including investment funds, international business loans and specific financial support programmes for women entrepreneurs.
- **Risk management and regulatory compliance:** Trainers should raise awareness among women entrepreneurs about the risks associated with internationalisation, such as financial, legal and operational risks. Empowering entrepreneurs in risk management and regulatory compliance in international markets will help minimise obstacles and ensure the long-term success of their companies abroad.
- **Cultivate a global network of contacts:** Fostering the building of a strong and diverse network of contacts at an international level can provide women entrepreneurs with access to resources, collaboration opportunities and invaluable support. Trainers must teach entrepreneurs to participate in networking events, trade shows and online platforms to expand their network of contacts globally.

Chapter 5: Cultural adaptation and global competence

In order to meet the objectives of the training course and to provide VET trainers with the necessary tools to support the internationalisation of women-led companies, it is essential to address cultural adaptation and global competence as critical aspects of this process. This section examines the

importance of understanding and navigating cultural differences in international markets, as well as developing the ability to successfully adapt to diverse global environments.

Firstly, it is essential to highlight the relevance of cultural adaptations to the success of women-led companies in the international arena. VET trainers need to understand that each market has its own rules, values and business practices, and that the ability to adapt to these cultural differences can make the difference between success and failure in a company's global expansion. Therefore, the need to develop skills of cultural sensitivity and empathy is emphasised to understand the perspectives and expectations of customers, business partners and employees in different cultural contexts. It should be kept in mind that there are cultures of high and low context, and that in each of them the communication and working styles are different (Navigator, 2022):



Practical strategies for cultural adaptation and global competence should also be explored. VET trainers will teach to identify and anticipate key cultural differences that can influence the business strategy, from communication and marketing to talent negotiation and management. Concrete examples of companies that have successfully adapted to different cultures and markets will be presented, highlighting the effective strategies and practices they employed to overcome cultural challenges and build strong relationships with clients and international partners.

In addition, the importance of global competition will be addressed as a fundamental skill for women-led companies looking to expand internationally. VET trainers will teach women entrepreneurs how to foster a global mindset among female entrepreneurs, promoting curiosity, openness to change and the

ability to learn from new experiences and cultural perspectives. It will highlight the importance of continuing education and professional development in building global competencies, as well as the need to leverage available networks and resources to broaden the international vision and reach of women-led companies.

Learning activities

Activity 1. Research on internationalisation trends

Research and collect information on current internationalisation trends in women-led companies in different regions of the world. This may include growth statistics, further expansion sectors, used market entry strategies, and outstanding success stories.

Activity 2. PESTEL analysis for internationalisation

Perform a PESTEL analysis for a specific international market in which a women-led company is considering expanding. To do so, analyse all of the following aspects of the new target market: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Ecological and Legal.

POLITICAL
ECONOMIC
SOCIAL
TECHNOLOGICAL
ECOLOGICAL
LEGAL

Activity 3. Planning the entry strategies to the international market.

Develop a detailed plan for the entry into the international market of a company led by women. You can focus on a specific target market and develop strategies to adapt products or services, identify distribution channels, and build relationships with local customers and partners.

Activity 4. Comparison of communication styles in high context and low context countries

Research and compare the style of communication in a country of high context and another of low context. To do so, choose countries that represent these two types of contexts, such as Japan (high context) and Germany (under context).

WOMENIN Training Course



Module 5

Resource management and strategic planning

Module 5: Resource Management & Strategic Planning

Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of entrepreneurship, particularly within the context of the European Union, the demand for a more inclusive and equitable approach has never been more pronounced. This call for inclusivity extends beyond the conventional realms of technical and conceptual aspects of entrepreneurship; it encompasses the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. Recognizing this imperative, Module 5 of this training course, titled "Resource Management and Strategic Planning," aims to empower trainers with the essential tools to navigate the world of resource management and strategic planning in the entrepreneurial journey of women.

Learning objectives

The primary goal of this module is to equip VET trainers with a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted aspects of resource management, including time, personnel, bureaucracy, and finance, coupled with the strategic planning imperative for ensuring business success. This strategic focus aims to transcend conventional training approaches and instill trainers with the capacity to address the specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. Through this educational program, trainers will not only gain profound insights into the hurdles and opportunities encountered by female entrepreneurs but will also develop essential competencies to effectively transmit this knowledge.

Educational content

Chapter 1. Time management and work-life conciliation

Navigating the demanding landscape of entrepreneurship requires a strategic approach to time management, coupled with a keen understanding of the complexities associated with harmonizing work and personal life. This chapter holds significant importance within the context of empowering women entrepreneurs. Recognizing the unique challenges they face, we delve into proven strategies and practical insights that not only optimize time utilisation but also foster a sense of equilibrium between professional ambitions and personal well-being.

The foundations of effective time management and task prioritisation techniques

Quoting the title phrase from Stephen Richards Covey's book, *First Things First*, before we begin to consider effective time management in an entrepreneurial environment, it is important to establish some basic principles that should always accompany us in our pursuit of this goal. In expecting satisfactory and long-lasting results, we must be aware of the need to invest our resources, attention, effort, and time, without which we cannot expect to achieve the desired results. Only by achieving the right mental attitude, working regularly to change our habits, and trying to put good time management methods into practice on a daily basis, we can achieve a measurable result. Learning the right techniques, implementing them into our daily routine, and applying them in the right way, although demanding, is the only effective way of self-improvement.

The second premise, on which the following part of the course will be based, is to organize our tasks according to their importance rather than urgency. Action dictated by the paradigm of urgency is a kind of mental trap that, while offering an illusory sense of satisfaction and self-fulfillment, will ultimately slow down the pursuit of our goals. A key first step, therefore, will be to refocus on prioritizing tasks and challenges of importance.

A simple, yet very powerful idea that aligns perfectly with this approach is **the two-minute rule**. Its working principle is also not complicated - if your next activity can be done in under two minutes, do it right away. The only thing that you need to decide here is if you are going to do this task at all. If not, it can be discarded. If so, postponing, organizing, and managing many of such tasks, which will inevitably pile up if not addressed immediately, will take more of your time than actually resolving them. People who decided to give this method a try were often surprised at how many of their tasks belonged to this category. As a result of utilizing this technique, you will end up with more free time available, which you can then either devote to focusing on the more important tasks or use it as quality relaxation time, which is also a crucial part of any efficient work routine.

Optimizing productivity and achieving work-life conciliation

One of the most important terms to get familiar with, when it comes to the optimization of our performance, is the term “deep work”. Coined by Cal Newport and discussed extensively in his book under the same title, it can be described as a specific state of our free-of-distraction mind, that in this deep concentration mode can work with its full potential. In this state, we are able to create, improve our skills and achieve performance, that “shallow work” (the opposite of the “deep work”, conducting logistical, easy-to-replicate tasks) won’t enable. Several rules exist, which introduction into our lifestyle

should make it easier for us to enter this state and in this module, we will focus on two most important ones, especially relevant in modern times: 1. Reduce digital distractions and 2. Embrace boredom.

Most of us probably noticed that online networking tools and apps developed to help us with establishing new business connections or staying up to date with the newest industry revelations are not only taking up a big part of our time but also often draw us towards themselves even if we don't need them at the moment. After long periods of such functioning, our brains become "re-wired" to seek these experiences, to choose them over any difficult task or challenge. A dangerous effect of this phenomenon is an inability to concentrate, to enter the aforementioned state of deep work, to put aside all the distractions, and focus solely on the task at hand. This is why it's so crucial to be aware of these mental traps and try to actively resist them. One of the effective methods of dealing with that issue is carefully selecting the applications we decide to use. Cal Newport suggests the implementation of **The Craftsman Approach to Tool Selection**. Its idea is simple - pick the key features that make success and happiness in your career and private life. Analyze whether adopting a tool will have a significant difference in the examined factors, on the positive or negative side. Thanks to introducing this method in your personal and professional life, you might notice a big improvement in your ability to focus and stay concentrated for a longer period of time.

The last thing that we want to discuss in this chapter, but also crucial for maintaining peak performance, productivity, and work-life balance is embracing boredom, and being aware of the potential of doing nothing. While this idea might seem counterintuitive at first, we can't ignore the power of letting our minds idle, rest, refresh, and regenerate. This approach is especially relevant in modern days when our minds are not only expected to produce valuable outputs daily but are also constantly flooded with overwhelming amounts of information. There are many solutions to this challenge, some of them even include a complete and literal escape from the current duties and tasks, to spend time with nature, unplugged from any kind of communication devices, but always with the goal of improving professional performance. However, a much more universal and easier-to-apply method of handling this pressure is setting one rule - after your workday or a specific time of the day, reject all the work-related thoughts and clear your mind from them. In case of need more time to complete your tasks, you can extend your work time, but after completing them, let your mind fully cut off from professional issues. This simple change, if implemented correctly, is expected to greatly reduce your stress, increase the amount of quality leisure time and overall well-being as well as positively benefit your work performance and ability to reach your goals.

Chapter 2: Personnel management

‘Great vision without great people is irrelevant.’ These words by James Collins, an American expert on business management and career growth, are a perfect embodiment of the issues discussed in this chapter. Below, we will focus on the importance of proper handling of the team of company employees, from their acquisition process to managing their further work. All that is to ensure the creation of a friendly, understanding work environment, that will benefit everyone involved, while enabling the whole company to work smoothly and achieve great results.

Talent acquisition

The first, and often the most important step, in building a team for the company, is choosing the right candidates for the vacant positions. It is a crucial part, that to a great extent will decide if the company will be successful, or if it will fail. John Zillmer, the CEO of Allied Waste, who achieved a 67% growth of the value of the company in the first 18 months of his tenure, says *I think the fastest way to improve a company's performance is to improve the talent of the workforce, whether it is the ultimate leader or someone leading a divisional organization. It just energizes the company and leads to positive things*. This is why the first part of this chapter will be devoted to a specific way of acquiring ideal candidates for their role, with the support of the “A-method”.

Simply put, the A-method is a set of rules for the person responsible for the hire, that increases the chance to choose the right person for the position - a so-called “A-player” (a person highly-qualified, devoted to their work and valuing it above anything else, fitting the job very well both due to their skills and knowledge, but also thanks to alignment of their values and perspectives with the company’s mission)

The A method consists of **four** key elements:

Scorecard: a set of your expectations towards the interviewee, a list of specifications for the outcomes, to identify them as satisfactory. The scorecard should include such characteristics as **Mission** to accomplish - it should be clear and concise; **Outcomes** expected to be achieved by the candidate, not their activities but things that they must get done; **Competencies** that they should possess, their traits ensuring both cultural and behavioral fit;

Source: this step encourages maintaining a list of candidates ready to be employed when a specific opportunity appears;

Select: conducting a series of extensive interviews with the goal of gathering detailed knowledge about the interviewee, to fill the scorecard and make an informed decision;

Sell: persuading a desired candidate to join your team, leveraging the fact of their fit to the company, offering freedom in making decisions, attractive salary, or fun activities at work

Employee management

The environment we all function in is constantly changing. Change is inevitable and the best thing we can do, is adapt to it, it's the only way to thrive in this ever-reshaping landscape. The labour market isn't an exception. The recent COVID-19 pandemic showed us all the power of remote work. But the idea of providing employees with more freedom than in a classic office work setting isn't new. A great example of utilizing the potential lying in autonomous employees is the former CEO of Meddius company, Jeff Gunther, and the experiment that he conducted in his company at the beginning of 2009. The idea was simple - employees didn't have to come to work and go back home at specific times. They didn't have to stay at the office at all. The only thing that mattered to Jeff was the results.

As long as you were getting your job done, there was no difference, where, when, or how you did it. This approach is called ROWE - a results-only work environment. Jeff's experiment was a success, to say the least - over the 3 months of its duration team's productivity rose, stress declined. In the end, this workflow has been adopted permanently in Meddius. As the CEO said, *management isn't about walking around and seeing if people are in their offices. It's about creating conditions for people to do their best work.* Money can be a motivator only to some extent, but once an individual's and their family's needs are fulfilled, other values come to the fore. Freedom and autonomy are these things, and in many cases, especially for employees focusing on creative, innovative work, providing them with possibly comfortable work conditions, will result in the team performing much better, than when they would be working in a restricted, stressful environment, motivated only by the vision of getting paid.

Chapter 3. Bureaucracy and financing

Modern entrepreneurial activities are strictly regulated by various laws and rules, and to become a successful businesswoman, it is crucial to get a good understanding of them. This chapter will be devoted to finding your way through a complex world of entrepreneurial regulations and letting you gain essential knowledge about managing your company from a financial standpoint, which is necessary to thrive in this environment.

Business bureaucracy

Business bureaucracy is a set of rules that govern the functioning of a given enterprise or organization. Their complexity depends on the size of the company, but they always serve similar purposes - regulating various procedures, employees' responsibilities, internal and external policies, etc. Correctly applied bureaucracy in a company can lead to positive effects, but too vast and restricting rules can hinder the progress of your company.

The following tips will let you minimize unnecessary bureaucracy in your organization:

1. **Stay focused on results.** Don't put regulations and rules above productivity and creating comfortable workspace for your employees. Value results rather than procedures.
2. **Optimize your workflow.** Look for creative solutions to minimize the amount of time you are spending on repetitive, easy-to-automate tasks.
3. **Give your employees autonomy.** Increase the productivity of your team by granting them more freedom in making decisions and striving for their best results.

Financing

As part of this segment of the course, we provide you with important information regarding financing approaches for the growing business. The aim is to equip you with a detailed inventory of possible funding sources that will allow you to gain access to the necessary resources for setting up your business and for strategic investments as your company grows.

Source	Description	Characteristics
The founders	Investment from founders, including cash, time, and resources.	Demonstrates commitment; limited scalability without external funds.
The 3Fs (family, friends, fools)	Early-stage funding from close networks based on faith in the idea or entrepreneur.	Quick cash, limited compared to larger investment options.
Angels/informals	Investment from experienced entrepreneurs offering capital, networking, and sector knowledge.	Effective for early-stage and seed funding.
Crowdfunding	Funding from a large group of	Raises public awareness;

	people online, often through platforms like Kickstarter or Indiegogo.	success depends on product appeal.
Subsidies	Financial support from government programs or organizations aiming to stimulate entrepreneurship or innovation.	Relevant across various business stages; subject to specific criteria.
Venture capital/private equity	Funding from professional investment firms for high-growth companies, providing capital and expertise.	Valuable for scaling rapidly with proven market viability.
Debt financing: the bank	Loans from banks for stable businesses with collateral, lower risk, and the ability to repay.	Useful for businesses with collateral; limited scalability.

Chapter 4. The importance of strategic planning for business success

According to Patrick Bet-David in the book, “Your Next Five Moves. Master the Art of Business Strategy”, success in business world depends to a great extent on your ability to think forward, to plan ahead. To always think several moves ahead and be prepared to react to the effects your previous action had on your own situation and the environment. Below, we present a set of tips to help you to become a strategist, the 5 Moves Plan, proposed first by Patrick Bet-David in his book *Your Next Five Moves. Master the Art of Business Strategy*:

- 1. Move 1: Master knowing yourself.** Start by asking yourself questions: who am I, what do I want to achieve? Well-developed self-awareness is the key to laying the foundations for all your future endeavors, as alignment of your goals with undertaken efforts will always fuel you toward reaching them.
- 2. Move 2: Master the ability to reason.** Learn how to process issues and take responsibility for your actions. Don’t hesitate to admit your mistakes, and make sure that you know how to prevent them

in the future. Process faced issues and begin concluding sentence with the word “I”, to find out what could you do better.

3. **Move 3: Master building the right team.** You can’t win on your own. As mentioned before, you need a good, A-team. But instead of focusing solely on the value you get from them, ask yourself: “What can I give them to improve their lives?”
4. **Move 4: Master strategy to scale.** Capitalize your business, demand the best from your employees, create momentum by compressing time frames without losing quality, discover crucial formulas for your business and transfer your knowledge, be prepared for competition’s attack, know the vulnerabilities of your company.
5. **Move 5: Master power plays.** Identify the next company that you want to challenge and be prepared for various difficulties along the way. The potential reward is worth it. Leverage social media. Constantly study interactions between entities, to be able to recognize their motivations.

Learning activities

Activity 1: Practicing 2-minute rule.

Think about your daily tasks that belong to the 2-minutes category. How many of them did you count? Starting tomorrow, try to address immediately as many of them as you can, and at the end of the day check how much time did it save you.

Activity 2: Preparing for the interviews.

Imagine a scenario where you are hiring for a critical role in a fictional company. Identify the core criteria using the A-Method (Scorecard). Prepare a set of questions for a mock interview, emphasizing Mission, Outcomes, and Competencies.

Activity 3: Finding your money source.

Reflect on the financing sources mentioned in Chapter 3. Choose one source that resonates with your idea and write down why you chose this method. Consider the characteristics and potential benefits of the chosen financing method in the context of your business idea or hypothetical venture.

Activity 4. Think about a 5 Moves Plan and answer these questions in its context:

1. **Self-Reflection:** List three personal or professional goals. Assess how they align with your skills and aspirations.

2. **Learn from Mistakes:** Identify a recent challenge. Write down what you learned, how you can prevent similar issues, and what improvements you'd make.
3. **Team Building:** Imagine enhancing your team's well-being. List three actions you could take to improve their work lives.
4. **Scaling Strategy:** Think about your business. Envision its growth. Outline two steps to capitalize on opportunities and scale.

Activity 5. Case study: Sara Blakely - Mastering Resource Management

Background: Sara Blakely, founder of Spanx, exemplifies resourceful entrepreneurship. Starting as a sales professional, she successfully navigated challenges to build a multimillion-dollar undergarment empire.

Key elements:

1. **Time management and work-life balance:** Balancing a full-time job while developing Spanx in off-hours showcased Blakely's effective time management, highlighting dedication to entrepreneurial goals.
2. **Talent acquisition and team building:** Blakely's success lies in strategic talent acquisition. By assembling a team aligned with her vision, she enhanced Spanx's capabilities and fueled its growth.
3. **Bureaucracy and financing:** Blakely adeptly handled business complexities, demonstrating wise resource utilization and skillful financial management in Spanx's early stages.
4. **Strategic planning:** Blakely's strategic moves, including capitalizing on market demand and expanding globally, contributed to Spanx's great success.

Impact and lessons: Sara Blakely's journey imparts crucial lessons in time management, talent acquisition, financial acumen, and strategic planning. Aspiring entrepreneurs can draw inspiration from her resourceful approach and ability to overcome challenges, learning to navigate their entrepreneurial path effectively.

WOMENIN Training Course



Module 6

Inclusive language and effective communication

Module 6: Inclusive Language & Effective Communication

Introduction

Language holds the remarkable power to bring people together and create divisions amongst us. The Sapir–Whorf hypothesis (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, n.d) or linguistic relativity hypothesis, has been a subject of extensive study in academic circles since the 1950s, exploring how language shapes our thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes toward reality. More recently, scholars have investigated the interconnection between language, communication, business, organisational structure, and stakeholder engagement, considering aspects such as Diversity & Inclusion Management and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategies.

In this context, language is scrutinised as a pivotal factor in constructing a diverse and sustainable workforce that flourishes within an inclusive corporate environment, fostering tolerance and consideration for others. The importance of inclusive communication and the use of neutral language has drawn the attention of DE&I experts and professionals in various fields, including public relations, human resources (HR), corporate communications, management, and governmental institutions. However, despite increasing awareness, the concept and practical implementation of neutral and inclusive communication often lack clear guidance.

Within this evolving narrative, our focus extends to a critical facet: the influence of language on women's entrepreneurship in the European Union (EU). Language is not just a tool for conveying ideas; it is a linchpin in constructing a workforce that thrives within inclusive corporate environments, fostering tolerance and consideration. The lens through which we examine this phenomenon encompasses not only D&I Management but also extends to encompass vital aspects such as Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategies.

As we traverse this module, we confront the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis as it intertwines with contemporary realities, addressing language's role in creating environments that welcome, respect, and consider diverse perspectives. Unit by unit, we navigate the complex terrain of inclusive language, exploring its definition, significance, and practical implementation. Our module unfolds with an

exploration of the challenges and gaps hindering the effective deployment of inclusive language, acknowledging the barriers that must be dismantled for progress.

The module concludes by offering concrete solutions, displaying various forms of inclusive language applicable in the working environment and women's entrepreneurship circles. From gender-neutral terms to diverse representation and flexible language on family matters, these actionable strategies empower organisations to contribute to a more supportive and empowering environment.

Specific objectives

Trainers engaging with this module will embark on a developmental journey, cultivating the skills and knowledge necessary to deliver impactful inclusive language training within their network.

Firstly, trainers will delve into becoming familiar with inclusive language concepts, gaining a profound understanding of their relevance in fostering D&I within corporate settings. This foundational knowledge will serve as a bedrock for effectively guiding participants. Demonstrating practical applications is a key focus, as trainers develop proficiency in identifying and implementing inclusive communication strategies. The goal is to offer tangible examples tailored to corporate contexts, ensuring that participants can readily apply these principles in their professional communication.

Facilitating discussions on unconscious bias emerges as another crucial skill. Trainers will demonstrate their ability to guide participants through conversations on unconscious bias in language, providing practical tools and strategies for individuals to identify and mitigate biases in their communication. Also, ensuring accessibility in training delivery becomes pivotal, with trainers developing skills to make training materials and methods accessible to individuals with diverse abilities, thus promoting inclusivity in learning environments.

The promotion of diverse representation in all corporate communication materials is a tangible goal. Trainers will advocate for and demonstrate the importance of showcasing diverse voices, fostering a more inclusive narrative within the company. Lastly, trainers will focus on integrating inclusive language practices into everyday corporate communication, fostering a culture where diverse perspectives are not only acknowledged but celebrated.

By achieving these objectives, trainers will be well-prepared to lead impactful inclusive language training sessions within their companies, contributing to a more inclusive, respectful, and diverse corporate culture.

Educational content

Chapter 1: What is inclusive language?

According to the European Parliament, “Gender-neutral language is a generic term covering the use of non-sexist language, inclusive language or gender-fair language. The purpose of gender-neutral language is to avoid word choices which may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm. Using gender-fair and inclusive language also helps reduce gender stereotyping, promotes social change and contributes to achieving gender equality” (Gender-Neutral Language in the European Parliament, 2018).

Inclusive communication, as defined by The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, is an approach that aims to involve as many individuals as possible in interactions while recognising the varied ways people perceive and express themselves. This approach encourages the utilisation of all available communication methods to facilitate mutual understanding. Inclusive language, within this framework, encompasses expressions that reflect respect, devoid of bias, assumptions, and stereotypes.

The goal of using inclusive language is to create an environment that is welcoming, respectful, and considerate of diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and identities. This involves selecting words and phrases that are neutral, respectful, and affirming, and it often requires staying informed about evolving societal norms and language preferences to ensure that communication remains inclusive and sensitive to diverse audiences. (Gender Inclusive Language, 2021)

Chapter 2: Inclusive language and its importance in women’s entrepreneurial endeavors

Recognising the significant impact of language on shaping our perceptions and attitudes, let's dive into how inclusive language plays a crucial role in creating a supportive and empowering environment tailored for women entrepreneurs.

Inclusive language acts as a powerful catalyst, breaking down barriers that might hinder the progress of women in entrepreneurship. By deliberately avoiding exclusionary or biased terms, it fosters an environment where diversity is not just acknowledged but celebrated. (The diversity style guide, 2019)

Within this inclusive framework, we witness the development of a culture centered around collaboration and respect, two essential elements for the success of women in entrepreneurship. Inclusive language becomes the means through which these crucial values are not only communicated but deeply embedded in the entrepreneurial community.

By breaking down barriers, inclusive language becomes a guiding light that invites women entrepreneurs into a space where their ideas, skills, and contributions are not just acknowledged but celebrated. It serves as a bridge, connecting individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences, creating an environment where every voice is not just heard but valued.

Furthermore, the impact of inclusive language extends beyond communication; it becomes a catalyst for promoting diversity within the entrepreneurial landscape. The intentional choice of words creates an inclusive tapestry that reflects the richness of varied perspectives, making the entrepreneurial journey accessible and welcoming to women from all walks of life).



Image source: Adobe Stock (https://stock.adobe.com/cy_en/images/workshop-talk-workers-people-are-sitting-at-negotiating-table-vector-collective-thinking-and-brainstorming-company-information-analytics-vector-illustration/483803239)

Chapter 3: Main barriers and gaps

Addressing inclusive language in the working environment and in women's entrepreneurship circles involves overcoming various barriers and filling critical gaps. Some of the main challenges that need attention are addressed below.

Navigating the challenges of inclusive language in the working environment and women entrepreneurship reveals key areas where improvements are needed. One significant challenge is the use of gendered language and stereotypes, which reinforces traditional gender roles and creates a less inclusive environment. To overcome this, there's a need for a conscious shift in language choices and an effort to avoid perpetuating stereotypes; essential steps in overcoming ingrained gender biases.

Another challenge lies in the lack of gender diversity in leadership and decision-making positions. Limited representation of women can influence language policies and communication strategies, highlighting the necessity of promoting gender diversity in these roles for a more inclusive perspective. Addressing unconscious bias is crucial, as biases can unintentionally seep into communication, leading to exclusion. To bridge this gap, training programs and awareness campaigns are essential, empowering individuals to recognise and mitigate unconscious biases in language.

Insufficient education on the importance of inclusive language poses a barrier, emphasising the need for education and training programs to empower individuals to use inclusive language effectively.

The inconsistent implementation of inclusive policies within organisations is another challenge. Even with policies in place, their inconsistent application can hinder effectiveness. This emphasises the need for ensuring consistent application through monitoring, feedback mechanisms, and organisational support.

Oversights related to intersectionality represent a challenge, potentially leading to unintentional exclusion. The gap here is in the need for a comprehensive approach that considers diverse aspects of individuals' identities for truly inclusive language practices.

Resistance to change serves as a notable barrier, as reluctance to adopt new language practices may stem from organisational culture or individual resistance. The gap calls for the establishment of a culture

that values diversity and provides clear incentives for adopting inclusive language, overcoming resistance effectively.

Limited accessibility in communication is a barrier, as methods may not be accessible to everyone. To address this, there's a need to ensure that communication platforms and materials are accessible to individuals with diverse abilities. (NICE Comparative & Best Practices Report, 2023).

Inadequate representation in communication materials is another challenge, contributing to a sense of exclusion. The gap here is in actively seeking and promoting diverse representation in all communication materials.

Finally, the inadequate measurement and evaluation of inclusive language initiatives pose a barrier. The gap underscores the importance of developing measurable indicators and regularly assessing the impact of inclusive language efforts for continuous improvement.

By addressing these challenges and gaps, we can enhance the use of inclusive language in the working environment and within women-led enterprises, fostering a more supportive, diverse, and equitable atmosphere.

Chapter 4: Forms of inclusive language in the working environment and in women's entrepreneurship circles

In the working environment and specifically within the context of women-led entrepreneurship, adopting inclusive language involves being mindful of the words and expressions used to ensure that communication is respectful, supportive, and welcoming to individuals from diverse backgrounds. Here are some forms of inclusive language relevant to the working environment and women's entrepreneurship:

- **Gender-Neutral Terms:** Use gender-neutral terms whenever possible to avoid reinforcing stereotypes. For example, use "businessperson" instead of "businessman" or "businesswoman."
- **Inclusive Job Titles and Descriptions:** Craft job titles and descriptions that do not reinforce gender bias. Avoid using terms that may be associated with a specific gender and instead focus on skills and qualifications.

- **Diverse Representation:** Showcase diverse role models and success stories in entrepreneurship materials. Highlight achievements of women entrepreneurs and other underrepresented groups to inspire a broader range of individuals.
- **Flexible Language on Family Matters:** Use inclusive language regarding family situations to avoid assumptions about gender roles. For instance, use "parental leave" instead of "maternity leave" to acknowledge that both men and women may take time off for family-related reasons.
- **Recognising Intersectionality:** Acknowledge the intersectionality of identities by considering factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and abilities. Recognise that individuals may face different challenges based on the intersection of multiple aspects of their identity.
- **Promoting Work-Life Balance:** Encourage and support work-life balance for all employees, recognising that individuals may have various responsibilities outside of work. This is particularly relevant for women entrepreneurs who may juggle multiple roles.
- **Diversity & Inclusion Policies:** Clearly communicate and promote diversity and inclusion policies within the organisation. Make sure that the language used in these policies is inclusive and reflects a commitment to creating an equitable workplace.

By adopting these forms of inclusive language, organisations can contribute to a more supportive and empowering environment, particularly for women entrepreneurs, fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Learning activities

Activity 1: Practicing inclusive language

In this activity, trainees will practice identifying non-inclusive language, and then they will try to rephrase it into more inclusive:

- Hey Guys, let's get started! →
- The salesman should close the deal →
- She's emotional about the project →
- Our chairman will address the team →
- That's his job, he's the IT guy →
- The team needs a strong leader, he can handle it →
- Disabled →
- Manning →

Activity 2: Scenario & role-play

In this learning activity, participants engage in a structured analysis of job advertisements to address concerns about language barriers and inclusivity within ABC Corporation.

Aim: The activity aims to analyse old and current job advertisements of a company and assess the level of use of inclusive language, and propose improvements, where necessary.

Instructions:

(15') - Participants are divided into small groups to analyse case study scenario provided, alongside the job advertisements. The aim is to identify exclusionary or biased language. Following this analysis, groups reconvene for a whole-group discussion, sharing their findings and discussing the potential impact of exclusionary language.

(10') - A reflective discussion highlights the importance of using inclusive language in recruitment efforts and its alignment with diversity and inclusion goals.

(20') - Subsequently, participants brainstorm alternative, inclusive language and develop action plans to improve inclusivity in job advertisements.

(10') - The session concludes with a summary of key takeaways, emphasising the ongoing need for inclusive language in recruitment practices.

Objective: Through this activity, participants will enhance their understanding and skills in promoting diversity and inclusivity within job advertisements and recruitment efforts at ABC Corporation.

Scenario:

ABC Corporation is a leading technology company committed to fostering diversity and inclusion within its workforce. As part of its recruitment efforts, the company regularly posts job advertisements to attract top talent. However, recent feedback from employees and external stakeholders has raised concerns about the language used in these job postings. Many have pointed out that certain terms and phrases may unintentionally exclude or discourage candidates from underrepresented groups, such as women, people of color, and individuals with disabilities.

Examples of past job advertisements:

Position: Salesman

ABC Corporation is seeking a dynamic Salesman to join our team. The ideal candidate will have a proven track record of exceeding sales targets and driving revenue growth. Responsibilities & qualifications: [...]

Application Process:

To apply, please submit your resume and cover letter to [email address] by [application deadline]. Only successful candidates will be contacted for interviews.

Position: Waitress

ABC Restaurant is currently hiring a Waitress to join our team. We are looking for a friendly and energetic individual who can provide excellent customer service in a fast-paced environment. Responsibilities & qualifications: [....]

Application Process:

To apply, please submit your resume and cover letter to [email address] by [application deadline]. Only successful candidates will be contacted for interviews.

Activity 3. Write a job advertisement from scratch, using inclusive language

In this activity, participants practice writing a job advertisement using inclusive language to attract candidates from diverse backgrounds. They'll learn the importance of inclusive language in recruitment, and gain practical skills for crafting job postings that promote diversity and inclusion. Participants will start by discussing the significance of inclusive language in job advertisements and reviewing examples for reference. They'll then draft their own job advertisements, being mindful of language choices and how they impact inclusivity. Afterward, participants will share their drafts with the group, offering feedback and discussing the effectiveness of the inclusive language used. Finally, a reflection session will allow participants to discuss their experiences and insights gained about the importance of inclusive language in recruitment. Through this activity, participants will enhance their skills in using inclusive language and contribute to creating more diverse and inclusive workplaces.

Activity 4: Inclusive Language Toolkit Creation

Task participants to collaboratively create an inclusive language toolkit or resource guide for use within their companies. This toolkit can include guidelines, best practices, and practical tips for promoting inclusive language in various communication contexts.

WOMENIN Training Course



Module 7

Gender perspective and transversalities

Module 7: Gender Perspective & Transversalities

Introduction

The module explores transversalities related to education and training of women entrepreneurs, which are themes of crucial importance for the personal and working lives of women.

This module highlights the role of training as a factor of connection between women and their areas of interest and work. It is therefore necessary to have continuous training and lifelong learning, which can support women in their life changes. As a result, training can be seen as a driver of change. As a result, this module aims to boost women skills in connection with specific and concrete situations in order to enable training to feed experience and viceversa.

Finally, this module pinpoints on how women entrepreneurs coming from all around Europe should continue to invest in their education by attending training courses, reading books on business management, attending networking events and more. Keeping an open mind to new ideas and continually learning can lead to greater confidence in women's ability to manage and grow a business.

In order to be more competitive, women entrepreneurs have to acquire the appropriate technical knowledge ranging from economics and finance to marketing, from leadership development to knowledge of techniques of negotiation and digital skills. It also occurs to continuously learn through continuous training and equip oneself with a good range of soft skills which are fundamental in an everyday entrepreneurial life such as effective communication and active listening, time management, problem solving, resistance to stress, empathy, critical thinking, and more.

Specific objectives

This training module introduces gender analysis into all stages of the training course (structural approach) and maintains a monitoring and evaluation system to enable those participating to adopt adequate tools and indicators which promote gender equality as one of the 17 UN Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals.

The module aims to delve into the training and education challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Europe. Although women-led ventures significantly contribute to job creation, innovation, and

economic growth, they still grapple with barriers to accessing networks, finance, and models they need to develop businesses. Achieving the 2030 Agenda's inclusion objectives requires supporting women entrepreneurship through digitalization, technological innovation, and the growth of human capital through training as an enabling factor for development. According to the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (2015), education and training stand as key factors for entrepreneurial success, and customization of these programs to meet women entrepreneurs' needs is crucial. In the rapidly changing technological landscape, women entrepreneurs need to boost their knowledge and preparation, especially in digital and technological aspects, integrating the humanistic heritage as stated by the World Bank.

Education and training are vital for entrepreneurial success, but when these programs lack practical relevance and focus too much on theory, they limit entrepreneurial success and opportunities. To encourage their involvement in self-employment opportunities and achieve work-life balance, it is crucial to provide theoretical and practical knowledge. Continuous training and lifelong learning are essential to support women in adapting to changes in their personal and professional lives. Training and real-world experience go hand in hand, enriching each other.

As a result, the main objectives of this module are:

1. Providing adequate training for women entrepreneurs, even those who may have lost their jobs following the pandemic;
2. Reducing the Digital Gender Gap through the acquisition of skills (digital re-skilling) and promoting continuous training in e-learning mode also in the business environment with specific programs for women who are under the risk of being excluded from digital innovation or to encourage their access into the job world, also including women with disabilities
3. Structuring specific skills training programs for women accessing networks, finance, and models they need to start and grow their businesses

Educational content

The educational content of module VII is built upon six main principles and is divided in five units. It is created to engage, inspire, and inform female entrepreneurs attending the training course. Nowadays educational content should be even more creative since there is no longer space for learning only from a textbook and a lecture.

Chapter 1. Understand the basis/approaches to mainstream gender in education and training

This module approach is based upon the concept of United Nations Economic and Social Council which states that: “Gender mainstreaming is to assess the implications of actions/ policies for women and men of any planned activities/ actions, including legislation, policies or programs. It is a way to make women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies/programs in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that inequality is not perpetuated. The goal is to achieve gender equality” (UN ECOSOC 1995).

According to the Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027 for Malta, and the Gender Mainstreaming Training Manual provided by the UNDP, it became fundamental to adopt gender mainstreaming as a strategy to achieve gender equality in education and training. Gender mainstreaming integrates a gender perspective into policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and measures regulatory and spending programs, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and to combating discrimination through education and training programs.

Gender mainstreaming ensures that policy-making and legislative work are of good quality. It is higher and of greater importance to society, because it makes policies respond more effectively to the needs of all women, men, girls and boys and people with specific needs. Gender mainstreaming is not only intended to avoid creating or strengthening inequalities, which may have negative effects on both women and men. It also involves analyzing the status quo, with the aim of identifying shortcomings of inequality, and developing policies aimed at addressing these inequalities and undoing the mechanisms that cause them.

Even though gender equality is really important, starting from the thought of Hamdani (2020), the module takes into consideration also the preliminary goal of gender parity which consists in the achievement of equal participation of girls and boys, men and women in all forms of education, based on their proportion in the relevant age groups in the population while gender equality goal is ensuring educational equality between boys and girls, women and men. Achieving gender parity is just one step towards gender equality in and through education. The same is applicable to training.

Chapter 2: Knowing the responsibilities and entry points for gender mainstreaming in education and training

If we apply the entry points for gender mainstreaming provided by the World Bank to the education and training sector for women entrepreneurs, we can identify three levels of responsibilities:

- **Institutional level:** Gender mainstreaming at this level is the best because all policies after that will ensure the integration of gender in the educational and training strategy. This requires a strong commitment of the leadership.
- **Policy level:** Gender mainstreaming at the policy level also can be used as programs by supporting these policies to integrate gender in the educational initiatives and training opportunities schemes for female entrepreneurs.
- **Program/ project level:** For the participants of this training course, this level can serve as the best entry point for gender mainstreaming and it is also the most direct way to enhance and promote gender mainstreaming in education and training programs being their ambassadors.

Even though the responsibility falls under the institutions and organizations at corporative level and their management, the trainer must highlight that the responsibility for implementing gender mainstreaming is also with all employees of those organizations involved directly and indirectly in education and training sectors.

It is important to highlight that policymakers, organizations and individuals should work together to create the right environment to empower women entrepreneurs, by promoting gender parity and equality, fostering innovation and supporting lifelong learning.

Chapter 3: Involving women in leadership and decision-making levels related to education and training programs

In order to create education and training programs tailored for women entrepreneurs, the trainer intends to pay attention to the empowerment of women through:

- Capacity building of stakeholders on a local level for gender equality through education and training programs
- Development of awareness material and dissemination of information at national and local level
- Coordination and networking with stakeholders involved in the education and training sector
- Encourage mainstreaming of gender on a national and local level by supporting the development of the policies that support gender mainstreaming through education and training opportunities.

- Promotion of law and policy to adapt education and training courses towards gender parity and equality. The main problem remains that inequality between women and men is still common, even though the law states that all individuals are equal in front of the law. Therefore, this gender mainstreaming aims to enable society and institutions to change their perceptions, values and cultures, policies and practices in support of equal choices and opportunities for men and women.
- Monitoring of progress and implementation of action plans developed on all levels to ensure that women and men can participate equally in education and training sectors. In still several countries, the structures of the community create inequalities between women and men in access to resources, opportunities, and participation in decision-making on the level of policies by women and men.
- Removing training obstacles, promote lifelong learning, in order to create an inclusive environment in Europe, where women entrepreneurs have the skills and knowledge to flourish.
- Stimulating innovation for women entrepreneurs across the continent.



Image source: Council of Europe (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-youth-foundation/gender-perspectives>)

Chapter 4: Become familiar with the gender mainstreaming strategies and tools through education and training programs

All around Europe we need a political commitment to gender equality and a compatible legal framework as the prerequisites for establishing a successful strategy for gender mainstreaming also through education and training programs. Indeed, starting from the policy document “Guidance for gender mainstreaming in the content of courses and study programmes” provided by the Goteborgs Universitet, and taking into account extraeuropean best practice such as that one of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, gender mainstreaming requires a clear action plan which should consider the context, meet the necessary conditions, cover all relevant dimensions, predict the use of concrete

methods and spaces, define responsibilities as mentioned in the unit II and ensure that the necessary competencies are in place to achieve the expected results within a specified time.

Starting from the concept of the Commonwealth of Learning (2014) and the concept of gender mainstreaming in technical and vocational training and education as described by Nurhaeni and Kurniawan (2018), this unit focuses on the main gender mainstreaming strategies and tools which should be used by the trainer course by:

- Involving women and men in consultations about how to gender mainstream in education and training initiatives through surveys, public hearings, stakeholder interviews or other methods. This will ensure that the concerns and priorities of women and men are known and incorporated into the training course design according to United Nations Institute for Training and Research-UNITAR (2022)
- Including sex-disaggregated data, so based on that women can develop their plans in the personal and professional life to help identify and address specific barriers women face in their educational and training process
- Formulating gender-sensitive and/or specific objectives, indicators and activities to assess the quality of education and trainings schemes and takes the measure to adapt to the real needs of women entrepreneurs to guarantee a work-life balance.

Chapter 5: Recommendations developing mainstreaming strategies for policymakers, organizations and women entrepreneurs

In order to develop mainstreaming strategies related to the “Training and Education” related topic, this unit focuses on targeted recommendations for European policymakers, organizations, and individual women entrepreneurs, which is strictly related to UNIT II related to responsibilities.

For policymakers, it could be interesting to develop a national strategy for entrepreneurship education that is inclusive and addresses the specific needs of women entrepreneurs, allocating financial resources to support entrepreneurship programs, with a focus on initiatives targeted at women entrepreneurs, and promote gender equality initiatives, also implement policies encouraging businesses to adopt diversity and inclusion practices and provide incentives for gender-balanced hiring and leadership. In order to promote gender equality, public awareness campaigns could help change gender stereotypes surrounding entrepreneurship. These campaigns can highlight the success stories of women entrepreneurs and promote positive role models. For organizations, it is recommendable to collaborate

across borders by creating networks that connect women from different European countries, organizations can play a pivotal role in facilitating cross-border collaboration and knowledge sharing among women entrepreneurs, providing valuable opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges, networking, and resource sharing. Besides that, it is recommendable to establish or support digital learning platforms that offer comprehensive online courses and resources specifically tailored for women entrepreneurs in Europe. These platforms should be user-friendly, multilingual and accessible. Finally, organizations should promote cross-sectoral training by encouraging the exploration of different sectors through cross-sectoral training programs.

By exposing women to diverse industries, these programs can stimulate innovative ideas and foster cross-industry collaborations. The ability to pivot and adapt to changing market dynamics is a valuable skill for entrepreneurs.

For individual, women entrepreneurs should embrace the concept of lifelong learning in order to stay competitive and innovative. Actively seek out training opportunities, workshops, and courses that provide opportunities to acquire new skills, stay updated on industry trends, and adapt to changing market dynamics. At the same time is fundamental to leverage European networks by providing valuable connections, mentorship opportunities and access to resources. Finally, women entrepreneurs should actively advocate for gender-responsive education and training by participating in relevant initiatives, sharing their experiences, and championing policies that promote equality in entrepreneurship. Collaboration and collective action are the keys for a positive change.

Learning activities

Activity 1: Entrepreneurship Training

Conduct training sessions to help women entrepreneurs develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and expertise to succeed in business. These training sessions can be conducted by experienced entrepreneurs, business coaches, or industry experts.

Activity 2: Mentorship Program

Launch a mentorship program where experienced entrepreneurs can share their knowledge and experience with women entrepreneurs. This will provide women entrepreneurs with guidance and support in navigating the challenges of the business world.

Activity 3: Access to Funding

Provide access to funding and resources that can help women entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses. This could include developing partnerships with financial institutions, providing funding, or creating a crowdfunding platform.

Activity 4: Business Incubators

Establish business incubators that provide women entrepreneurs with a space to work, access to resources and services, and networking opportunities. This will provide a supportive environment where women entrepreneurs can build and grow their businesses.

Activity 5: Networking Events

Organize networking events that bring together women entrepreneurs, investors, mentors, and other stakeholders in the business community. These events will provide an opportunity for women entrepreneurs to network, share their experiences, and learn from others.

Activity 6: Advocacy and Awareness

Raise awareness about the importance of women's entrepreneurship and advocate for policies that support women entrepreneurs. This could include working with policymakers to develop policies that promote women's entrepreneurship, or launching a public awareness campaign to highlight the contributions of women entrepreneurs to the economy.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, the training course within the WOMENIN project is a crucial response to the pressing need for gender equality and inclusivity in entrepreneurship. By equipping vocational education and training (VET) educators with the necessary tools and competencies, the course addresses both the technical aspects of entrepreneurship and the specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. Through comprehensive modules, educators can gain a deeper understanding of women's entrepreneurship, including its trends, challenges, and opportunities across different European Union countries.

Moreover, the course has fostered a culture of advocacy for gender equality, empowering trainers to champion inclusivity not only in entrepreneurship but also in education. By integrating a gender perspective at all stages of the training process, educators are equipped to promote diversity and equality within their educational institutions. Additionally, the course emphasizes the development of inclusive communication skills, enabling trainers to effectively guide and support women entrepreneurs on their entrepreneurial journeys. With a focus on internationalization, it instills a global vision of entrepreneurship, ensuring that trainers are equipped to address the specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs across Europe. As we continue to prioritize initiatives like the WOMENIN project, we are taking significant steps toward creating a more inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial landscape.