



**We4
Change**

Girls and Women Connecting
for Environmental Change



GIRLS AND WOMEN AS CHANGEMAKERS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND CLIMATE ACTION

A CONTEXT SPECIFIC ANALYSIS



Funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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2021



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Disclaimer: This analysis is published as part of the project **“Girls and Women Connecting for Environmental Change”** funded under the Erasmus Plus programme of the European Union. The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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1. Introduction

We4Change: Girls and Women Connecting for Environmental Change project aims to contribute to the EU Youth Strategy by engaging, connecting and empowering young people with skills and confidence to contribute to prosperous and cohesive societies. Adopting a gender specific approach, We4Change is concentrated on empowering girls and young women (aged 15-25) from disadvantaged backgrounds with digital and environmental citizenship skills and a changemaking attitude. The gender perspective in the project is essential as youth as an area remains highly influenced by gender-based inequalities.

Specifically, young women - especially from disadvantaged backgrounds - face gender specific challenges related to education, employability and civic participation. As such this initiative is addressed to this audience because they are the most at risk to suffer irreversible effects caused by gender inequalities, accentuated by the current social, economic and environmental situations, reducing their access to and control over (basic) resources, access to education and information, and access to decision-making processes, leading to lost opportunities, lack of self-confidence and interest to be actively involved in society.

Especially after COVID-19, the situation of disadvantaged girls and women deteriorated due to heightened socio-economic impacts;

an increased risk to be pulled out of education or work to compensate for increased care and domestic work and a higher threat to face gender-based violence.

Therefore, now more than ever, disadvantaged girls and young women need to become empowered with competences that will enable them to become architects of their life and their communities ensuring safety and sustainable growth. As such, an urgent need exists to apply a gender lens to youth empowerment programmes for encouraging girls and women to actively engage in society while also contributing to gender mainstreaming in Youth Policies.

Hence, we designed We4Change Changemakers activities and events which employ a female-centric changemaking approach for engaging, connecting and empowering girls and women and supporting them to build their confidence, develop digital and innovation skills, increase civic engagement and unlock their changemaking potential. Responding directly to the needs of young women to break down stereotypes, develop their creativity and confidence and contribute to society, the project will offer an innovative combination of hands-on activities, training on digital, innovation and environmental awareness skills, problem-solving and co-creation of prototypes to address climate change.

2. Objectives and methodology

Part of the “We4Change Changemakers Event Curriculum”¹, the current analysis aims to identify what motivates girls and young women across Europe to develop their creativity, knowledge and skills for the future and contribute to society, and how to best use ESTEAM (Arts and Entrepreneurship powered by STEM) to support this goal. Likewise, we will look at what are policy priorities and initiatives in five European countries, as well as other activities that share the same objectives.

To do so, the project team has conducted a context specific gender analysis, as the foundations for an innovative curriculum that offering a combination of hands-on activities, training on digital, innovation and environmental awareness skills, problem-solving and co-creation of prototypes to address climate change and drive environmental transformation.

For the current analysis, two qualitative research methods were combined: (1) desk research to investigate how the gender perspective is integrated in each national context; and (2) a survey meant to collect information on the target audience’s attitudes towards the topics previously mentioned.

Desk research

A desk research was conducted by each partner of the project and aimed to collect

the following information on the national contexts of the countries analysed:

- Existing national youth policy & youth participation programmes;
- Existing initiatives by other stakeholders on environment and climate, digitalization
- and innovation;
- Best practices for the engagement of girls and women in relevant activities.

Survey

In parallel, partners have conducted a survey on girls’ and women’s interest in ESTEAM topics for social innovation. The survey was conducted in May 2021, and was launched in five languages (English, French, Greek, Portuguese and Romanian) to facilitate the collection of responses in each country analysed. It included open-ended questions, multiple choice questions and simple choice questions. A total of 100 responses were collected. The responses were analysed both per country, and have also been aggregated to outline a transnational representation.

The information collected through the two methods were combined to identify the different contexts, knowledge, points of view, interests, and needs of the target audience related to the issues tackled by the project to understand how these issues affect women and how their actions and capacities could be utilised to build further their confidence and increase civic

¹ All materials can be accessed for free here: <http://we4change.eu/>

participation through the deliverables and activities that will be developed further

following the context specific gender analysis.

3. Glossary

Context specific gender analysis: a context specific approach was chosen for the current analysis to allow project partners to better understand the socio-cultural, political, economic and geographic factors that influence the participation of youth across Europe to the society, looking at specific sectors and their representation by gender. A gender perspective was added to understand the relationships between men and women, their access to resources, their activities, and the constraints they face relative to each other.

Digital competence: Involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cybersecurity), intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking.

ESTEAM: Entrepreneurship and Arts powered by Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Green skills: Fundamental skills to the transition to a low-carbon economy, which can be general such as sustainable agriculture, soil protection, energy use and

waste reduction, or more technical such as knowledge on renewable energy.

Key competences: The basic set of knowledge, skills and attitudes which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment, as described in the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning.

Non-formal learning: Learning which takes place outside formal education and training through planned activities in terms of learning objectives and learning time and where some form of learning support is present.

Peer Learning: A reciprocal learning activity, which is mutually beneficial and involves the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience between the participants. Peer learning practices enable to interact with other participants, their peers, and participate in activities where they can learn from each other and meet educational, professional and/or personal development goals.

Social innovation: Social innovation refers to the design and implementation of new solutions that imply conceptual, process, product, or organisational change, which ultimately aim to improve the welfare and

wellbeing of individuals and communities. Many initiatives undertaken by the social economy and by the civil society have proven to be innovative in dealing with socio-economic and environmental problems, while contributing to economic development. To fully tap the potential of social innovation, an enabling policy framework is needed to support public, non-profit and private actors to co-construct and implement socially innovative solutions and thereby contribute to address socio-economic issues, build stronger territorial resilience and better respond to future shocks.

Youth: The period when a person is considered to be 'young' differs across Europe according to national context, the socio-economic development of society and time. Common to all countries is that the

period of youth - the transition from being a child to being an adult - is marked by important life changes: from being in education to having a full-time job, from living in the parental home to setting up one's own household, and from being financially dependent to managing one's own money.

Youth activity: An out-of-school activity (such as youth exchange, volunteering or youth training) carried out by a young person, either individually or in a group, in particular through youth organisations, and characterised by a non-formal learning approach.

Youth worker: A professional or a volunteer involved in non-formal learning who supports young people in their personal socio-educational, and professional development.

4. Youth and gender in the European context

EU YOUTH STRATEGY

The EU Youth Strategy is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027, based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018. According to its aims, youth cooperation shall make the most of youth policy's potential. Furthermore, it fosters youth participation in democratic life, supports social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society.

The EU Youth Strategy focuses around 3 words: Engage, Connect, Empower. It also works on joined-up implementation across sectors.

Engage

With “Engage” the EU Youth Strategy aims towards a meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural and political participation of young people.



Connect

Connections, relations and exchange of experience are a pivotal asset for solidarity and the future development of the European Union. This connection happens through different forms of mobility. (Read what Member States and the European Commission are invited to do and about the planned activities)



Empower

Empowerment of young people means encouraging them to take charge of their own lives. Today, young people across Europe are facing diverse challenges and youth work in all its forms can serve as a catalyst for empowerment. (Read what Member States and the European Commission are invited to do and about the planned activities)



EU Gender Equality Strategy

With the renewal of the EU institutions following the European elections in 2019, the issue of gender equality made it back on to the political agenda with strong support from the first-ever female Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, and the creation of a dedicated Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli. On 5 March 2020, the European Commission published “A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025”, as one of a series of EU initiatives and strategies concerning equality, diversity and inclusion that the Commission will adopt and enact as part of delivering on its headline ambitions “A stronger Europe in the world” and “A new push for European democracy”.

The proposed 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy aims at “achieving a gender equal Europe where gender-based violence, sex discrimination and structural inequality between women and men are a thing of the past. A Europe where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are equal.” It is structured around six themes:

- ✓ Being free from violence and stereotypes
- ✓ Thriving in a gender-equal economy
- ✓ Leading equally throughout society
- ✓ Gender mainstreaming and an intersectional perspective in EU policies
- ✓ Funding actions to make progress in gender equality in the EU
- ✓ Addressing gender equality and women’s empowerment across the world

A dual approach will be taken in implementing the Strategy that combines gender mainstreaming with specific targeted actions to achieve gender equality. It is also the first time that an EU Strategy aims to integrate an intersectional perspective in its implementation.



EUROPEAN YOUTH: MAIN TRENDS²

- **Young people are educated to an increasingly higher level:** the proportion of young Europeans who have attained at least upper secondary level qualifications has risen, as has the proportion with tertiary degrees; in parallel, a general decline in the proportion of early school leavers has also occurred.
- **More young people are finding employment:** in the EU as a whole, the unemployment rate is much lower for young people graduating from tertiary education than for those with the lowest levels of education. Following the rise in youth unemployment provoked by the economic recession in the early years of the decade, the rates have been falling since 2013 in the majority of European countries.
- **There has been some improvement in the social inclusion of young Europeans.** Labour market improvements have had a positive impact on the living conditions of many young people. Entering the job market often coincides with becoming independent and assuming new responsibilities in terms of sustaining the significant costs of living independently.
- **Young Europeans are demonstrating an increasing interest in politics and are taking advantage of the new methods of participation offered by modern technology:** improved opportunities in education and employment, as well as progress in social inclusion, not only contribute to the younger generation's wellbeing, but can also revive their interest in political and civic issues and inspire them to re-engage with society. This renewed attention to political issues is also supported by the growing availability of internet applications, such as social media, blogs and online networks, which offer additional opportunities for communicating and exchanging information. Participation in voluntary activities shows an exceptional expansion. This renewed engagement in society has also translated into a sharp increase in the proportion of young Europeans participating in voluntary organisations

However, some challenges persist...

- **Some groups of young people encounter difficulties in educational achievement:** the rate of underachievement in literacy, numeracy and science is not improving. Since 2009, the proportion of students aged 15 with low levels of proficiency in those key competences has either stagnated – as in the case of reading and mathematics – or increased – as in science. Poverty and social exclusion still affect large sections of the youth population.
- **Electoral turnout amongst young Europeans continues to decline:** the most traditional form of political participation – voting – continues to lose its appeal amongst

² This section was reproduced from the study: Situation of young people in the European Union Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2018) 169 final of 22.5.2018, retrieved in June 2021 at <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9264-2018-ADD-2/en/pdf>

young Europeans, especially in EU elections. While other ways of expressing interest in political and civic issues (e.g. online methods) become more widespread, growing numbers of young citizens refrain from casting their ballot at elections.

... and some groups of young Europeans suffer from inequalities

- **Young women and men both face disadvantages but in different areas:** despite achieving higher levels of education, women's participation in the labour market is – in some respects – less prominent than that of young men. This is often related to the fact that they leave the labour force due to family and caring responsibilities. The potential economic fragility resulting from a less conspicuous involvement in the labour market can amplify the danger of social deprivation. Social and economic marginalisation is known to have negative effects on the levels of political and civic participation. As a matter of fact, women vote and take part in organisations and political parties to a lesser extent than men. On the other hand, young men are disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment compared to women. Lower levels of participation in education contribute to the higher numbers of unemployed among young men than women.
- **Young Europeans from eastern and southern Europe face comparatively bigger challenges in terms of education, employment and inclusion:** the trends in these three areas show that inequalities are manifest across different regions of Europe. For the main indicators on education, young people from countries in the eastern and southern regions of Europe consistently have worse outcomes than the European average. Lower proportions of students from these regions attain tertiary degrees, higher proportions leave school early, and greater percentages of students have low proficiency in reading, mathematics and science. Apart from educational attainment, there are considerable differences between European countries in young people's use of digital technologies. The rate at which young Europeans from countries in the south and east of Europe master digital skills is lower than the EU average. As these competences are increasingly important to succeed in the labour market as well as for making the most of the opportunities for civic and cultural participation offered by the internet and its applications, such a deficit poses a particularly serious risk of economic and social exclusion.

5. Overview of national contexts

Belgium

The federal Belgian level of government only has limited competence in youth matters, for instance some aspects of judicial youth protection. Currently, there is not one national youth policy at the Belgian level because it falls under the competences of the three communities: Flemish, French and German-Speaking, in other words, Belgium has three youth policies. Given that Belgium youth consists of 29% of the total population (0-14 at 17% and 15-24 at 12%), it is supervised by these three communities which have a Minister responsible for Youth, a parliamentary commission and a number of administrative departments with 'youth' in their title and a large number of specific youth-related budget items.

Although the Flemish and French Communities define youth as 0 to 30 years old, the German-Speaking Community refers to an age group between 12 and 26 years old in its youth work legislation. Hence, for a number of years there has been policy developments addressing these age groups in order to reinforce their inclusivity on the entrepreneurial field. The goal is to increase the number of young people that are interested in pursuing it as a full-time or even a part-time activity because the Belgian youth are slightly more likely to be self-employed than the EU average for youth as seen in 2018 (7.8% vs. 6.5%) but they are slightly less likely to have employees (14.2% vs. 15.9%). Despite further political initiatives, such as laws on gender pay equality, the gender inequalities have not been removed in Belgium as there is a difference of 10 percentage points that can be noted between employment rates of women (62.1%) and men (72.3%) that results on a gender pay gap of 10.2%.³

Existing national Youth policy & Youth Participation Programmes

The **Flemish Community** consists of the inhabitants of Flanders and the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of the bilingual Brussels Capital Region.⁴ The youth of this community is under the supervision of the official advisory body of the Flemish Government on all matters concerning children and young people, the Vlaamse Jeugdraad (Flemish Youth Council). In the Flemish Youth Council's department of culture, youth and media, there is a responsibility for the implementation of the youth and children's rights policy of the Flemish government in Belgium.

³ Gender Balance Power Map, National Study "Co-inspiration between social and conventional enterprises to promote equal access to decision making positions in Belgium":

https://www.pourlasolidarite.eu/sites/default/files/gender-balance_belgian-study_en_0.pdf

⁴ https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Belgium_2010_Youth_Policy_Overview.pdf

The Council coordinates the preparation of the Flemish youth policy plan and also closely monitor the international youth and children's rights policy.

Acting on the basis of the decree of 20 January 2012 on a renewed youth and children's rights policy, the Flemish government strives for an integrated Flemish youth and children's rights policy. This integrated approach makes it possible to reach all the domains in the lives of children and young people up to the age of thirty. In 2020 there has been the implementation of the Flemish Youth Policy Plan 2020-2024 which outlines all the concerns regarding children and young people and their rights, the overall focus is on equalising the opportunities of all young people in Flanders.

Moreover, the process for drawing up the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2020-2024 completed several participatory stages. In the spring of 2019, an extensive environmental analysis, the Great Priorities Debate, took place, showing that children and young people frequently engage in volunteering in either an organised or non-organised context. There is a demand for better protection and appropriate support and recognition of the acquired competencies, not only in the short term, but also, for example, in future life careers.

The *Youth Guarantee Plan for employment and vocational training*, ensured the implementation of new measures to provide employment for those under 18 years of age. In fact, under this guarantee, a STEM action plan was an initiative brought forward with the key objective of, introducing a set of measures, starting from primary school to careers on the labour market through integrated action.

About 150 representatives from the different policy areas of the Flemish government, experts, young people, and actors from civil society and local authorities discussed there the most important cross-policy - or 'transversal' - challenges that affect children and young people, and what the focus should be in the coming years. Thus, in order to tackle environmental care and sustainability issues, the Flemish Youth Council brought forward the project **MOS (Milieuzorg Op School, Environmental Care on School)** of the Flemish Department of Environment and Spatial Development, which targeted both primary and secondary schools. This is a project developed by Flemish-funded youth organisations, such as JNM (Youth Federation for Nature and Environment), Studio Globo and the Flemish Youth Support Centre and aims in developing materials that aid students in making conscious choices for a sustainable future.⁵ Furthermore, the project MOS offers teaching materials, information and training to teachers of secondary schools. MOS belongs to a global network of schools that work towards sustainability and environmental care.

⁵ <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/belgium-flemish-community/94-raising-awareness-about-global-issues>

Additionally, the Framework Decree on Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment Policy ends up setting a general framework for the implementation of a proactive and preventive policy on equal opportunities. It aims to reduce discrimination, whether it is based on gender, sexual orientation, inaccessibility, disability or ethnicity. Although this decree doesn't focus on young people, it is still relevant towards them because it covers the gender aspect not addressed by the youth policy.

In the **French Community**, there is an overlap with the area of Wallonia excluding the German-Speaking Community and the Brussels Capital Region. The 'Conseil de la Jeunesse' is the official youth advisory and representation organ which has always integrated the framework of socio-cultural policies in the French Community, providing learning opportunities for youth. Notably, non-formal learning is the essence of youth policy in the French-speaking Community, there are undertaken mainly by volunteering activities, youth participation to citizenship projects, and others. And along the years this community was able to provide youth work through youth centres, youth organisations, homework schools and holiday centres.

There are equal opportunities policies governed by the Decree of 12 December 2008 on the fight against certain forms of discrimination.⁶ The governmental action program promoting gender equality operates by gender mainstreaming, allowing each minister to promote gender equality through concrete initiatives. The Decree establishes six general objectives with regard to the promotion of gender equality: the fight against sexist stereotypes and domestic violence, balanced sex ratios in compulsory and higher education, the promotion of gender studies and research, the equal participation of men and women in decision-making and the break up by gender of all official statistics. It is important to note that according to the Common Political Declaration 2019-2024 highlights, in the frame of youth policies, it is important to build bridges between policy fields that affect young people. With this in mind, it is possible to see that existing gender policies and youth policies support each other.

In this community, there is also the "0-25 Child and Youth Plan" which aims at strengthening investments in children and youth in various sectors such as education, sport, youth, youth welfare, digitalisation and media literacy, childhood, culture, women's rights, equality of chances and youth mobility.

The **German-Speaking Community** is the smallest of the three Belgian Communities. It has the Council of German-Speaking Youth acting as the federation of youth organizations and local youth councils. For several years it has run a system of Performance Contracts which enables open youth work and strong involvement of youth in the municipalities.

⁶ B.M. of 13 January 2009

A major responsibility for the administration of unemployment benefits and training priorities and also for monitoring job-seeking activities is under the Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft (DG). There is a broad-based youth policy that is focused on education and economic activity for this community. In fact, the Youth work is controlled by the Decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding of youth work (Dekret vom 6. Dezember 2011 zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit), that has as a main task to facilitate the participation of young people in policymaking. Unfortunately, it is hard to pinpoint exactly the representation of young women in such discussions.

Existing relevant initiatives developed by other national stakeholders

- **GenerationW Initiative** - <https://www.generationwomen.be/>

The aim of the program is to promote the economy of the future in Brussels by supporting women in their career and personal development through mentorship, support, technical skills, training and access to networks. Another project powered by Womenpreneurs, aims to support women in economic participation, **reduce gender inequality in digital field** and prepare women for future careers. In order to achieve their objectives, a series of activities are prepared such as workshops and trainings, coding sessions, mentoring, sessions with experts, inspiring talks, and a possibility to network.

- **YouthStart**- <https://youthstart.be/>

YouthStart is a non-profit organization focusing on incorporating youth and young adults experiencing difficulties in the professional & social world. Their mission is to teach opportunity-seeking **young individuals entrepreneurial skills**, offering them the possibility to realize their ambitions. This is achieved by developing the entrepreneurial skills of youth and young adults.

There is an 8-day training, where young people may acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and entrepreneurial mindset. This is done by following the hands-on training programme and motivational coaching sessions, a juried certification ceremony is held, during which these participants present their business cases.

- **Youth for climate**- <https://youthforclimate.be/about>

The Belgian Youth for Climate, inspired by Greta Thunberg, has been able to set out initiatives that involve young people. Young activists ended up launching the Belgium chapter and first rallies in early 2019 and were able to create a group of independent experts from various disciplines who have united in the panel for climate and sustainability.

Their aim is to limit the consequences of the climate and biodiversity crisis by combining as a movement and applying political pressure while raising awareness in society. Also, they seek to

bring awareness to the inequalities and injustices that will be suffered to those minority groups, and/or existing victims of discrimination who are disproportionately affected by climate change. Everyone involved in the panel ends up making selfless contributions based on their expertise, targeting policymakers. This climate movement enables the action of young people towards awareness rising and policy changes towards climate change and environmental protection. Their action is realised without violence towards people or property, although the gender element can be missing from this initiative, it is possible to see how it incorporates the young population in decision making and responsibilities.

- **Impact Programme 21/22** <https://www.ashoka.org/en-be/program/impact-programme>

Through workshops, The Impact Programme 21/22: "Scaling Positive Change for People and Planet" is an impact accelerator for entrepreneurs who want to scale their impact in the field of climate change and circular economy.

The programme aims to identify & support leading Changemakers who aim to scale their systemic solutions to achieve more depth in fighting the profound planetary crises the world is facing today. For this the Impact Programme is supporting entrepreneurs through different levels in developing and refining their strategies. After a jury selection, 10 chosen entrepreneurs, will benefit from individual coaching, workshops, access to circular economy experts, networking opportunities and pitching opportunities to new partners. The entrepreneurs showing the highest development curve will receive continued support provided by Accenture, ABN AMRO and Ashoka.

- **Girl Tech Fest** - <http://dlii.org/girl-tech-fest-brussels/>

The initiative from the Digital Leadership Institute(DLI) with support from Google, IBM, Amazon Web Services, Cisco, Dell and the ULB, was the first Girl Tech Fest carried out in Dutch, French and English. The event involved over 100 volunteers who organised more than forty workshops and twenty Digital Muse Lab activities that showcased high-tech gadgets and activities like Cooking with Watson, Google Cardboard, and Smartgurlz Drones designed, powered and modelled after girls.

The activity included the participation of 250 girls from thirty-three schools across Belgium, who were able to gain much knowledge from the workshops. As the hands-on workshops taught skills to know how to "Lead Like a Girl" and "Write in Wikipedia," they got to design and build their own gadgets like computer-powered legos and 3D holograms. At the end, there were prizes awarded to exceptional digital muses who encouraged and inspired their fellow participants during the day.

- **Girl geek Dinners** - <https://girlgeekdinners.com/about/facts-and-figures/>

Belgian Girl Geeks organizes free events for women who are interested in innovation & the digital world. The aim is to encourage women and girls of all ages, races and religions to learn about how they can use technology and grow within the technology industry without fear or prejudice. It is done in a manner that there is high support of young women.

It started in 2005 with a total of 35 attendees. Over the years there was a boom in women tech organisations and currently it stands at over 50,000 attendees. There are training courses, resources and support networks globally for those who want to be change-makers within the industry.

- **Girls Takeover** - <https://www2.deloitte.com/gr/en/events/career-days/2021/girls-takeover-2021.html>

Deloitte's Girls Takeover, is an international hackathon, which was held on 11 October 2021. Young women based in Belgium and other countries took part in the virtual design thinking workshop. The requirement of strong-willed young women, of about the ages of 18 and 23, who are ready to spend a day with other equally passionate women deciphering a design thinking challenge together.

- **Move It Forward+** <https://moveitforwardplus.com>

The flagship Move It Forward for Female Digital Starters event aims to bring together teen and adult women to provide them with the skills, resources and access to the expertise necessary to inspire them to take up digital entrepreneurship. MIF events are free, targeted toward beginners, and focus on building skill sets, confidence and community to stream women and projects into digital start-up incubators and eventually launch their business in order to drive jobs and positive economic transformation at the local, national and global level. Using a bottom-up and results-driven approach, Move It Forward directly involves women in identifying social challenges that impact their communities and supports them in developing solutions for the benefit of these communities and of society at large.

With a specifically intergenerational approach to optimize engagement and experience-sharing among women of all ages, each Move It Forward event aims to:

- reach 40-50 teen and adult women
- deliver 3-4 digital skills workshops
- create an average of 8 projects per even produce a minimum of 3-4 viable tech-driven/enabled startup initiatives

France

In 2017, by the time of his election as President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron promised to make equality between women and men one of the "greatest causes of his five-year term"⁷. Few months later, the #MeToo movement which strongly impacted France reinforced the growing interest in this subject, from the government as well as civil society. However, despite some measures, namely against sexist and sexual violence or to promote professional equality, women are still suffering from strong inequalities which were even amplified by the COVID-19 crisis.

Oxfam provided an interesting assessment of the impact of the pandemic on gender inequalities in France⁸. The crisis highlighted the essential nature of many jobs in which women are over-represented (women represent 95% of the childcare assistants, housekeepers, and domestic workers, 87% of the nurses and 76% of cashiers) and which are, at the same time, the most precarious and least paid jobs. These positions also generated greater exposure to the virus. Furthermore, the study underlines that 76% of part-time jobs were held by women in 2019. This situation contributes to strengthening wage inequalities in France: according to the INSEE (French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies), in 2020, men earned 28.5% more than women⁹. Not to mention the explosion of gender-based violence during the lockdowns as well as the fact that women took on most of the domestic tasks. This negative impact is even more disastrous for women suffering from other forms of discrimination (racism, homophobia, grossophobia, etc., etc.) and/or isolation (single mothers).

Young people are also particularly affected by the crisis and represent a priority in the government's post-pandemic action plan, as well as sustainable development. In this chapter, we will focus on how gender has been mainstreamed or not in the government's policies when driving political action on employment, youth, or sustainable development in France.

⁷ [Égalité femmes/hommes : un an après le lancement de la grande cause, où en sommes-nous ? | Gouvernement.fr](#)

⁸ [Rapport_Oxfam_Davos_Zoom_France_2021.pdf \(oxfamfrance.org\)](#)

⁹ [Écarts de rémunération femmes-hommes : surtout l'effet du temps de travail et de l'emploi occupé - Insee Première - 1803](#)

Gender perspective in Youth Policy & Youth Participation Programmes

As mentioned above, The COVID-19 crisis deeply affected the French youth, knowing that 1 out of 10 people aged from 18 to 25 years old was already under the poverty line prior to it¹⁰. Ever since, the home schooling contributed to widen inequalities and more and more students suffer from psychological disorders and great precariousness, which is even more true for women, as showed by UNEF (National Union for French Students): whereas in 2019, the cost of living for girls was 118% higher than boys', it reached 123% in 2020¹¹. This figure can be explained by the fact that products such as school supplies marketed for girls are more expensive (called the "pink tax") or that they have higher health expenses (birth control, gynecologist appointments, menstrual protections, etc). This concerning situation was already given a special attention by the French government but never enough according to UNEF's study: the cost of living for students rose by 8,71% since the beginning of Emmanuel Macron's term and nothing has been implemented to reverse the trend.

Indeed, in recent years, most of the policies dedicated to youth have rather been designed to stimulate youth commitment in the civil society and social diversity but without any consideration of the specific needs of girls and young women. Apart from the introduction of quotas for some of them, such as the SNU, which requires the same number of girls and boys to be included, these measures make no mention of a gender perspective.

Nevertheless, the fight for equality between girls and boys in education is still part of the government's priorities, as shown by the interministerial agreement for 2019 to 2024, which brought together five ministries (National Education and Youth, Higher Education Research and Innovation, Culture, Agriculture and Food, Armies) as well as the Secretary of State for Equality between Women and Men and the Fight against Discrimination. This agreement defines a five-year reference framework for equality between girls and boys in the education system and is based on five main points:

- Steering the equality policy with pupils and students,
- Equality training for education staff,
- The transmission to young people of a culture of equality and mutual respect,
- The fight against sexist and sexual violence,
- The fight against sexual and gender-based violence, Orientation towards greater gender diversity in training courses.

¹⁰ [La pauvreté augmente chez les plus jeunes, mais n'épargne pas les plus âgés \(inegalites.fr\)](https://inegalites.fr/fr/la-pauvrete-augmente-chez-les-plus-jeunes-mais-n-epargne-pas-les-plus-ages)

¹¹ [Dossier-de-presse-Enquête-UNEF-sur-le-cout-de-la-vie-etudiante-2020.pdf](#)

This framework also includes goals in terms of the representation of girls in some fields: "For certain fields, quantified objectives have been set, such as reaching 40% of girls in scientific fields in higher education or 30% of girls in technical fields in higher education in the arts and culture (in the professions of chief operator, sound engineer, etc.)" .

Thus, even if equality between girls and boys seems to be given a particular attention in youth policies, there is a clear lack of consideration for the gender aspect as well as a lack of overall coherence between the various measures implemented. Here are some other initiatives which tend to adopt a more transversal approach:

- **EQUAL.ID: Training future leaders to fight against sexism while allowing young women to overpass their own limiting beliefs.**

In 2016, the French Business School Toulouse Business School launched the program EQUAL.ID, a pedagogical journey to change mentalities and behaviour. It offers to all of the students (who are meant to become tomorrow's leaders) the possibility to question their behaviour and allows girls to overpass their limiting beliefs and be better oriented.

How ?

- Mentoring for female students
- Coaching for all students on professional equality and their role as future managers and leaders
- Workshop and pedagogical activities to raise awareness on gender inequalities
- Research and studies led by the experts working at the school to develop more content on the topic

Key figures:

- 430 female students supported by 300 women mentors since 2016
- 100 first-year students attended to dedicated workshops and seminars
- 1 workshop organized to prevent sexual harassment

[EQUAL.ID : TBS s'engage en faveur de l'égalité femmes/hommes | TBS Education \(tbs-education.fr\)](http://tbs-education.fr)

- **Bougeons sans bouger : Raising awareness of gender equality with kids by democratizing art & culture**

In March 2016, various cultural institutions partnered with the educational Academy of Bordeaux (French city) to democratize the access to art and culture to youth through a gender equality approach.

How?

- Guided tours build on a gender perspective, to tackle the women's visibility and representation in Art

- Workshops and dedicated activities to further discuss the guided tour
- Artistic representation made by pupils, thanks to the support of artists

Key figures:

- In 2020, 18 cultural institutions were taking part in the initiative

[Bougeons Sans bouger ! Livraison 2020 | Académie de Bordeaux \(ac-bordeaux.fr\)](#)

- **Rev'Elles : Empowering young girls from disadvantaged backgrounds and allowing them to find out who they are meant to become.**

In 2013 Athina Marmorat founded the association Rev'Elles, after running a study to better understand the challenges and obstacles faced by young girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. This work revealed a lack of self-esteem and role models, as well as a tendency to self-censorship. Rev'Elles' mission is to inspire, motivate and support these young women, in their personal and professional development and to enable them to become active participants in the society they live in.

How ?

- 6 free support programs for girls from 14 to 20 years old, who are either unschooled, dropping out or looking for a job. Each of them is designed around a specific theme, from an immersion into the corporate world to the discovery of scientific and digital higher education.
- A community of female role models

Key Figures :

- 664 girls supported since 2013
- 78% of the supported girls say that the program had an impact on their professional career
- 222 female role models taking part in the program

[Rêv'Elles | Une étincelle, des potentiels. \(revelles.org\)](#)

These initiatives allow to identify the following good practices to implement youth participation programs taking into account a gender perspective:

- The local scale to address the issue is relevant even though it requires a real support from the state
- It is crucial to include the whole population: not only pupils and teachers but also parents and supervisors. Not only women starting their professional career but also (future) leaders. Not only women but also men. In short, everybody.

- Beyond implementing programs dedicated to reducing gender inequalities, it is also essential to adopt a more transversal approach and design any new initiatives with an inclusive perspective (to tackle inequalities, beyond gender).
- It is essential to give more visibility to inspiring women and contribute to the emergence of female role models.

Gender perspective in Climate Change and Environmental Policies

Despite the difficulties faced by young people in France, they have been at the forefront of the fight against global warming in recent years. Indeed, in 2018, several protest movements brought together a majority of young people in the streets to demonstrate against the state's inaction on global warming and more than 32,000 students signed the "Manifeste pour un réveil écologique" to call the society to take concrete action to protect the environment. At the same time, 4 NGOs joined forces to lead the "Affaire du Siècle" to take legal action against the French state for its lack of actions to respect the Paris Agreement and obtained more than 2 million signatures of support in less than 3 weeks (among the signatories, 42% were under 35 years old and 56% were women). A few months later, the 2019 European elections confirmed this trend in France with the arrival in 3rd position of the Europe Ecologie les Verts party (French party for ecology), particularly popular with young people (25% of 18–24-year-olds and 28% of 25–34-year-olds voted EELV).

In response to these various pressures and in a desire to make decision-making more democratic and inclusive, the government has set up the Citizens' Climate Convention in 2019. Made up of 150 citizens, including 51% of women and 49% of men (representative of the French population), its mandate was to "define a series of measures to achieve a reduction of at least 40% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (compared to 1990) in a spirit of social justice". Emmanuel Macron had pledged that these legislative and regulatory proposals would be submitted "without filter" either to a referendum, a vote in parliament, or direct regulatory application.

In its work, despite some mentions of the need to adopt an inclusive approach, allowing women and men to participate in decision-making on an equal footing, the work of the Citizens' Climate Convention did not seem to really take into account the gender dimension in the proposed solutions. It's a known fact that women are the first victims of climate change, especially in developing countries, but it seems that this assumption is not retained in the case of France, so that until now, the gender dimension has almost never been considered when designing environmental policies.

However, several factors prove that women experience climate change differently, and are the first victims of deregulation. Indeed, as mentioned in the introduction, women are over-represented in the most precarious and lowest paid jobs. They also hold 76% of part-time jobs. This poverty makes them more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (natural disasters, etc). Furthermore, even in wealthier environments, women seem to be the ones who have to deal with the mental burden of adopting a more eco-responsible lifestyle in the households¹². Finally, we can also mention the effects of air pollution on the health of pregnant women and the foetus.

In this context, it seems essential to adopt a gender perspective in environmental policies, which is all the more crucial as ecology is one of the priorities of the recovery plan detailed by the government to help France overcome the economic crisis generated by the pandemic. We also note the lack of women in decision-making positions and leaders, which has a direct impact on the relevance of the gender approach: how can we imagine inclusive solutions if the leaders and policy makers that develop them are not ? Let's look at a few initiatives that offer some ideas

- **Un autre Regard sur le climat, Emma : Raising awareness on a invisible and yet problematic issue in France**

Emma Clit is a french illustrator who became famous after releasing a comic-book to illustrate the mental load represented by the household chores for women in France. In 2019, she published “Un autre Regard sur le climat”, a new comic-book highlighting the role of women in the fight against climate change, mostly through the responsibility they had, within households, to adopt a more eco-friendly lifestyle.

How ? In her work, Emma illustrates the subtle way this mental load is assigned to women by depicting daily situations. As in the household, the woman will be most likely to do the grossery shopping, to do the cleaning, the prepare meals, it slowly became her responsibility, for the whole family.

[Pour Emma, la charge mentale liée au recyclage repose sur les femmes et les empêche de s'engager \(franceinter.fr\)](https://franceinter.fr/actualites/emma-clit-la-charge-mentale-liee-au-recyclage-repose-sur-les-femmes-et-les-empêche-de-s-engager)

- **Women 4 Climate : Leading the way in the political field**

This global movement led by female mayors from major cities in the world aims to empower and inspire the next generation to commit themselves in fighting climate change, influence conversation through leadership events and raise awareness on the

¹² [Comment l'impératif écologique aliène les femmes | Slate.fr](https://www.slate.fr/story/100000-comment-limperatif-ecologique-aliene-les-femmes)

key role women play in this field. Paris' mayor Anne Hidalgo is one of the pioneer members and the 3rd gathering of the movement was hosted in Paris in 2019.

How ?

- Paris Mentorship program : mentorship program for women entrepreneurs tackling climate change who can benefit from the expertise of women leaders from the corporate world, international organizations or civil society.
- Knowledge Lab : research workstream to better understand the impact of climate change on women and the key role they play in identifying solutions.
- Tech challenge : contest to identify innovative tech solutions created by women

Key figures :

- 17 women mayors pioneer in the movement
- 40 women entrepreneurs supported through the Paris Mentorship program

[Who we are | Women for climate \(w4c.org\)](#)

- **Earthship Sisters : Supporting women for them to become the leaders of ecological transition**

Earthship Sisters is an accelerator dedicated to women entrepreneurs developing solutions to tackle climate change. They join in a community of environmental ambassadors, whose role is to raise awareness on the issue.

How ? Earthship Sisters offers a support program with 5 week-ends of training and a sailing experience strengthen their knowledge of biodiversity and pollution with an experience on the ground. During the training, the entrepreneurs will get to work on their leadership skills and further develop their project. They will also be supported by a mentor.

Key Figures :

- A 9-month support program
- 30 women entrepreneurs supported
- 15 mentors involved in the project

[Le concept - Earthship sisters \(earthship-sisters.fr\)](#)

These initiatives allow to identify the following good practices to implement youth participation programs taking into account a gender perspective:

- Adopt an intersectional approach when designing solutions (take into account the society as a whole, with all the discriminations and the various ways climate change can impact the population, beyond gender inequalities).

- Give more space for female leaders in the political decisions, on a national and international level
- Promote sorority among women changemakers to multiply the impact of their actions
- Raise awareness on the specific way climate change impacts women, both at the local scale (precarity, mental load, etc) and at the global level (the impact of climate change on women in developing country)
- Attract and train more women to the ESTEAM subjects which are a powerful way to develop solutions to tackle climate change

Gender perspective in digitalization and innovation

Training more women to the ESTEAM subjects would indeed contribute to a better inclusion of gender in the elaboration of solutions to tackle global warming, especially in regards with the technological and digital field. The Digital with Purpose¹³ report underlines that digital technologies hold a great potential in designing solutions to address the SDGs: “Of the 169 SDG targets, 103 are directly influenced by these technologies, with established examples of deployment that provide insight into their potential to make an impact.”

Moreover, this sector also represents a huge deal in the French economy: in 2019, it was the 1st net job creator for executives¹⁴. Digital technology also played a key role in the management of the COVID-19 crisis in France, particularly to inform the population on the evolution of the pandemic and monitoring the situation through the development of various digital tools among which the app Tousanticovid (downloaded 13 million times in March 2021¹⁵). The digital sector is also at the heart of the French recovery plan and will benefit from 7 billion euros¹⁶.

However, when analysing the French performance in this field in 2019, France does not seem necessarily a best-in-class in this area, compared to other European countries¹⁷. The backwardness lies in the development of infrastructures to provide access to a connection for the greatest number of people, as well as helping the digitalization of processes for SMEs.

It is also true regarding gender equality in that field: France does not appear to be taking it into consideration in the digital development of the country. In the focus on France made by the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) in 2020, it is underlined that the number of female

¹³ [DIGITAL WITH PURPOSE Summary A4-WEB watermark.pdf \(gesi.org\)](#)

¹⁴ [L'informatique premier pourvoyeur d'emplois de cadres - ZDNet](#)

¹⁵ [Depuis son lancement, l'application TousAntiCovid a alerté 100.000 cas contacts \(bfmtv.com\)](#)

¹⁶ [Le plan de relance du gouvernement consacre 7 milliards d'euros au numérique et aux start-up \(usine-digitale.fr\)](#)

¹⁷ [Rapport BCG - enseignements généraux - 17 juin 2019 \(medef.com\)](#)

specialists in ICT (Information & Communication Technologies) out of the female workforce decreased from 1.5% to 1.4% between 2019 and 2020, whereas the overall number of ICT specialists out of the total French workforce rose from 3.7% to 3.9% for the same period.

This can partly be explained by the fact that the French digital area seems to be marked by a strong sexist mentality as demonstrated by Social Builders (social enterprise which supports women in the digital field), in a study on sexism in the Tech & Digital education¹⁸. This work provides an interesting overview of the various obstacles a woman must face while pursuing a career in the digital field in France. First, there are way less women than men who choose to pursue studies in this sector: in 2016, they were 33% whereas they are 53% in all sectors combined. In the study, the female respondents mentioned the feeling of illegitimacy to explain this figure.

For the few who make it into the universities and graduate schools, 7 out of 10 report that they have already been victims of sexism and 86% of them state that they already witness such a situation against 56% of the men surveyed. Moreover, 61% of the female respondents said that they either felt discouraged by this environment, already thought about changing their professional orientation or felt like it was harder for them than for men to reach the same job.

Finally, the study highlights that after graduating, 70% of the male respondents feel ready to directly start working against 56% of the female respondents, who are overrepresented in the support functions within digital companies.

In regards with leaders and entrepreneurs, in 2020, only 21% of the tech start-up were founded by women or mixed gender teams and less than 10% of the funds raised for tech start-up this same year were allocated to them¹⁹.

There is therefore a real challenge to build a gender inclusive digital sector in France, as it is set to occupy a crucial place in the French economy. If measures are not implemented quickly, it will only contribute to an increase of gender inequalities in France, in education (limiting the access for women and girls in the field), in training (strengthening a sexist culture in a key sector of the French economy), in the distribution of roles (high concentration of female workers in support functions rather than in management), and in innovating, leading and financing.

However, many solutions are emerging to tackle all aspects of this problem:

¹⁸ [Enquête-Sexisme-dans-les-formations-numériques-vrai-ou-fain 2016, thux-.pdf \(socialbuilder.org\)](#)

¹⁹ [Baromètre SISTA x BCG \(squarespace.com\)](#)

- **Girls can code ! : Overpassing self-limiting beliefs at a young age**

The Association Prologin aims at attracting more and more students in the digital field. They developed the program “Girls can code !” to train young girls from secondary school and high school to coding, during free internship.

How ? These internships are open to girls in secondary school or high school without any knowledge and background in the coding area. During 2 to 7 days, they will get to learn how to code, attend conferences and possibly end up developing their own project.

Key Figures :

- More than 200 girls trained
- 7 editions of Girls can code !

[Accueil – Girls Can Code! \(prologin.org\)](http://prologin.org)

- **Femmes@numérique : Promoting and training more women in the digital field**

Founded in 2018 by 6 associations deeply committed to include more women in the digital field, this foundation aims to give them more visibility, fight against sexism in the field and attract more girls and women to get trained.

How ?

- Raise young girls’ awareness on digital higher education through pedagogical toolkits
- Gather the women in the digital area into a community to create synergies

Key figures :

- 50 partner associations
- A community of 1500 women experts in the digital field

[Le projet » Femmes@numérique \(femmes-numerique.fr\)](http://femmes-numerique.fr)

- **SISTA : Easing the access to funding for women leaders in the tech field**

In 2018, 22 women entrepreneurs or investors from the tech field gathered to elaborate a code of conduct for equity funds : they should commit to use at least 10% of the money to finance women-led enterprises. In 2021, SISTA became a real community of women leaders in the tech field as well and both men and women investors. Their goal is to facilitate the links between these two communities allow more women leaders access to funding.

How ?

- A support program for women entrepreneurs in the tech field

- Quantified objectives in terms of gender inclusion for any investor who wishes to join the community
- Contribution to studies to make this issue visible in France

Key figures :

- A community of 200 women investors
- More than 130 funds and support structure signed the code of conduct

[SISTA 2.0 \(wearesista.com\)](http://wearesista.com)

These initiatives allow to identify the following good practices to implement youth participation programs taking into account a gender perspective:

- Adapt the communication for higher education to attract more girls and women
- Give more visibility to female role models in the tech field
- Implement quantitative objectives to funds and support structures to allow the emergence of more and more female leaders
- Train girls to digital skills at a young age

Greece

Existing national youth policy & youth participation programmes

During last years, there have been a series of policies and inspiring actions within Greek State in favor of youth people and their participation within community. Youths constitute an essential asset of Greek society, but few young individuals are given the chance to participate in decisions or effective actions that affect their lives and offer a positive impact for their communities, while their hypothetical contribution to society is often disregarded (UNICEF Greece, 2021).

On another note, specific policies taken by Greek authorities in past have already highlighted and reaffirmed the importance of investing in adolescents, emphasizing their role as agents of positive change. Today, the young generation should be socially aware and is substantial that they contribute to the well-being of their communities. Nevertheless, many adolescents and young people feel excluded and unsupported, both within their families or their local environment or in the wider community. What is more, the role of girls and young women in transformation of society in all levels (environmental, digital, socially or in field of innovation) has not always been given the proper attention that it is deserved to receive. The women can equally become the society's changemakers like young men, although the gender gap and the gender mainstreaming is not highlighted so properly and sufficiently to result in more equal opportunities to all members of Greek society, from an early age.

On the other hand, it would be misleading and biased if some prominent national initiatives were not mentioned. Gender issues are prioritized to a certain extent by the Greek State, and it is true that significant efforts have been made during the recent years to promote them and to mainstream gender into all public policies and actions, including youth policies which are interconnected with the promotion of gender equality. The implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development paved the way on the issue of gender mainstreaming as it constitutes a cross-cutting issue, considering all SDGs (GSFPGE, 2020). Following that, Greece has committed to adopt a set of measures and initiatives to achieve gender mainstreaming in all policies.

Regarding the context of national youth policy, in Greece any policy addressed to young generation is targeted at young people aged 15 – 35 years, while in some cases is extended till the age of 40. In most dimensions of youths' policy, there has been given some attention to young people with fewer opportunities and those belonging to specific groups. The General Secretariat for Youth is the governmental body responsible for adopting and implementing youth policy. What is more, youth policy is a horizontal one, as it reaches many fields under the

responsibility of different Ministries and as a result it is exercised by all Ministries, according to their thematic responsibilities. Consequently, there is a Ministerial Committee headed by the General Secretariat for Youth whose role is to coordinate actions targeted at young people (Moschou, 2012).

More specifically, with regard to the existence and impact of Greek policies about youth initiatives and how exactly gender perspective is included therein, one of the most important measures for youths, considering in parallel the gender equality and young women's participation, comes from Greek General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) – under Ministry of Interior – and its “National Action Plan on Gender Equality” (NAPGE) for the period 2016-2020. This Plan consists of a noteworthy national policy that entails the gender mainstreaming in youth policies. More specifically, it includes the following six policy areas with concrete objectives and distinctive synergies with active key stakeholders, thus covering a variety of both public and private life and seeking to benefit young women and men, as well as girls and boys (EuroGender, 2017:51):

- i) social inclusion and equal treatment of women facing multiple discrimination;
- ii) prevention and tackling of violence against women;
- iii) labour market, work-family reconciliation;
- iv) promotion of gender equality in education, training, media, culture, sports;
- v) elimination of gender inequalities in health;
- vi) balanced and equal participation of women in decision-making processes;

The abovementioned Action Plan has been selected and included as a good practice in the 2016 Report on Equality between Women and Men in the European Union (European Commission, 2017). The Plan includes a series of horizontal interventions within public policy, as well as vertical specialized policies, addressed to support young women and men in areas where specific inequalities are identified. The combination of the interventions follows the strategy established in 1995 at the UN Beijing Platform. In the context of producing integrated policies for specific problems and population groups, proposals and actions are usually complemented with each other to achieve more effective outcomes in various areas regarding the empowerment of youth people and mainly the balanced co-existence of women and men in society. Also, it is expected that the current NAPGE will be further elaborated during the next years, with emphasis on the empowerment and support of women and the development of their professional and digital skills. Another significant achievement, in line with a youth perspective, is the establishment of the “Observatory of Gender Equality”, a mechanism which was developed under the auspices of the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE). The aim of this mechanism's creation is to support Public Administration and Local Authorities to design, implement and evaluate policies concerning gender equality, through detailed gender-segregated data on equality issues. At this point, it is essential to notice that its

structure is based on the twelve critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), where "The Girl Child" is one of them; additionally, youth issues are incorporated in all thematic areas (EuroGender, 2017). The importance and effectiveness of this mechanism has also been selected by the European Commission as a national good practice in the Annual Report on Equality between Women and Men in the European Union for 2015 (GSFPGE, 2020).

Furthermore, it is essential to mention another important initiative in area of youth policy, taking also into account the gender perspective, which is the Greek "*National Strategic Framework '17-'27 for the Empowerment of Youth*". This framework, initiated by the General Secretariat for Youth and Lifelong Learning under the auspices of Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs and approved by approved by the Social Policy Government Council on 10th May 2018, operates as a roadmap through which the National Strategy for the empowerment of young people fills a gap of decades and creates a concrete and consolidated framework where the policies, the programs and the services for Youth are drawn up, evaluated and updated continuously with the aim of improving all aspects of young people's daily social life. At policy level, it is considered one of the most valuable tools for the activation of local societies of the country to establish an environment with better opportunities to all young people, with emphasis on young women and the elimination of the various inequalities that they face in education, personal and professional development. Generally speaking, youths are posed in the core of the Strategic Framework, which is structured in 7 main objectives, extremely important for the young people who live in Greece, with 32 sub-objectives and related indicators. A primary aim posed by its responsible actor (General Secretariat) is to monitor annually the implementation of the strategic framework and publish an annual report that focuses on the presentation of any progress or evaluation process about the willingness and needs of youth within different facets of their life, reflecting in parallel the Government's commitments for Youth, identifying the most critical priorities in this area and providing a decision-making framework (Antoniou et al., 2018). Regarding the gender perspective, the Framework highlights in many of its indicators and sub-objectives the importance of promoting and empowering young women' participation in various substantial areas of public and private life, as supported by sub-objective 6.2.1 "*To integrate gender issues in all policy agendas*" and one of its monitoring indicators (*Percentage of young women in the labour market*) as also in the sub-objective 7.3 of Framework, focusing on the significance to "*Raise awareness and participation of young people in the sustainable management and conservation of natural resources*"(Antoniou et al., 2018).

Moving on to the operational level, Greek authorities have provided a series of inspiring participation programmes for young people, integrating the gender perspective in most of them and prioritising at the same time the most essential young women' needs, notwithstanding some obstacles created by high unemployment rates and austerity measures in the first years of financial crisis in Greece. In particular, some indicative empowering programmes for the young generation which have been planned and promoted by the General Secretariat for Youth,

attempting simultaneously to give a real stimulus to young people, were the “Career Card” – a practical initiative that was designed in the past to provide career guidance counselling and training services to any interested young person through so as to complement and enhance their knowledge, skills and competences – or the “Entrepreneurship Hubs” Project, in the field of innovation. Concerning the latter, one of its objectives is to support young people to be distinguished in entrepreneurial competitions by providing entrepreneurial training and developing their entrepreneurial skills, supporting them for implementing their entrepreneurial plans in the open market. This project was also addressed to young female students, giving equal opportunities to all young learners to develop their entrepreneurial spirit and their skills on organizational procedures management, familiarising at the same time themselves with research and technology issues. Moreover, during last years, there have been also some financially support programmes by the Greek State, with a subsidy of social security contributions by the Greek Manpower Employment Organisation (O.A.E.D.) such as “Programmes supporting young people who are self-employed and those starting up new businesses (Youth Entrepreneurship, Young Scientists, New Entrepreneurs and Women Entrepreneurship)”, with a total of 23,500 beneficiaries, mostly young people up to 32 years. In those programmes, the Greek authorities have given financial aid to young people, including young women, to the following actions (Moschou, 2012):

- Start-up business financial support,
- Action-specific counseling (drafting a business plan, **sustainability principles**, etc.) for those who receive financial aid,
- Specific actions to support **youth entrepreneurship** in the sectors of tourism, culture, and **environment**, according to the specific needs of the local economy and
- Financial support actions for youth cooperatives and social enterprises.

Existing relevant initiatives by other stakeholders

Apart from state-led policy measures or concrete actions and tools (like the Framework '17-'27 or support programmes for unemployed youth) focused on youth policy, some additional initiatives from civil society, private sector or even as a result of a synergy/ common initiative between a public service authority and a civil society actor are worth mentioning. An indicative example is a webinar, which took place as an interactive online event, in November 2020, titled as “Green Deal, European Youth Guarantee and youth employment: Opportunities and Challenges in Greece and Spain”. This webinar was performed with the collaboration of the World Future Council with the pilot EU projects GRÆDUCATION and EUKI YesClima and their partners. The Greek social cooperative “Anemos Ananeosis / Wind of Renewal” participated in the preparation of the event and the organisation of discussions’ panel. Its particular focus was to discuss if and how a Green Sector can offer chances to engage young women and men endangered by economic exclusion, in particular by implementing the goals set out in the European Green Deal (EGD) and the corresponding National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). All speakers of the webinar highlighted that the Green Recovery process will create

new business opportunities and relevant innovative pathways for young people. As such, today's youth will need to be more well-prepared. Also, it was given emphasis on the European Commission's initiative to "*reinforce the Youth Guarantee*", aiming to support young people in gaining work experience and developing skills as well as to boost employability for a green economy. All discussion themes were critical in giving to all participants the chance to reflect upon crucial issues, like youth unemployment or engagement of young people with the green transformation process and climate protection. Also, the webinar paved the way for the participating organisations to adopt new ideas to their local context and increase the focus on supporting young women in their own projects/initiatives. In particular, the social cooperative "Wind of Renewal" which participated actively in this webinar, had the opportunity to transfer the knowledge and lessons learnt to the project YESClima, in which it participates as a Greek partner. In this project, 22 young women and men from Greece and the Spanish province Cádiz, have elaborated energy-audits and proposals to make school building more energy efficient, mainly with "smart" natural techniques and using solar energy (Chrysogelos, 2020).

Aside from specific European initiatives in which some Greek actors are involved (such as the abovementioned webinar), there are national civil society or private actors that have focused on gender issues as well as on the connection of women with the environmental sustainability and skill's development. For example, the volunteer organization "X.E.N. ELLADOS" seeks to promote the development of society's environmental consciousness, by fostering the **relationship of young women with the environmental protection**, through tailored actions and counselling services addressed to young women. Specifically, via the creation of educational and supportive materials, this organization tries to achieve the active participation of their female volunteers into programmes related to the environment, by sensitizing them to develop a responsible role in environmental issues. Indicatively, two of its most important actions for young women and their inner development in crucial societal issues are the initiative "**Support the woman in the crisis**", including actions that strive for women' education and learning in currently required skills, as well as another one which is titled as "**Women' navigation**", aiming at educating women in new technologies and boost their relative skills in this field (X.E.N, 2021).

In a global environment where equality and women's empowerment has become one of the primary objectives of most countries in Europe and beyond, both public and private actors that invest in the promotion of Sustainable Development Goals and new opportunities for all young people, are called upon to act responsible and strategically towards gender equality, both within their own network and in the broader communities in which they operate. A noteworthy example of such action comes from the Greek non-profit organization "**Women on Top**", based in Athens, which focuses, among other, on the organization of professional development seminars to empower women from vulnerable groups. More specifically, this educative and creative initiative includes empowerment workshops which are designed especially for the needs of

female workers (unemployed, working mothers, new or prospective entrepreneurs, students, women in a career change phase), covering and benefiting a variety in age range of young women. Through these customized workshops, mentors and trainers of this Greek organization have given emphasis on skills that either enhance the career prospects of women (like negotiation, conflict management, leadership, digital skills, risk management, etc.) or help improve their work / family life balance and their productivity (time management, balance of roles, etc.). In addition, Women on Top often organizes a series of training/networking events for the women' advancement in male-dominated environments (like technical professions) via one-day conferences, career fairs and inspirational events which seek to raise awareness within the general female population around a particular industry (e.g. a traditional male-dominated one) or a company that actively invests in female talents (Women on Top, 2018).

Best practices

At this point, specific case studies, implemented by various stakeholder groups, both national and grassroots initiatives, are going to be presented, having already been considered successful in young women participation in critical issues of our society (digitalization, innovation, environment, etc.). To begin with, the first initiative considered as a best practice is titled as **“Women and Girls go Digital”**. It is about a well-organised Conference which took place in 2014, in the framework of Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union (for the period January-June 2014) and was coordinated by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, in collaboration with the European Centre for Women and Technology and in cooperation with National and European Stakeholders. This initiative, in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy and the implementation of the Digital Agenda for Europe, was aimed at showcasing the link between e-Skills, Gender Diversity and ICT as a critical factor for economic growth, based on the proliferation of digital jobs, always in favour of women. On top of that, the Conference focused on how to effectively address the digital skills gap and raise awareness digital skills' enhancement, by including female talents in digital jobs, research, and innovation. All participant stakeholders paid specific attention to the promotion of new opportunities for young digital entrepreneurs and to the challenges of the media' role in the new digital era. Thanks to the organization of this practice, Greece as the conference's host country, was internationally awarded in the category of “digital opportunity” by the WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards, a biannual event for the recognition of excellence in digital technology. The international reward of the “Women and Girls Go Digital” Initiative in the category of “digital opportunity” was announced on September 30th, 2014, as part of the 19th World Information Technology and Services Conference, held in Mexico (EuroGender, 2017). In addition, this impactful initiative was mentioned positively as a good practice in the 2015 Report by the European Parliament entitled “Empowering women on the Internet” (European Parliament, 2015: 16).

Furthermore, regarding the connection between digitalization and young women or the promotion of women' competences in digital and ICT sectors, another Conference entitled as **"Women in Digital"** was conducted virtually in March 2021 and organized by the commercial agency "Smart Press". During this Conference, there were interactive and productive sessions and small discussions with women already engaged in the area of digital technologies, by learning at the same time about their experiences in this sector, the challenges they are facing as well as the advantages that a young woman can gain in the field of digital technology. This initiative gave the chance also to young women from various groups in society to attend virtually and freely the conference, being inspired by female role models and their own success story in the development of their skills and their professional achievements. Apart from the discussions on the women' empowerment in a digital environment, there was a small section in the Conference especially dedicated to the digital transformation process and how the women, from a young age, can contribute efficiently to the promotion of their digital skills in order to thrive into our challenging world (Women in digital, 2021).

Moreover, another promising practice related to the young women' active engagement in society, benefiting both their own competences and generating an added-valued also for society, is the project **"Womentors"**, which is implemented under the Active citizens fund program by the *Lambrakis (Greek) Foundation* and the organization *"Mission Anthropos"*. In this project, which constitutes a co-creative process, the focus is on the empowerment of young women through training & capacity building techniques so as to have a positive impact in their participation, decision-making power & transformative action, becoming responsible agents of the society and taking full control of their lives in relation to their economic/resource base, the public/political arena allowed to them by society, the balance between work – family – personal life, their wellbeing, their equal rights in the labor market etc. More specifically, it is expected that around 177 female students will be initially trained as leaders and in turn will organize within 2 years a set of empowerment seminars for 50 young women each, hence forming a nationwide network of 9,000 women, 18-35 years old, (with a percentage of 5% coming from remote areas) who will participate in inclusive women's empowerment activities in 15 cities around Greece. In this collective endeavour, there will be 28 facilitators with strong empowerment skills will support the whole experiment, by giving advice and coordinating the female beneficiaries at regional level. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all training and empowerment sessions will only be available online during the academic year 2020-21. If public health conditions allow for in-person meetings in 2021-22 (in the upcoming months), the seminars will be implemented in a blended version (combining live and e-learning methods). Additionally, live teleconference sessions with female mentors are planned to be provided during the seminars, while videos of inspiring personal stories mainly by women will be created and communicated to 35,000 women of all ages. Moreover, an awareness campaign for 4,000 girls and 4,000 boys aged 12-18 is going to be promoted and disseminated in schools throughout Greece (Womentors, 2021).

Finally, a very important initiative which opened a new window in innovation and entrepreneurial front, this time addressed to young refugee women which constitute a society's group with fewer opportunities, is the creation and launching of an online store, called "**Etsy store**". The online establishment of this "creative" store was organised and led by Greek NGO Irida Center, in collaboration with Beyond Words International. This idea was realised through "Women Without Barriers", a project to support refugee artisans, mainly young women, in promoting and in-turn selling their artwork and products and the means to achieve this experiment was the development of a digital shop, the "Etsy store". A second objective of this innovative practice is to foster the inclinations and the confidence of talented female refugee women, by promoting their artistic works to a wider audience. It is essential to mention that most art products are made by sustainable or recyclable materials, contributing in this way to the circular economy values and to the sustainable development. Today, Irida Center, which is based in Thessaloniki, serves 450 women from 37 countries, many of whom are refugees and asylum seekers. "Etsy shop", which has been considered a very promising initiative for the benefit of young women with fewer opportunities or disadvantaged backgrounds, seeks to provide opportunities for income generation, by offering 100% of proceeds back to the artists, expanding arts programming at the Center for women and youth, and promoting women refugees' untapped potential through arts, which is a powerful and innovative tool for stress relief, trauma recovery, positive expression and skills' advancement. Also, a part of proceeds from the project is planned to fund part-time art teachers to continue the women' training at the Irida Women's Center and provide classes to refugee youth in Thessaloniki, Northern Greece (Beyond Words International, 2019), such as activities focused on life and computer skills (Intervolve & Irida Center, 2019-2020: 9).

Moldova

For several years, the Republic of Moldova has been confronted with the process of depopulation. The demographic situation of the country is the result of several processes, such as diminishing fertility, increase of mortality and external migration from the last two decades. In the Republic of Moldova, in the Information and Communication Technology sector (ICT), girls and women are underrepresented on the workforce market. They occupy 31% of the jobs in the sector and 19% of digital professions. Gender inequities on the workforce market in the ICT sector are obvious, but declining. The share of women employed in the ICT sector in 2017 was about 31%, and their share has increased during the years 2014-2017 by 2 p.p., which shows that gender discrepancies in employment on the workforce market are declining²⁰.

In order to better understand which are the barriers and main factors that contribute to the fact that girls and women take decisions in favor of STEM and ICT professions, a survey was conducted by the company Magenta Consulting on the request of UN Women and with the financial support from Sweden. In the **”Motivations and barriers for girls and women in STEM and ICT domains”**²¹ study analyzed existing statistical data and was carried out a survey among 362 girls aged 14-18 from 5 administrative-territorial units: Balti municipality, Cahul, Calarasi, Causeni, Ungheni district.

Both young women from the urban and those from the rural areas are interested in the domains: Beauty services (30%), Economics (27%), Tourism and hotel services (26%) and Education (24%). At the same time, the young women are not interested at all in the following domains of activity: Physics and Electronics (81%), Geography and Geology (78%), Architecture and Engineering (74%), Mathematics (76%), Biology / Chemistry (69%), Information Technology (65%).

Among the participants in the interview, 38% knew since high school that they would study in the field of ICT, being inspired by computer science teachers or being passionate about computer science lessons at school. Others either chose spontaneously or submitted the documents for studies at a faculty where they thought they would have more chances for a place on budget.

²⁰ [Analytical Survey. Women and men in the Information and Communication Technology sector \(ICT\), 2019](#)

²¹ [Motivations and barriers for girls and women in STEM and ICT domains](#)

The factors that influenced women and girls in choosing a professional career were more often represented by the opinion of family members, friends and teachers who encouraged them. Also, an important factor can be considered the favorable location of the educational institution in relation to the locality where the respondents live.

The majority of male and female interviewees who work in IT companies say there is no discrimination of women who work in STEM domains, but there is just a stereotype in society, which is already diminishing.

At the same time, the majority of male and female participants in the study think that persons of an older age may consider that girls would not be able to cope in STEM. Some girls encountered discouraging affirmations from relatives or parents who considered that in STEM or IT “masculine thinking is needed”. At the same time, several respondents consider that for a woman it is more complicated to achieve fulfillment professionally because, besides the career, the woman needs to raise children.

The girls interviewed told that some of the barriers they faced were: the fear of failure, considering that they graduated a humanistic profile in high school; poor knowledge of English language; sexist attitudes and jokes towards them from colleagues or university teachers.

Women's access to income, through decent employment opportunities and social security, is a foundation for economic emancipation and gender equality. Access to personal income can help increase a woman's self-esteem and bargaining power in domestic and community settings, and can reduce the probability that they will be exposed or remain in abusive relationships.

Portugal

Portugal has a dictatorial heritage that made the emergence of social movements complicated and more recent. Still, the young people have had an important and revolutionary role on the 1974 revolution. Since then, several social changes have followed at various levels (the emergence of freedom of expression and speech, women's rights, LGBT rights, among many others). In the last 3 years or so, there has been an expansion of demonstrations, actions, and collectives around environmental issues that join the issue of feminism. It was around 2018, over the influence of Greta Thunberg, that many young people went on the streets to demonstrate against the state's inaction on global warming and climate change.

Nowadays, with the internet and the expansion of social networks, causes gain a new dimension, and what happens and is talked about in one place in the world, ends up reaching us. Both environmental and feminist issues are now present themes in the Portuguese public and political debate, influenced by the pressure exerted by young people and collectives.

The topic of feminism and the environment together (e.g. ecofeminism) is something that is addressed more at the academic level. There are also some collectives that, more recently, have been mentioning these issues.

Covid-19 made a lot of vulnerabilities, in many levels, more visible. With the pandemic, in many cases, women became more vulnerable. First of all, like mentioned by FCT: "Women are in the front line of the response to the pandemic, as health workers, social workers, cleaners, as scientists and researchers, and as mobilizers; also, as working mothers they are particularly hard hit by the demands of reconciling care and support for children whose schools and nurseries have closed" (FCT, Gender Research 4 Covid-19). Also, with the confinement and lockdowns, domestic violence towards women increases (in 2020 thirty women were murdered, 16 of them within intimate relationships). APAV²² in its 2020 annual report noted that 74.9% of the victims of violence are female.

This pandemic context was also particularly difficult for young people, male and female, for many reasons. Many claim²³ that they are learning significantly less with the online classes format; covid-19 is compromising their professional prospects; mental health is being considerably affected; and so on. In this way, the pandemic crisis is creating many obstacles that previously existed, but are now highlighted.

²² Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima (Portuguese Association for Victim Support).

²³ Jovens e a Covid-19: Impactos No Emprego, Na Educação, Nos Direitos e No Bem-Estar Mental https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-lisbon/documents/publication/wcms_775004.pdf

Covid-19 obviously made it more difficult for people to go out on the streets and manifest, however, there are still some actions being made, within what it is possible to do.

Existing National Youth Policy & Youth Participation Programmes

Portugal is an ageing country so the Portuguese government compromised to invest in the youth. Young people (from 15-29 years old) represent around 16% of Portuguese population, and the government decided, in 2018, to create the Plano Nacional para a Juventude²⁴ (PNJ). The main idea is that, since young people have some difficulties, like the access to housing or employment, this is supposed to be a way to protect their rights by creating public policies for these particular purposes.

Still, unlike in most European countries, the continuing low turnout of young Portuguese voters is not offset by their participation in other, less "elite-driven" and unconventional forms of political activity²⁵.

Although there are, theoretically, several opportunities for youth to participate in national and European democratic mechanisms, most of these mechanisms are disconnected from their lifestyles and cultural consumption²⁶.

(Around 57% of Portuguese between the ages of 15 and 24 show no interest in politics) - <https://fronteirasxxi.pt/cativarosjovens/> (aplicação MyPolis)

Among the various international documents ratified by Portugal, of particular note is CEDAW - the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women - a document adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, which defined what constitutes discrimination against women and presented an agenda of national activities aimed at ending such discrimination.

²⁴ National Plan For Youth, retrieved in June 2021 at <https://dre.pt/web/guest/home/-/dre/116330692/details/maximized>

²⁵ Estudo sobre A Participação Política da Juventude em Portugal: <https://gulbenkian.pt/forum-futuro/participacao-politica-dos-jovens-em-portugal/>

²⁶ Jovens na Política – Participar para a Cidadania

Global <https://app.parlamento.pt/webutils/docs/doc.pdf?path=6148523063446f764c324679626d56304c334e706447567a4c31684a53556c4d5a5763765130394e4c7a4a44546b56445543394562324e31625756756447397a51574e3061585a705a47466b5a554e7662576c7a633246764c7a4133596a4d77597a426d4c54526b597a55744e475579596930344d4455334c54686a4d5451774e574e6b5a546b324e6935775a47593d&fich=07b30c0f-4dc5-4e2b-8057-8c1405cde966.pdf&inline=true>

Existing relevant initiatives by other stakeholders

- **HeforShe Portugal**

Created in 2014 by UN Women, the movement has the particularity of calling for the awareness of boys and men to promote gender equality. HeForShe believes that it is possible to accelerate the process of gender equality if citizens, civil society organizations, universities, businesses, and government institutions join forces. It recognizes that the empowerment of women is fundamental to inclusive economic growth and social cohesion and justice, and environmental balance.

Carolina Salgueiro Pereira - founder of #HeForShePortugal, creating a national youth movement for gender equality, women and LGBTQI+ rights, with clubs in dozens of universities across the country, and 200+ regular young activists. Co-founder of Tipping Up, chapter in Women in Global Health (WGH) is a global movement with the largest network of women and allies working to challenge power and privilege for gender equity in health.

Learn more about it here: <https://www.facebook.com/HeForShePortugal/>

- **Women2Women Portugal**

W2W is an international women's leadership program, organized by the NGO Empower Peace. Ana Lomba Correia, founded in 2019 the youth association Women2Women Portugal, aiming to bring the international leadership program to our country and work on youth empowerment with a focus on gender equality. It is suppose to strengthen leadership skills through a cycle of conferences, workshops and activities; build bridges of mutual understanding, respect, and trust among young people from different backgrounds and cultures; engage the participants on topics that define their lives, such as healthy self-confidence and self-esteem, violence against girls and women, guaranteed access to education and health, and all aspects that relate to their effective participation in society; and to demonstrate the importance of civic engagement and volunteerism through the development by each of the participants of a social impact initiative in their communities related to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Learn more about it here: <https://uniarea.com/event/women2women-portugal/>

- **Portuguese Women in Tech**

Portuguese Women in Tech was launched in April 2016, by Liliana Castro and Inês Santos Silva, with a dual mission: they want to support women in technology by providing visibility, networking, mentorship and by creating trainings and other opportunities. But they also want to attract more women and girls to tech and in this way, increase the pipeline.

This project already made a lot of progress, and some of its actions were: the organization of workshops and events (workshops on productivity, Web Summit, the Portuguese Women in

Tech Awards and the PWIT Hackathon), the launch of a booklet, a mentorship program, a bookclub and a female founders entrepreneurship program, and also created several tools like the Portuguese Women in Tech Speakers List, the Salary Transparency Project and the Pioneers Report.

They mean to attract more women into the technology area and want to see **more women in leadership roles and building companies**.

Learn more about it here: <https://www.portuguesewomenintech.com/>

- **Girls in Tech**

Girls in Tech is a movement that aims to contribute to a greater gender diversity in STEM courses, promoting the exchange of experiences and knowledge between female high school and college students.

Higher education students organized in regional Girls in Tech groups will hold presentation sessions in high schools, with the aim of fighting the main myths and prejudices related to the presence of women in scientific and technological areas.

Learn more about it here: <https://girlsintech.pt/>

- **Geek Girls Portugal**

Its mission focuses on engaging, inspiring, and empowering women through meetups and workshops, awareness sessions in schools to inspire young women, and mentoring to support the development and career advancement of women in tech.

In their meetings they approach diversified themes, from more technical areas - electronics, software, hardware - to project management methodologies, management for innovation, digital media, or even motivational themes. These are moments of great sharing of experiences, projects, and contacts between women, but where everyone is invited to collaborate and be a speaker at one of the upcoming events.

The workshops are about more technical, or career development topics covered in the meetings, whose interest reveals the need to deepen them, will thus be the object of a workshop open to all Geeks in the community.

In schools they pretend to captivate and encourage more young people to opt for a career in this area, introducing them to the diversity of aspects that the technology area has to offer.

In addition to the need to build a solid network of contacts among women in technology, in order to get them more involved in the activities and world of technology, many women were also looking for some support and guidance for their careers. In this sense, they are planning and developing a project of mentorship.

Learn more about it here: <http://geekgirlsportugal.pt/>

- **Engenheiras Por Um Dia**

The project Engenheiras Por Um Dia, an initiative by the Secretary of State for Citizenship and Equality, Rosa Monteiro, promotes among students of non-tertiary education, the option for engineering and technology, deconstructing the idea that these are male domains.

Throughout the school year, schools can participate in several of their activities, such as: engineering challenges, study Visits to companies and universities, mentoring actions, cycle of workshops on engineering and technology, celebration of Girls in ICT Day and other events.

Learn more about it here: <https://www.engenheirasporumdia.pt/>

- **Feministas em Movimento**

The main goals of this project are: to articulate academia and activism, highlighting and promoting feminisms and their activism as a social and political tool for the realization of human and women's rights, particularly those of women and girls; to combat all forms of discrimination against women and gender discrimination; to advocate for gender equality and equal opportunities among all people and intersectionally; promote children's rights and the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence.

So, its vision consists in eliminating multiple gender discrimination, particularly against women and girls, ensuring the materialization of gender equality, living in citizenship and human rights, all fundamental rights, in an intersectional and trans-generational way.

One of its projects is a Violence Map which aims to aggregate and cross-reference individual data on daily violence against women, from multiple sources, institutional, NGOs, academia, and others. The goal is to contribute to increase coherence in the evaluation of the phenomenon of gender violence and violence against women, organizing information and extracting relevant indicators.

Learn more about it here: <https://fem.org.pt/>

- **Feminismos Sobre Rodas**

This project consists of an itinerant feminist and activist group that carries several initiatives to exchange experiences and build answers for a transforming future. Some of the topics they talk about are menstruation and menstrual health, feminine masturbation, equality, and so on.

Learn more about it here: <https://www.facebook.com/feminismos.sobre.rodas/>

- **Rede de Jovens Pela Igualdade**

The Rede Portuguesa de Jovens para a Igualdade de Oportunidades entre Mulheres e Homens (REDE) is a non-profit association that aims to promote gender equality in youth in compliance with the precepts and guidelines of the United Nations and the European Union using, for this purpose, activities of information, training, lobbying and influence, research, solidarity and education and cooperation for development.

The REDE brings together two areas of intervention: gender equality and youth. It intends, therefore, to mainstream gender in the area of youth. It works in different areas: education, empowerment, mobilization and advocacy.

With the objective of implementing gender mainstreaming in education for Human Rights, REDE has, since its creation, collaborated with schools, universities, associations, and other youth-related structures to raise awareness and mobilize young people around issues related to Gender Equality, using participatory methodologies, particularly based on Non-Formal Education.

In order to empower young women, REDE develops several activities with the purpose of contributing so that they can participate, together with their male peers, in an equal and balanced way, in civic and political power, changing the current status quo, deeply conditioning an equal participation in power structures.

The REDE provides a space and a set of tools at the service of young people who want to carry out actions for social transformation, towards a greater defense and recognition of human rights and the promotion of gender equality.

It is also intended to influence public policies at the National and European level through advocacy and lobbying activities, based on the experiences and contributions of young people, as well as the experiences of projects developed in the field.

Learn more about it here: <http://redejovensigualdade.org.pt/blog/>

- **Plataforma Portuguesa para os Direitos das Mulheres**

It is a social, cultural and humanist association, non-profit and independent from the partisan, administrative and confessional point of view, which has NGODMs as members. It was created in 2004 with the objective of building synergies for reflection and collective action, with a view to

promoting equal opportunities between women and men and defending women's rights, using a variety of means, including research, lobbying, dissemination, communication, awareness-raising and training.

It aims to contribute to the empowerment, articulation and mobilization of Portuguese NGOs and to strengthen their cooperation with European and international NGOs working in this area, in order to enhance their action in society as actors of the gender equality implementation process. As such, the Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights represents Portugal in the European Women's Lobby and in the Southern European Women's Association. The Platform also intends to contribute to the change of mentalities and to the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the most diverse areas, namely through the media, as privileged multipliers.

Learn more about it here: <https://plataformamulheres.org.pt/sobre-nos/organizacoes-membro/>

- **Femafro**

FEMAFRO is a non-profit association led by women and young people that defines its action based on the defense and promotion of the rights of black, African, and Afro-descendent women in Portugal, seeking the elimination of all forms of ethno-racial and gender discrimination, based on the ethical principles of equality, social and labor justice, promotion of quality of life, and respect for human rights.

The strategic plans of action are: political and civic participation of black, African and African descendant women in Portugal; creation of networks with other associations and organizations that meet FEMAFRO's mission and objectives; establishment of partnerships capable of contributing to the sustainability of initiatives and programs developed locally, nationally and internationally; development of non-formal education activities, peer education and exchanges with communities of children, youth and women; organization of events: conferences, debates, training sessions, round tables, etc.; production of audiovisual content.

Learn more about it here: <http://femafro.pt/>

- **BORA - Impact Hub**

The goal of this event was to inspire women to take the leap into entrepreneurship. The problem they sought to overcome was the sense of being overwhelmed and under-informed which many people, women especially, feel when they consider striking out on their own. They convened a range of speakers, male and female, who could share their wisdom and insights with the participants over two days of intensive talks and workshops.

Learn more about it here: <https://lisbon.impacthub.net/bora-mulheres-coca-cola/>

6. We4Change Survey Analysis

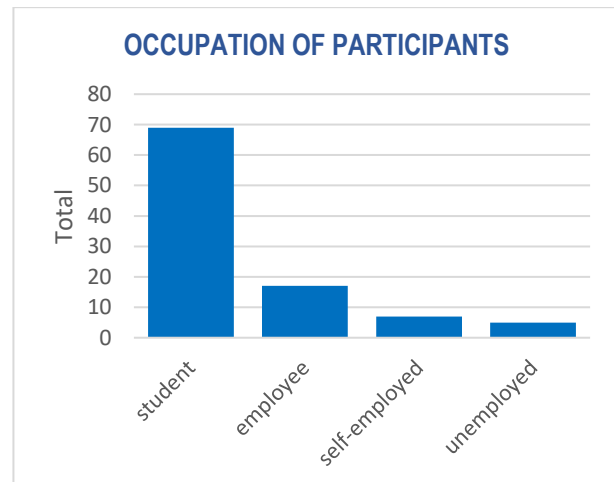
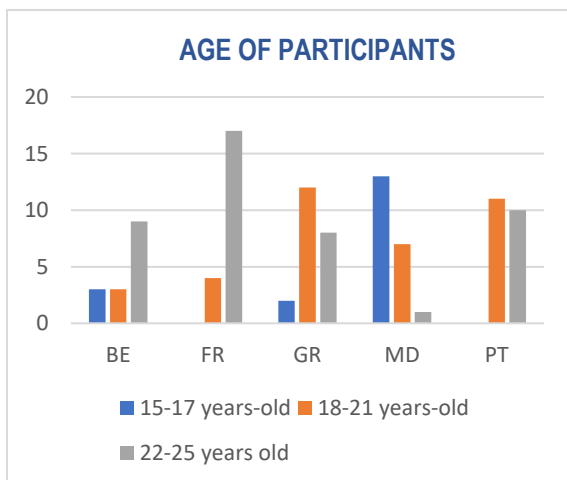
We4Change survey on Girls' and Women's interest in ESTEAM topics (STEM powered by Entrepreneurship and Arts) for social innovation

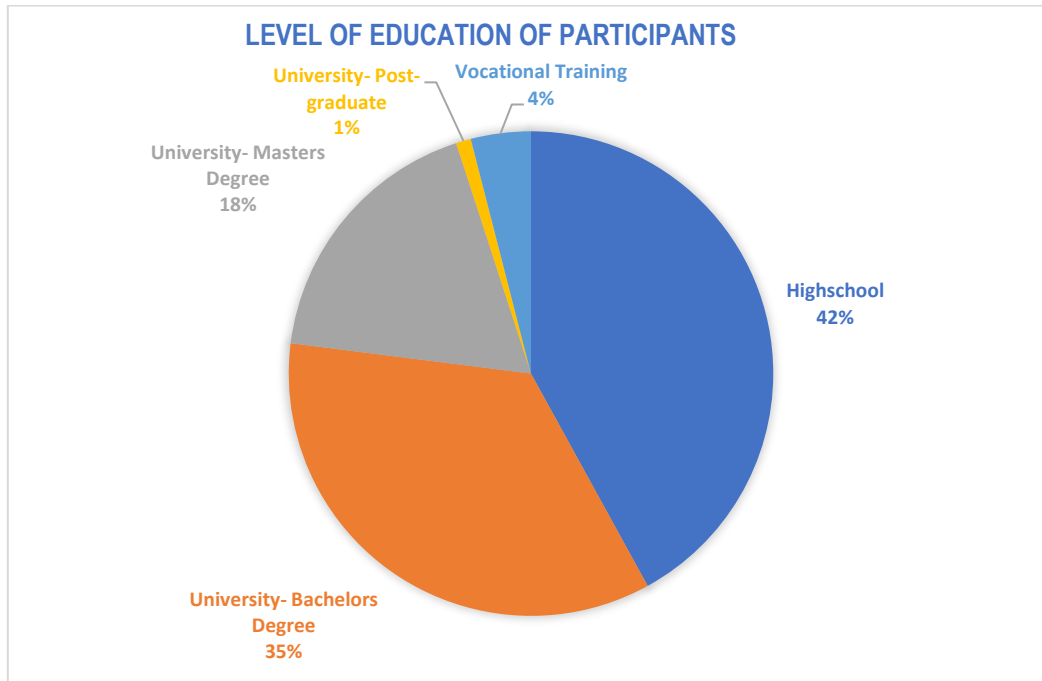
To identify what motivates girls and young women across Europe to develop their creativity, knowledge and skills and contribute to society, the project team has conducted a context specific gender analysis, which will lay the foundations for an innovative curriculum that will offer a combination of hands-on activities, training on digital, innovation and environmental awareness skills, problem-solving and co-creation of prototypes to address climate change and drive environmental transformation.

From the survey conducted, there was a total of 100 responses from female responders in Belgium (BE), France (FR), Greece (GR), Moldova(MD) and Portugal (PT) that were recorded. The questions on the survey tackled the profile of the respondents, the learning methods of ESTEAM topics and the career prospects within the realm of ESTEAM.

Profile of Respondents:

This section takes a look at the profile of the respondents of the survey, to understand the group of participants who have provided insight into the main topic. Questions address age group, occupation and the current level of education of the respondents.

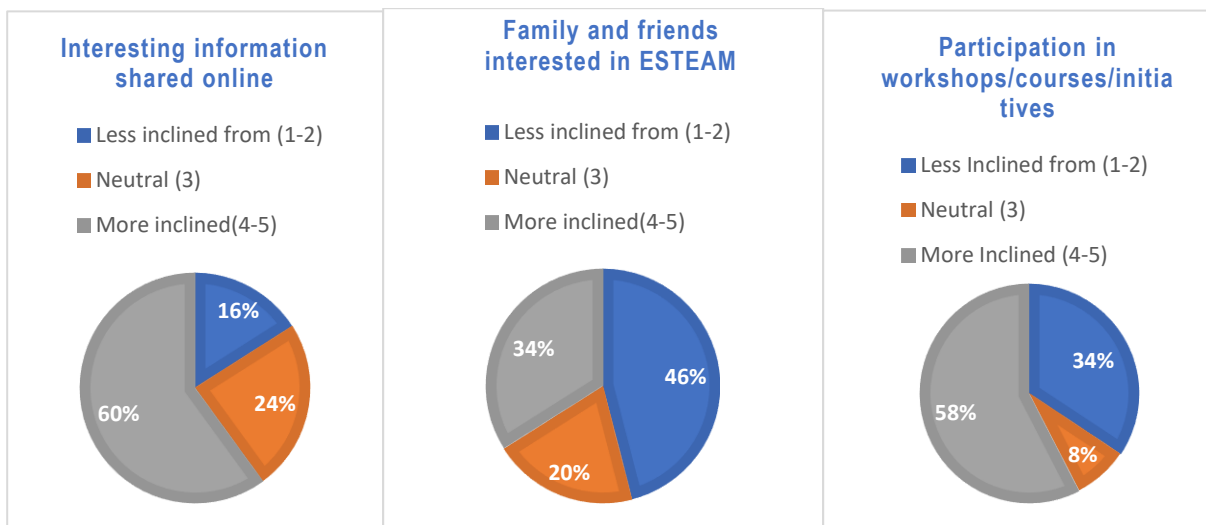
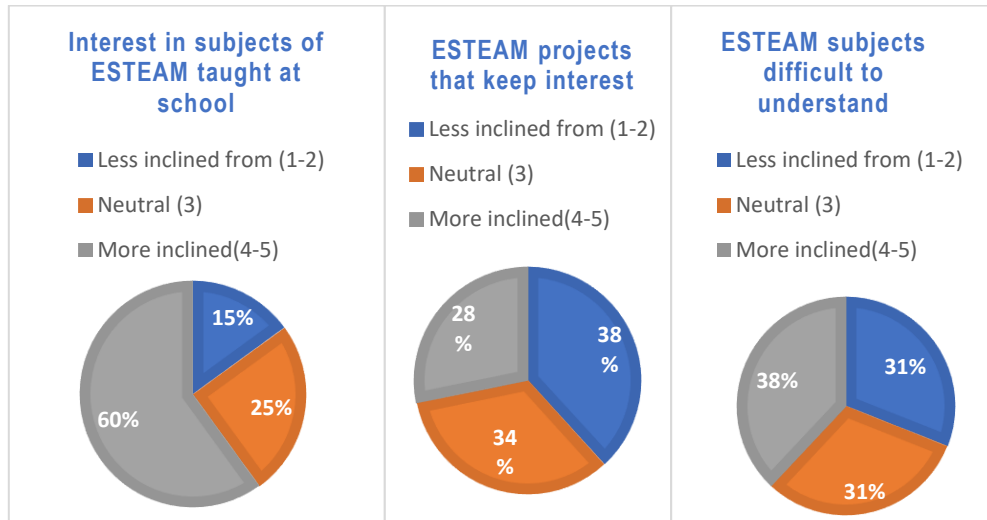




From the survey conducted, most of the respondents were students of secondary (high school) and tertiary (Bachelor's degree) levels, with the highest representation of those in the age group 22-25.

Knowledge and interest of respondents in ESTEAM subjects

This section aims to look at the interest of respondents in ESTEAM subjects and their perceptions on the efficiency of formal education methodologies to transmit/teach these subjects in a way that is easy to understand for students. The section also introduces questions on non-formal and informal activities that the respondents took part in to acquire further information /interest in ESTEAM subjects.





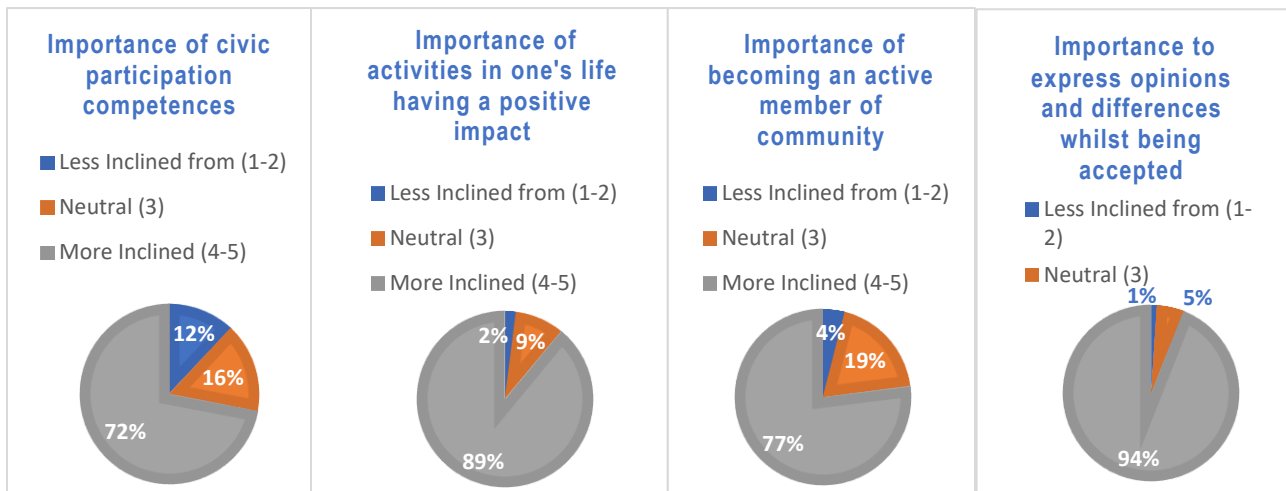
From the data gathered, the respondents showed a high level of interest on ESTEAM subjects. However, their responses indicate that they find it difficult to understand the complexity of ESTEAM topics solely through the information available in formal education contexts. As there is a high portion of respondents who indicated that their friends and family also do not share a high level of interest towards ESTEAM topics, it shows a discouraging position for some young minds to further discuss and develop within the field of ESTEAM. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents indicated that online resources other initiatives in the non-formal education settings are used to gain further the knowledge in ESTEAM subjects.

On the matter of their needs to pursue their interest in ESTEAM, the majority of responses indicate that their require information that is easy to understand and includes practical uses and that is also readily accessible. This is a key insight as we design the curriculum for the We4Change Changemakers activities, but also for any institution that develops and offers ESTEAM activities to youth, that they need to be grounded in the daily practice of young people so that they can relate to a certain topic/activity and it needs a hands-on approach that encourages the learner to test and experiment their newly acquired information, but also to think critically to identify gaps between theory and practice.

Even given the diversity of our respondents, in terms of cultural and educational background, the other needs identified by the research team – role models, a community of people to share one’s interest and financial resources – are common to all the respondents and equal in importance, indicating that these barriers are still relevant and more needs to be done to address these secondary, but important barriers for young women to increase their interest and participation in ESTEAM fields.

Civic Participation

This section takes a look at the level of participation and engagement of the respondents in activities related to social activism and other democratic decision making activities. Civic participation is essential because it allows citizens to influence policy, local values, and local government priorities. This, in turn, leads to a higher level of trust, stronger, happier communities, and creates agency among residents who are often overlooked and underheard.



The responses collected show a high level of interest in the concept of civic engagement of young women. An important majority of the respondents are interested in acquiring civic participation competences (leadership, social activism, critical, democratic decision making, interactive participation etc.), while there is a preponderance of young women that consider it important to become a more active member of their communities.

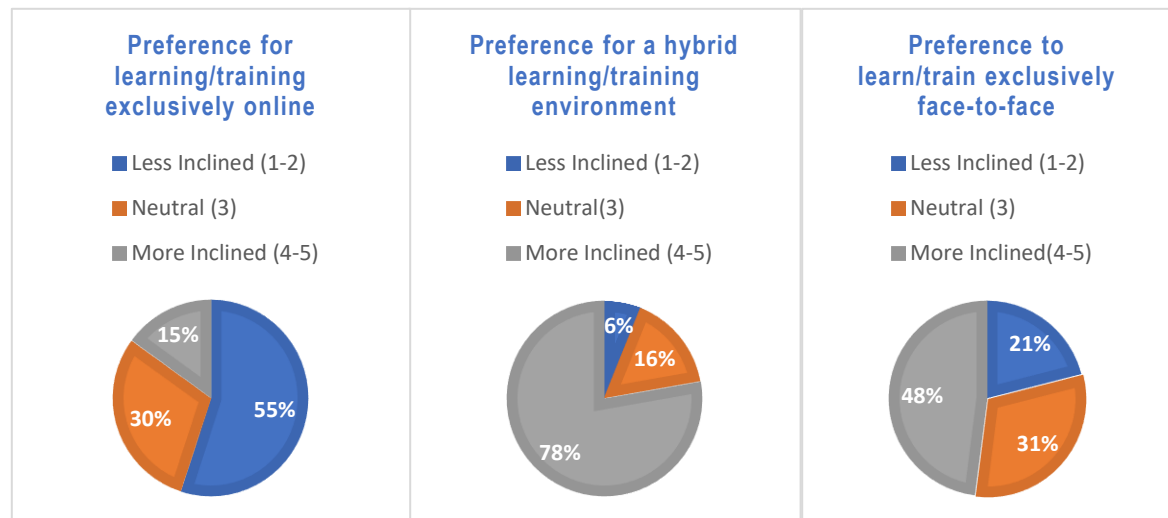
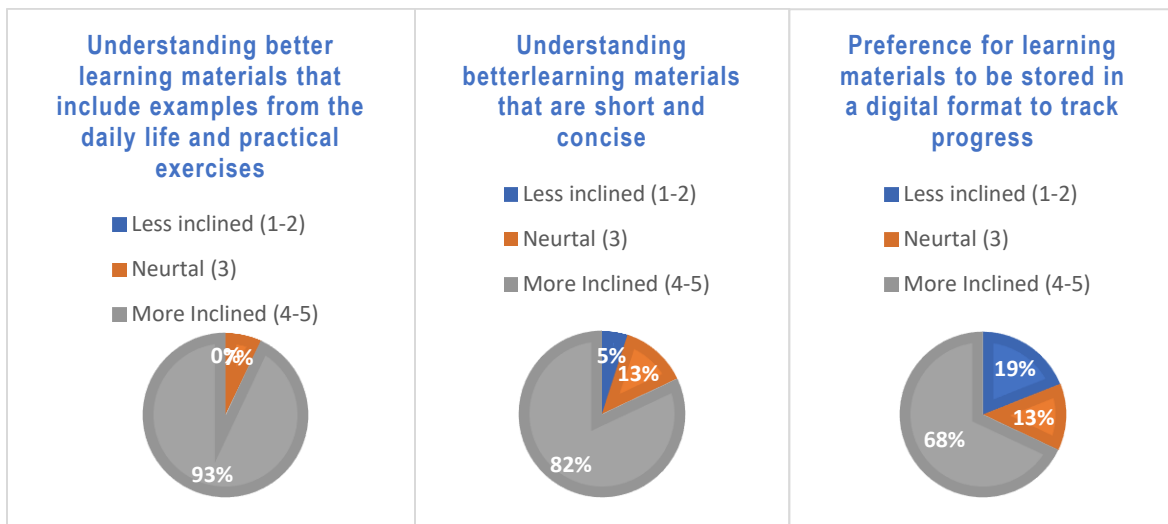
There is a greater level of value given to being part of a community, especially communities that are inclusive, where multiple ideas can be shared in a safe environment and where there can be recognition of the positive impact of all its members.

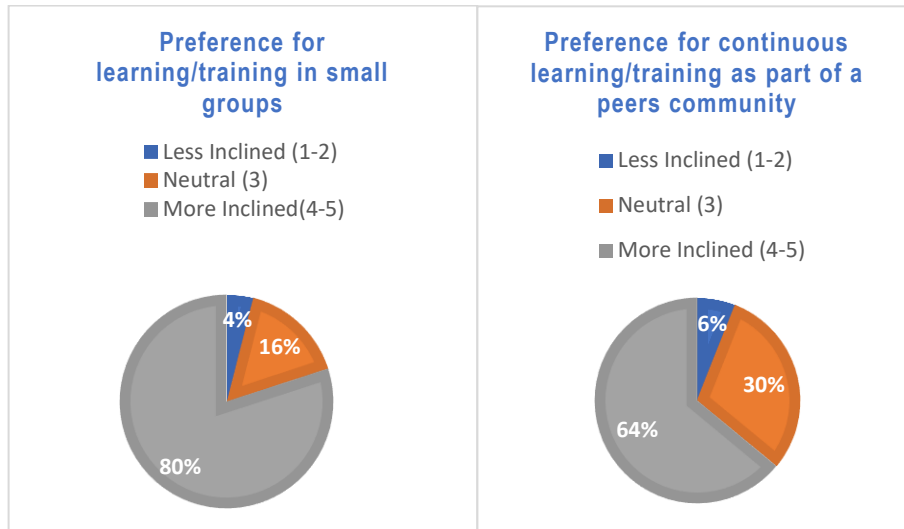
Again, these insights are very important for the design of the We4Change Changemakers events, as it reinforced the need to develop activities around two essential concepts:

- ✓ Socially oriented: the activities and outputs to address social challenges and with a clear societal impact;
- ✓ Community & local ecosystem: tapping into the local community helps to deliver solutions that are suited for the local ecosystem and ensure greater support of initiatives beyond the events;

Learning methods

The main focus of this section is to look at the different preferences of respondents when it comes to how they receive education/information of ESTEAM subjects in a non-formal education setting. In order to design activities that bring real added value to our target group, it is critical to utilize a variety of instructional strategies and tools that take into account their needs. A good learning experience strengthens learning and development and, ultimately, helps improve employee performance and productivity.





From the data collected, the majority of the respondents demonstrate an interest to learn more from practical exercises that can be used in daily life. It is preferable for the material to be brief, whilst providing enough information for the users.

Additionally, most participants want to continue to track their progress through a digital format, but there is a great preference to train through a hybrid format rather than online or exclusively face to face. This permits an easier accommodation of activities during the day.

Also, it is clear that a foundation built from a peer community can expand the level of interest and networking abilities of respondents, especially preferring to have a small group training to allow for a greater chance for communication and continuous improvement.

Career in ESTEAM

This section focuses on the interest of respondents in pursuing a career in ESTEAM, and it takes into account the level of education or professional development, social factors (such as financial development of the country of origin of the respondents, cultural norms etc.) and future opportunities in the ESTEAM sectors.

To get a better feeling of the experiences of the respondents and to understand the factors that drives or not their interest in ESTEAM careers, we shared an open ended question “*Are you interested in pursuing your studies/career into ESTEAM fields (Engineering, Science, Technology and Mathematics powered by Entrepreneurship and Arts)? What de/motivates you on this path?*” Those who provided a positive response, stated that :

- “*I think that the ESTEAM issues can help me in my future job pursuit, given the difficulties of the financial crisis*”

- *“I love math, I love technology, obviously I am interested in developing in this field. Every quality I possess motivates me to grow, to know and to create”*
- *“I have a Masters degree in IT engineering and it's totally aligned with the next steps of my career !”*
- *“Yes, I work in a consultancy firm that deals with information systems and I am trained in technology and engineering issues”*
- *“It motivates me the fact that such a career is likely to have positive impact in our society. However, I feel that I do not know exactly what potentials exist and what I can do in these fields.”*
- *“Because it is already an area of study or vocation that I am not interested in, it was only during the 3rd cycle that I was interested in the areas, but then I started to draw negatives in disciplines that were essential to have a solid base to understand in the future. However, I don't regret it at all, because right now, finally, I'm doing what I really like and captivates me.”*
- *“I would like a career in one of the ESTEAM fields because they are based on change, creation and discovery of new things. I also want to be a person who helps to improve and create more favourable living conditions for the next generations”*
- *“The wide range of possibilities and a generous salary in the future career”*
- *“I have a business management background and I am interested in knowing how to use technology to develop a business.”*

From the answers collected, it can be noticed that the majority of respondents are already pursuing studies and careers in ESTEAM fields. Their interest stems from a genuine passion for these topics and the possibilities that these areas offer for personal growth and development, but also for positive impact on society. A career (change) in ESTEAM is considered beneficial also from a financial perspective, offering various employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

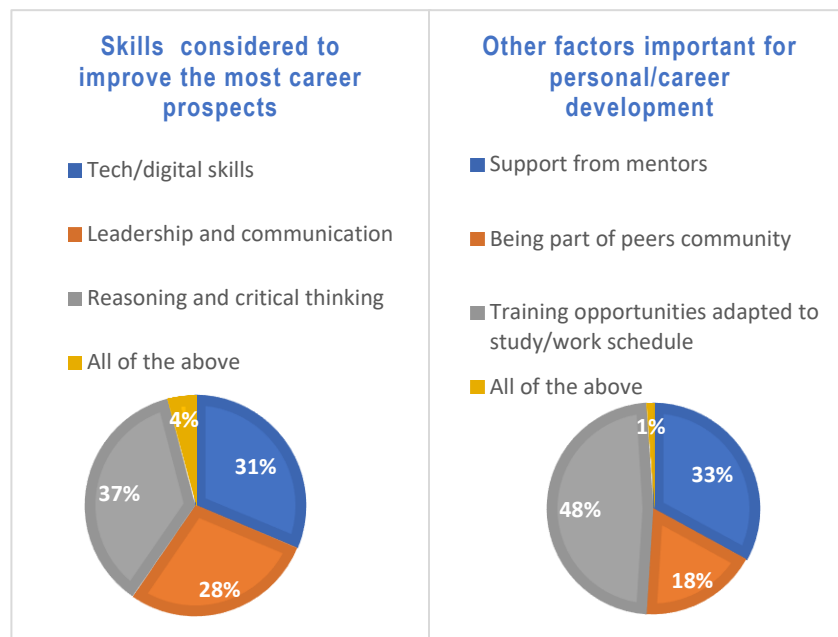
Respondents also shared what factors demotivates them from following a career in ESTEAM field, for example:

- *“I feel that I do not have the necessary skills to follow such a career.”*
- *“Lack of chances and support”*
- *“They are fields quite different from my initial background”*
- *“Not for my studies but why not taking a new course after graduating”*
- *“A motivation is that there is a potential to find professional opportunities because of the STEAM themes' broadness. It discourages me the fact that in school no special emphasis is given on issues related to art or entrepreneurship in order to exercise more relative skills”*
- *“It is a male-dominated space in which the women lag behind and are not supported efficiently”*
- *“I don't have a lot of knowledge about what I could do in this area”*

- *“Content is very complex and difficult to understand easily.”*
- *“I have a journalism degree, so I am not planning to make such an important change, but the mix of digital and entrepreneurial skills is important for me.”*
- *“I am more interested in jobs with a social element, but I think it is important to have some technical and entrepreneurial skills too.”*
“There are no models to follow in the subject of my interest”

While many respondents shared that they are already in other study/career paths, these can require a more general knowledge on ESTEAM topics or tools – such as digital tools – so they are interested in generic information. Some respondents have signalled a lack of support or knowledge to understand better what ESTEAM subjects are and how they can pursue these areas. Others have also identified social factors such as “male-dominated field” or lack of “role models” as demotivating factors.

Furthermore, we examined what skills are considered to improve the most career prospects and what other factors are important for personal/career development. Reasoning and critical thinking has ranked the highest to improve career prospects, followed by tech/digital skills and leadership and communication. As complementing factors for personal/career development, respondents have selected training opportunities adapted to study/work schedule, followed by support from mentors and peers community.



7. Conclusions

At European level, many initiatives are aimed at creating an inclusive, progressive and equal society, and some are specifically focused on supporting girls and women to fully participate to the society and fighting gender inequality. The following conclusions can be drawn from the context specific analysis undertaken by the We4Change project consortium:

- At European level there is there is a constitutional commitment to gender mainstreaming across all the EU's policies and activities
- However, in the majority of the countries analysed, policies dedicated to youth have rather been designed to stimulate youth commitment in the civil society and social diversity, but without much consideration of the specific needs of girls and young women.
- The role of non-governmental organizations in supporting girls and young women to understand and be part of the ecological transition is essential, as they are able to adapt faster to the changes and needs of the society.
- Young people show an increasing interest in matters related to environmental awareness and sustainable development
- Girls and young women perceive a strong connection between ESTEAM and social impact.
- Increasing interest in ESTEAM studies among girls, particularly throughout their adolescent years, is critical so as to instil computational thinking and problem-solving skills, and eventually leading to them selecting a study/career path requiring those skills.
- Many girls and young women still perceive a lack of support and readily available information to pursue ESTEAM studies and careers.
- Girls and young women complement knowledge obtained at school with other sources of information (informal and non-formal education) to get a better understanding of ESTEAM subjects.
- To be more relatable for young people, ESTEAM subjects should be connected with examples from their daily reality and should include practical activities, so that they are better able to connect theories to real-world situations.



We4 Change

Girls and Women Connecting
for Environmental Change



[WE4CHANGE.EU](https://we4change.eu)



Funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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