OMEGA

YOUNG FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS STEPPING INTO THE DIGITAL AGE

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METHODOLOGICAL HANDBOOK (E-BOOK)

"YOUNG WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND DIGITAL CULTURE"

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YOUTH FOR EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING

ΛΥΚΕΙΟ ΤΩΝ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΔΩΝ ΠΑΡΑΡΤΗΜΑ ΒΕΡΟΙΑΣ

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YOUTH AND LIFELONG LEARNING FOUNDATION

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE OMEGA PROJECT

The integration of young people into the labor market nowadays presents significant challenges to member states because the economic crisis has primarily affected young people, specifically those between the ages of 15 and 24, in terms of their employment prospects. Based on Eurostat statistics from 2017, the situation is even worse for young women in that age group, with a 16.2% unemployment rate. Analyzing the 2017 data for the project's partner countries reveals the disheartening fact that the unemployment rate for young women in Greece is 48.2%, or nearly one out of every two women.

Turkey's youth unemployment rate for 2019 was 24.64%; however, according to data released by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUİK) in July 2019, the labor participation rate for women is 34.5%, while for men it is 71.8%. In the second quarter of 2021, Macedonia's unemployment rate dropped for the second consecutive quarter, hitting a record low of 15.9%. The previous year's rate was 16.7%. In Skopje in 2012, the unemployment rate for women was 28.5%. In Skopje, the percentage of unemployed women decreased over time, from 30.5% in 2010 to 28.5% in 2012. The unemployment rate for women between the ages of 20 and 24 in the fourth quarter of 2020 was roughly 37.16 percent, higher than the rate for men in the same age group (35.98 percent). Romania has a 5.2% unemployment rate and a 4.8% unemployment rate for women, whereas Belgium has a 6.4% unemployment rate and a 6.5% unemployment rate for women. (2017, Eurostat). It is imperative that we all acknowledge the vital role that young women play in the economies and societies of Europe. Thus, it is believed that enabling young women to actively engage in the labor market is essential for the economic and social advancement of Europe as well as its long-term viability. The goal of this collaboration between the six organizations is to share best practices and encourage actions related to digital technology in order to help young women enter the workforce and advance their careers. In order to train young women in the professional use of digital technology to foster their employability and socio-educational and personal development and facilitate their professional and social integration, the project will, on the one hand, support professionals working with young women to improve their digital skills and strengthen digital education initiatives aimed at them (especially young women that belong to disadvantaged groups, refugees, or migrants).

On the other hand, it will provide young women with the chance to enhance their key competencies and digital basic skills through educational experiences and settings, boosting their chances of a seamless transition into the workforce. Furthermore, because they now need a different skill set, young women looking for work are facing new challenges as a result of the spread of information and communication technologies (ICTs) across all economic sectors.

On the one hand, these shifting skill sets are creating more job opportunities, but on the other, they are placing additional pressure on marginalized communities. For young people attempting to enter the workforce in today's job market, basic ICT skills are considered essential (Garrido, Sullivan & Gordon, 2010). The project prioritizes actions and experiences that help young women acquire digital skills and competencies, such as catching up with digital literacy and digital entrepreneurship, in light of the role that digital technology plays in improving employment opportunities for them. OMEGA is a 24-month EU project involving six organizations with the goal of fostering good practices and actions in the field of digital technology in order to support young women's professional integration into the labor market by fostering the development of their digital and entrepreneurial ideas and skills.

OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

Female entrepreneurs have repeatedly demonstrated that they add value to socioeconomic growth by providing an additional pool of entrepreneurial motivation and potential, far from being a hindrance to the development of the hosting societies. The European Union's "Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan" emphasizes that entrepreneurship must become the engine of economic growth for the continent if Europe is to fully capitalize on the opportunities presented by a dynamic and demanding global environment. This requires a significant and comprehensive cultural shift. Due to their higher rates of business creation than men, female entrepreneurs are noted in the Action Plan as an important part of the previously mentioned evolution. However, despite this, the plan also notes that female entrepreneurs fail more frequently than male entrepreneurs because they lack the necessary information, knowledge, and language skills. Although they encounter a number of obstacles, including limited management and marketing expertise, language barriers, lack of access to training, and business support services, female entrepreneurs are driven to pursue entrepreneurship. They also constitute especially vulnerable targets because they add gender disadvantage to these barriers.

The project intends to address the issues raised above by giving young entrepreneurs with an entrepreneurial drive the mindset and abilities necessary to launch and expand their own start-ups. The OMEGA project aims to create an international synergy between six European organizations that share the same need, which is to help young women enhance their digital competencies and skills in order to improve their chances of being integrated into the workforce. Having as target groups youth workers, trainers, ICT and digital technology experts involved in youth education belonging to partner groups, as well as low digital skilled women and young women belonging to disadvantaged groups (i.e. women living in remote areas, refugees, migrants), we propose a project having the following objectives:

- Professional development of youth workers, who will learn various good practices regarding digital skill and competence development in order to transmit them to the young women (of different backgrounds) they will work with and increase their chances of employability and their chances of entering into the labor market, to raise awareness on the value of digital skills in finding a job nowadays, as well as their social integration in the modern society nowadays.
- The development of business skills through digital literacy and learning how to run a virtual company. These are extremely valuable in that they help young women acquire digital competencies and skills that employers value today or that are crucial for launching their own companies.

- The acquisition of new behaviors: they will be more willing to converse on subjects of interest in digital education with experts and young people, in our case, women. - Improvement of language and communication skills, fluency, and bravery in speaking on subjects that appeal to young people.
- Adaptation to the contemporary entrepreneurial digital mindset and competitive advantage gained from its application in the job market.
- Tools equipped with everything needed to make a quicker transition into the workforce.
- Empowerment of female members of a population disproportionately impacted by joblessness.
- Discover how to apply gaming experiences for educational purposes that enable a deeper exploration of the idea of digital entrepreneurship.

OMEGA is bringing together five European Union partners in order to work toward a shared objective: supporting the growth of the entrepreneurial mindset and associated digital skills in young female entrepreneurs who are driven to start their own business but encounter a number of obstacles such as limited management and marketing expertise, language barriers, and limited access to training.

TARGET GROUPS AND BENEFICIARIES

Female entrepreneurs, far from being an obstacle to the progress of the host societies, have consistently demonstrated their capacity to contribute added value to socioeconomic development by offering an additional source of entrepreneurial drive and potential. This has been emphasized by the EU's "Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan," which underscores that if Europe wishes to maximize the opportunities presented in an ever-evolving and competitive global landscape, entrepreneurship must become the driving force of the European economy, necessitating a significant and extensive cultural shift. The Action Plan also underscores the significance of female entrepreneurs in this transformative process due to their higher rates of business establishment compared to men. However, it acknowledges that despite their higher business creation rates, female entrepreneurs face a greater risk of failure due to a lack of information, knowledge, and language skills. Female entrepreneurs aspire to become business owners but encounter a series of challenges related to access to training, support services, language barriers, as well as insufficient management and marketing skills.

Moreover, they are particularly vulnerable due to the intersection of these challenges with gender-related disadvantages. The project's objective is to tackle the aforementioned challenges by equipping young entrepreneurs, who possess the motivation to start and expand their own businesses, with the necessary skills and mindsets. The OMEGA project strives for international collaboration among six European organizations that share a common need: enhancing the digital skills and competencies of young women to improve their prospects for integration into the labor market. OMEGA recognizes the need to address several issues and problems that impact the partnership and the target groups, which include young women and youth workers:

- Insufficient understanding of the significance of acquiring digital skills for entering the labor market.
- Limited awareness of the urgent need for active involvement of young women in digital entrepreneurship education.
- Young women and youth workers working with young women lack updated digital skills education related to entrepreneurship and are in need of appropriate resources for more effective engagement.
- Inadequate tools and competencies required for faster entry into the labor market.

- Limited contact with best practices currently implemented in job-seeking environments.
- Limited awareness of innovative training techniques and packages such as simulation game experiences.
- A disconnect between them and the use of ICT-based game environments.
- Insufficient awareness of the effectiveness of the connection between simulation gaming processes and digital education.
- Limited awareness of the opportunities provided through simulation gaming processes.
- Exclusion of the population most affected by the consequences of unemployment.
- The need for the participation of young women in international projects.
- The need for establishing business relations.
- The need to expand networks of involved organizations within the EU partnership.

UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SIGNIFICANCE OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The landscape of women entrepreneurship

Europe's female entrepreneurship scene is presently undergoing a dramatic upheaval that is reshaping the continent's definition of social progress and economic growth. This section explores the complex network of variables that led to this change and highlights the importance of female entrepreneurs in the modern business environment. Women's entrepreneurship has increased significantly in Europe in recent years. These trailblazing women aren't just blazing a path; they're also becoming a major player in the founding of new businesses. This upsurge is supported by multiple important factors.

The fact that more women than men create businesses is evidence of their potential and entrepreneurial spirit. When it comes to starting and running businesses, European women are demonstrating that they are not only on par with men but frequently even better. These women are paving the way across a broad range of industries, not just one particular one. Their endeavors, which greatly contribute to economic growth and promote innovation, range from creative tech startups to more established companies. It's also critical to recognize that there are regional variations in this entrepreneurial revival throughout the continent. Regional differences contribute to the landscape's diversity, with some parts of Europe seeing more rapid growth and offering greater assistance to female entrepreneurs. These areas are fostering pockets of economic growth and innovation, underscoring the revolutionary potential of female entrepreneurship.

Growth in female entrepreneurship

The higher rates of business creation among women are essential to this revival. European women are surpassing their male counterparts in spearheading new business ventures at an increasing rate. By starting companies of all shapes and sizes, from traditional enterprises to technology- and innovation-driven startups, they are making a major contribution to both economic growth and the advancement of innovation. Female entrepreneurs in Europe are not only creating jobs and boosting economic dynamism, but they are also promoting diversity in the business environment. They are pursuing endeavors in fields where women have historically been underrepresented and questioning established gender norms. In addition to enhancing the business sector, this diversity is dismantling entrenched gender stereotypes.

Furthermore, it is becoming clear that female entrepreneurs are a strong and influential force in the European business community. They are working for larger corporations, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), and startups more and more. They are major forces behind economic advancement because of their adaptability and creative thinking, which are bringing about positive changes in a number of industries. Regional differences in the expansion of female entrepreneurship also contribute to the picture. While there are many regions in Europe where women entrepreneurs are thriving, each region may have very different growth rates and levels of support. Certain areas are fostering more favorable conditions for female entrepreneurs, acting as role models for advancement and empowerment.

Challenges and barriers

Even though women's entrepreneurship is expanding in Europe, it's important to recognize the particular difficulties and obstacles that women entrepreneurs encounter:

- Access to training: A lot of prospective female business owners do not have enough resources or training at their disposal to help them gain the abilities and know-how needed to operate a profitable enterprise. Limited access to mentorship, workshops, or educational programs catered to their particular needs may be the cause of this inequality.
- Business support services: There are frequently insufficient business support services available, such as networking platforms, funding opportunities, and mentoring. These services are essential for assisting female business owners in navigating the business world's intricacies, growing their networks, and gaining the knowledge necessary for success.
- Language barriers: For female entrepreneurs, language can be a significant obstacle in areas with linguistic diversity. These obstacles make it more difficult for them to enter new markets and investigate opportunities. In order to give female entrepreneurs access to the markets and resources they require to succeed, it is imperative that these linguistic gaps be bridged.
- Inadequate marketing and management capabilities: A lot of female business owners are devoid of the marketing and management abilities needed to successfully launch and expand a company. For them to succeed in the long run, they must close this skills gap since it will affect their capacity to compete in the business sector.

Gender disadvantage

Recognizing that gender-related disadvantages present an additional layer of challenges for women entrepreneurs in Europe is crucial.

- The gender pay gap: Women entrepreneurs frequently face gaps in opportunities and income despite making substantial contributions to the business world. Women entrepreneurs continue to make less money overall than their male counterparts due to the gender pay gap. Given that it is not a reflection of variations in entrepreneurial skill or dedication, this disparity can be extremely frustrating.
- Underrepresentation: Women continue to be underrepresented in positions of leadership and in fields that have historically been dominated by men. Due to their underrepresentation, they have fewer access to powerful networks and resources, which can significantly hinder their capacity to expand their companies and succeed on par with their male counterparts.
- Stereotyping and bias: Perceptions of female entrepreneurs are still influenced by gender-based stereotypes and biases. These prejudices may affect their endeavors' capacity to secure capital, win over clients, and gain general support. Creating a more equal business environment requires first addressing these prejudices and stereotypes.

The role of women entrepreneurship in socioeconomic growth

It's important to understand that women's entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in driving socioeconomic growth in Europe and is not just a question of equality. The sustainable development of Europe depends on utilizing the potential of female entrepreneurs, as research and initiatives such as the EU's "Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan" highlight. Women entrepreneurs make a substantial contribution to the creation of jobs, economic diversification, and community development as they persist in breaking down barriers and overcoming obstacles. Their companies promote social empowerment, economic dynamism, and innovation. In essence, female entrepreneurship serves as a catalyst for Europe's overall advancement, underscoring the significance of projects such as the OMEGA project. The OMEGA project seeks to increase the beneficial effects of women entrepreneurship, thereby promoting economic growth and societal development throughout Europe, by empowering and assisting young women in their entrepreneurial endeavors. The importance of women in entrepreneurship is clear, highlighting the necessity of continual efforts and assistance to promote the expansion of female entrepreneurs throughout the continent.

Challenges and Barriers Faced by Female Entrepreneurs

Unquestionably, female entrepreneurship plays a significant role in fostering socioeconomic growth, but it's important to recognize the particular difficulties and obstacles that women entrepreneurs face as they work toward their business goals. Their entrepreneurial journey may be significantly impacted by these obstacles, which call for specialized assistance and solutions:

- Access to resources and training: Women business owners frequently encounter barriers when trying to obtain the resources and training necessary for success in the corporate sector. These restrictions can take many different forms, such as being unable to participate in mentorship programs, workshops catered to their individual needs, and educational programs. Creating inclusive educational and training programs that meet the various needs of female entrepreneurs is necessary to address this challenge. We can equip women with the knowledge and abilities they need to succeed in the cutthroat business world by closing this resource gap.
- Insufficient business support services: The success of entrepreneurs depends on having sufficient business support services. But female business owners might find it challenging to use these resources. These resources, which aid entrepreneurs in navigating the intricacies of the business world and growing their professional networks, include networking platforms, funding opportunities, and mentorship. To guarantee that female entrepreneurs can take advantage of the opportunities and guidance these services provide, it is imperative to implement initiatives aimed at enhancing accessibility to these resources.
- Language barriers: For female entrepreneurs, language can be a major obstacle in areas with linguistic diversity. Working in multilingual settings can make communication more difficult, restrict their ability to enter new markets, and prevent them from taking advantage of opportunities. To ensure that language barriers do not prevent women entrepreneurs from accessing the markets and resources they require to succeed, initiatives such as translation services and language training programs are required.
- Inadequate management and marketing skills: Success as an entrepreneur depends heavily on one's capacity to manage and market a company successfully. These crucial abilities may be lacking in many female entrepreneurs, which could harm their businesses. The creation of educational materials and training programs that give women the skills they need to successfully compete in the business world is necessary to close the skills gap. By giving women the chance to improve their marketing and management abilities, we enable them to spearhead the success of their businesses.

- Access to funding: For female entrepreneurs, obtaining sufficient funding for their endeavors can present a major obstacle. They frequently run into difficulties getting loans, venture capital, or angel funding. This barrier needs to be addressed in a multifaceted way. It entails putting female entrepreneurs in touch with a variety of funding sources, raising awareness of the opportunities for funding that are out there, and offering assistance in crafting compelling funding proposals. We can support economic growth by giving women the financial resources they need to follow their dreams of becoming entrepreneurs.
- Work-Life balance: For female entrepreneurs, striking a balance between the demands of entrepreneurship and their personal and familial lives can present special challenges. Reaching this balance calls for accommodating work schedules, encouraging regulations, and easy access to reasonably priced child care options. It is critical to acknowledge the value of work-life balance and to promote laws that uphold it. We empower women entrepreneurs to thrive in their personal and professional lives without compromising in any area by giving them the flexibility they require.
- Network access: The success of a business depends on professional networks. Women business owners, however, might have trouble getting into these networks, which could limit their chances for mentoring, teamwork, and business growth. To guarantee that female entrepreneurs can take advantage of the wealth of information and support these networks provide, it is imperative to implement initiatives that make network access and mentorship opportunities easier.
- Market access: For female entrepreneurs, breaking into new markets and attracting a larger clientele can be difficult. These difficulties could be caused by a lack of knowledge, opportunities for exporting goods, and successful market entry tactics. It is imperative to support initiatives that encourage trade diversification and offer guidance on expanding markets. We improve the capacity of female entrepreneurs to expand their enterprises and support economic growth by providing them with the information and resources required to enter new markets.

In order to foster an atmosphere where female entrepreneurs can flourish and fully contribute to socioeconomic growth, it is imperative that these obstacles and challenges be acknowledged and addressed. By giving women entrepreneurs the tools, support networks, and training they need to overcome these challenges and realize their full potential as dynamic forces behind social and economic advancement, we can empower them. The goal of the OMEGA project and related programs is to close these gaps and build a more diverse and beneficial entrepreneurial ecosystem for all.

THE ROLE OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS IN SOCIOECONOMIC GROWTH

The importance of female entrepreneurs is not limited to the business world; it is intricately linked to the larger socioeconomic structure of the communities and areas in which they operate. Even though they face particular difficulties and obstacles, female entrepreneurs are vital to the development of the social and economic environments. This section explores the diverse contributions and transformative role of women entrepreneurs in promoting social development, prosperity, and sustainable growth.

The creation of jobs is one of the most notable and direct contributions made by female entrepreneurs to socioeconomic progress. Whether they are larger corporations or tiny start-ups, their businesses are significant job creators. Women entrepreneurs create jobs for their communities by starting and growing their businesses. Their capacity to generate employment lowers unemployment rates and supports economic stability. The impact of female entrepreneurship can be especially transformative in areas with high unemployment rates, providing a lifeline for people looking for meaningful work and income.

The actions taken by female business owners frequently have a significant effect on economic diversification. Women business owners are well known for their ability to launch cutting-edge goods, services, and business concepts. Numerous local economies are impacted by this diversification. The presence of female entrepreneurs increases a region's resilience to global challenges and economic fluctuations by reducing reliance on a single industry or sector. Their ability to spot market gaps and create original solutions boosts the dynamism and competitiveness of their local economies.

In addition to leading businesses, female entrepreneurs also develop into community activists. They usually put the needs of the community first in their endeavors, whether through using sustainable practices, generating social impact, or lending support to regional causes. By fostering social cohesion, addressing local issues, and encouraging a sense of unity and shared purpose, these businesses support community development. They improve everyone's quality of life by actively contributing to the general well-being of the communities in which they operate.

Progress is largely dependent on innovation, and female entrepreneurs are leading the charge in this regard. Their unique perspectives, life experiences, and approaches to problem-solving enable them to come up with ground-breaking concepts and solutions. Female entrepreneurs are renowned for their ability to spot market opportunities and unmet needs, which results in creative business endeavors. Their entrepreneurship encourages innovation, which advances societies and puts them at the forefront of social, technological, and economic advancements.

In addition to being influential figures in business, female entrepreneurs serve as role models and inspiration for other women. Their stories of success from startup to exit show that women can pursue entrepreneurship as a viable and rewarding career path. By doing this, they dispel myths, question accepted wisdom, and encourage other women to follow their aspirations of becoming business owners. A more inclusive and diverse business environment is the outcome of empowering and assisting female entrepreneurs. It inspires women to see themselves as capable leaders, innovators, and change agents.

It is impossible to overestimate the capacity of female entrepreneurs to demonstrate resilience and adaptability in the face of obstacles and economic uncertainty. They have demonstrated their ability to change course, weather economic turbulence, and prosper in trying situations. The existence of formidable female entrepreneurs bolsters the economic resilience of entire regions during times of crisis. Communities are able to bounce back from setbacks, seize new chances, and carry on with their growth and development despite unfavorable circumstances because of their resilience and spirit of entrepreneurship.

Socioeconomic inclusion and the active engagement of women in entrepreneurship are inextricably linked. It embodies the idea that everyone in society, regardless of gender, ought to be able to participate in and profit from economic expansion. We open the door to a more inclusive and equitable society by eliminating prejudices and barriers based on gender. Women's abilities, ideas, and goals are respected in an inclusive society, and their contributions are acknowledged as essential to the development of localities and areas. Women's socioeconomic inclusion in entrepreneurship guarantees that no one is left behind and that everyone benefits from economic growth.

It is evident how important female entrepreneurs are to the advancement of socioeconomic growth. Their contributions span far beyond economics, addressing issues of empowerment, innovation, job creation, and community development. They strengthen the social cohesion of their communities in addition to promoting economic prosperity. In order to ensure that female entrepreneurs continue to have a positive impact on job creation, economic diversification, community development, innovation, and the pursuit of a more equitable and inclusive future, initiatives like the OMEGA project—which recognizes the importance of supporting and empowering female entrepreneurs—are crucial. We clear the path for a more dynamic, just, and prosperous society by creating an atmosphere that recognizes and celebrates the accomplishments of female entrepreneurs.

THE OMEGA PROJECT FRAMEWORK

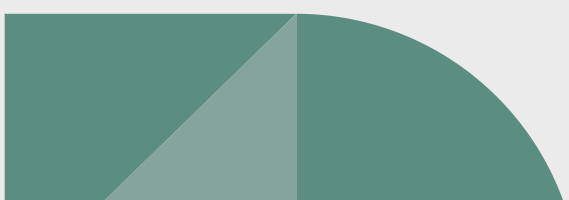
Developing the digital skills and competencies of young women, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to improve their integration into the labor market, is the common goal of the six European organizations that make up the OMEGA project. We describe the project's history, goals, goals, and main stages in this chapter.

Six European organizations have joined forces in the OMEGA project to address the digital skills and competencies of young women. This collaboration is compelling. This spirit of cooperation encourages a dynamic, international flow of information, resources, and creative solutions. The project's main goal is to give aspiring young women business owners the digital competencies and skills they need to succeed in today's competitive market. The significance of empowerment is particularly high for individuals who encounter particular obstacles such as restricted access to training, inadequate language proficiency, insufficient management and marketing skills, and disadvantages related to geography or society.

The diversity of partner organizations from Belgium, Greece, North Macedonia, Romania, and Turkey is a fundamental strength of the OMEGA project. A rich tapestry of experiences and knowledge is created by the distinct expertise, resources, and perspectives that each partner brings to the table. This diversity demonstrates the project's dedication to international cooperation and the importance of exchanging best practices across the European Union. The partner organizations cover a wide range of industries, such as community involvement, digital technology, youth education, and entrepreneurship support. Because of this diversity, the project can address the complex obstacles that young women face when they enter the digital labor market and pursue entrepreneurship in a well-rounded manner.

The OMEGA project aims to empower young women by developing their digital skills in an ambitious manner. The project has a variety of goals, which consist of:

·Professional development: The goal of the project is to improve the abilities and expertise of youth workers who will work with young women as mentors and educators. This strategic move to empower youth workers will enable them to better impart digital skills and competencies to their mentees, improving their employability and social integration.



- Development of business skills: Young women have the skills necessary to run virtual businesses because they are digitally literate. This diverse skill set is critical for starting and expanding their own entrepreneurial endeavors in addition to being vital for the job market.
- Behavioral transformation: The project's goal is to create an atmosphere in which youth workers are more willing to converse with young women, digital education experts, and subject matter experts. This radical change in conduct is essential to fostering an environment that gives the target group confidence and support.
- Communication and linguistic skills: Young women who possess these skills are better able to interact with professionals and peers because they can confidently express themselves on topics that appeal to the younger generation.
- Digital mindset for modern entrepreneurs: Participants are urged to adopt a digital mindset for modern entrepreneurs, utilizing digital skills to obtain a competitive advantage in the job market. Their long-term success is contingent upon adopting this digital mindset.
- Access to necessary tools: In order to combat unemployment, the project gives young women the tools they need to enter the workforce more quickly.
- Empowerment: Women from underprivileged backgrounds who are disproportionately impacted by unemployment are the focus of the OMEGA project. The project increases the participants' economic independence and self-reliance by imparting digital skills and competencies.
- Gaming experiences in education: The project uses gaming experiences to teach concepts related to digital entrepreneurship in a more in-depth and interesting way.

The OMEGA project is carefully divided into a number of distinct stages, each of which fulfills a particular function and adds to the initiative's overall success. The project is guided by these phases, which are listed below, from the beginning to the end, making sure that the goals are methodically achieved within the allotted time.

- Project initiation: The main goal of this crucial first stage is to establish the project's framework. It entails forging alliances with the organizations taking part in the project, delineating precise roles and duties, obtaining the required funding, and creating an all-encompassing project plan. The project's primary goals and tactics are defined during this phase, offering a clear road map for the future.
- Needs assessment: The success of the project depends on a thorough understanding of the particular requirements, obstacles, and goals of the target group, which consists of young women from a variety of backgrounds. Comprehensive needs assessments are carried out during this phase. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the unique digital skills gaps and challenges faced by young women in the partner countries, surveys, interviews, and data collection will be conducted.
- Curriculum development: A customized curriculum is meticulously created, building on the understandings obtained from the needs assessment. The purpose of this curriculum is to close the noted deficiencies in digital competencies and skills. It is the focal point of the training program and is designed to be interesting, pertinent, and in line with the goals of the undertaking.
- Training and capacity building: The main activities of the project take place during this central phase. Training sessions, workshops, and capacity-building activities are undertaken by youth workers, trainers, and young women participants. The intention is to equip them with the digital know-how and abilities needed to succeed in both entrepreneurship and the contemporary job market. This stage concentrates on developing participants' practical skills so they can use them in the real world.

- Participant engagement: It is essential to actively engage in the process of gaining knowledge and skills. Through mentorship and interactive learning opportunities, the project strongly emphasizes engagement. By doing this, training participants can effectively bridge the gap between theory and practice by applying the knowledge and skills they have learned.
- Evaluation: After the training, a thorough evaluation phase is conducted with the goal of determining the project's impact and efficacy. It evaluates the advancements made by the participants in terms of better employability, enhanced digital skills, and general empowerment. Feedback from evaluations is crucial for maximizing project results.
- Dissemination: The final stage concentrates on distributing to a wider audience the project's results, best practices, and lessons learned. The project's goal is to encourage and inspire others to use the development of digital skills to empower young women. Not only does dissemination highlight the project's accomplishments, but it also advances the larger cause of economic empowerment and gender equality.

The project schedule is created to guarantee that every stage is carried out effectively, with precise goals, important deliverables, and specified deadlines. The project is able to stay focused on its objectives, monitor its progress, and adjust its strategies as necessary in order to fulfill its mission thanks to this methodical approach. Each of these project phases will be covered in detail in the upcoming chapters of this guide, along with thorough explanations of the techniques, tactics, and activities used. With its distinct phases and well-organized timeline, the OMEGA project's framework enables young women to gain critical digital skills that will help them succeed in today's job market and in entrepreneurship, as well as promote economic independence. The project's target group will be empowered through a methodical approach that aims to bring about tangible change.

DEVELOPING DIGITAL SKILLS FOR YOUNG WOMEN

DIGITAL LITERACY AND ITS IMPORTANCE

The ability to use digital tools and technologies to their fullest potential and to navigate them is the essence of digital literacy. That being said, a varied range of competencies rather than a single skill makes it essential in today's society.

Because of its complexity, digital literacy includes a number of important aspects. First of all, it covers basic computer skills, which are the essential knowledge of computer hardware and software that allows people to effectively use a variety of digital devices, such as smartphones and desktop computers. Additional digital exploration is based on this foundational knowledge. Digital literacy also includes online communication. It involves having the ability to communicate digitally via social media, email, and other online channels. It covers more than just the technical aspects of sending and receiving messages; it also includes the finer points of online manners, which promote professionalism and productive communication. Digital literacy gives people the ability to retrieve information in the age of information overload. It gives them the ability to search and validate information on the huge and open internet. This skill is essential for conducting academic research, keeping up with current affairs, and making wise decisions in both personal and professional settings.

Moreover, the ability to critically evaluate online content is a component of digital literacy. In a time when false information and skewed stories are common, people with strong digital literacy skills are able to distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy sources.

This ability to think critically is essential for preventing the dissemination of false information and the acceptance of false information. It is essential to comprehend the complexity of digital literacy. It gives young women a broad range of skills that go beyond technical proficiency. It equips them to be astute digital citizens capable of securely, confidently, and effectively navigating the ever-changing digital landscape.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of digital literacy. Digital literacy has become more than just a benefit in a world where technology is present in almost every aspect of life. One of the most important factors influencing employability in the modern labor market is digital literacy. It opens doors to a plethora of career opportunities, ranging from administrative roles requiring rudimentary computer skills to tech-related roles requiring more advanced competencies. People may have trouble accessing the benefits of the modern job market and its employment opportunities if they lack digital literacy. Digital proficiency is essential for social integration. Having this skill enables young women to participate in online discussions, connect with friends and family, and engage with the digital aspects of modern culture in a society where digital communication and online communities are essential. It serves as a tool for building ties and relationships in addition to serving as a means of social integration.

Having digital literacy makes information accessible. Knowledge is readily available to us in this day and age, enabling people to learn, do research, and keep informed. This goes beyond scholastic or career aspirations; it enables young women to make knowledgeable decisions in all facets of daily life, including healthcare and finances. One of the most important components of online security and safety is digital literacy. It gives people the information and abilities they need to safeguard their personal information and identity online. This knowledge encourages self-assurance and guarantees that people can safely traverse the digital environment, protecting their private and personal data.

The promotion of a culture of lifelong learning is arguably one of the most important functions of digital literacy. The digital landscape is always changing, with new trends and technologies appearing on a regular basis. Digital literacy is a continuous process of learning and adaptation rather than a one-time skill. In a digital world that is changing quickly, young women's ability to adapt is essential to their ability to stay competitive and relevant. The OMEGA project's primary focus is on the diverse aspects of digital literacy and its enormous significance. The project makes sure that young women are equipped with these competencies so they can thrive in a world that is rapidly becoming more digitally oriented. In addition to being a skill, digital literacy opens doors to active engagement in the digital age, financial independence, and personal development. It acts as a cornerstone for the project's participants' journey toward independence and empowerment.

Digital skill development strategies

The OMEGA project has a strong commitment to providing young women with the digital skills necessary for success in the modern world. The project uses a wide range of techniques, each one specifically created to guarantee that participants develop digital competencies as well as self-assurance and technological competence.

Customized curriculum is essential to the OMEGA project's success. The curriculum has been carefully crafted to cater to the unique requirements and experiences of the young ladies involved. Because it considers different levels of prior digital knowledge, everyone can benefit from and find the training to be effective.

The project guarantees that every participant gets the direction and training required to effectively close the digital skills gap by customizing the curriculum. This method recognizes that when it comes to developing digital skills, a one-size-fits-all model is insufficient. Rather, the OMEGA project creates a more inclusive and productive learning environment by acknowledging the different starting points of the young women involved and customizing the learning experience to meet their specific needs.

The OMEGA project is a strong proponent of experiential learning. As a result, it emphasizes experiential learning heavily. The interactive and practical training sessions and workshops give participants the chance to practice using digital tools and platforms in the real world. Young women who actively participate in practical activities acquire the confidence to use digital skills in their daily lives in addition to learning the theoretical aspects of these skills. By bridging the theoretical and practical gaps, this approach enables participants to make effective use of their digital knowledge. In a world where digital literacy is a basic necessity, experiential learning not only imparts necessary skills but also fosters the ability to easily adapt to new technologies.

Experienced mentors and trainers are essential components of the OMEGA project's digital skill development strategy. These mentors share their knowledge of developing digital skills while providing individualized support. A crucial element is mentoring, which offers participants direction, responses to inquiries, and firsthand knowledge from mentors with experience in the digital industry. Young women and experienced mentors have one-on-one interactions that provide both a learning opportunity and a source of inspiration. It imparts the idea that technology is a vast and uncharted territory and that becoming digitally literate is a skill that can be attained. The project makes sure young women get the support and guidance they need to succeed in their digital learning journey by pairing them with mentors who have been there before.

The OMEGA project has included interactive learning resources into its curriculum to maintain participant motivation and engagement. These materials could include interactive platforms, captivating digital content, and multimedia resources. With this method, learners can actively engage with the digital content in a dynamic and stimulating learning environment. The project guarantees that participants stay actively engaged in the learning process by making it more interactive and pleasurable. It's important to promote curiosity and exploration rather than merely acquiring knowledge. In addition to imparting digital skills, interactive learning resources encourage young women to investigate the potential of technology and spark a lifelong love of learning.

The OMEGA project adopts a systematic and progressive approach in recognition that developing digital skills is a journey. The project starts with an introduction to digital literacy, covering subjects like information retrieval, online communication, and basic computer skills. The course then progressively moves on to more advanced digital competencies and skills, covering subjects like web development, data analysis, and cybersecurity. Participants' knowledge and skills will be gradually increased thanks to this progressive model. The OMEGA project makes sure that participants are equipped to tackle the entire range of digital challenges they may face in their personal and professional lives by beginning with the fundamentals and progressively moving on to more advanced topics. Young women are empowered to navigate the constantly changing digital landscape with ease and adaptability thanks to this strategic progression that instills a sense of mastery and confidence.

The OMEGA project's digital skill development tactics are carefully crafted to give young women a comprehensive and successful approach to developing their digital skills. The project gives participants the digital skills and self-assurance they need to succeed in the digital age by implementing a progressive approach, tailoring the curriculum, emphasizing hands-on learning, providing mentorship, encouraging interactive learning, and offering mentoring. These tactics encourage young women to explore the limitless opportunities that technology presents for their personal and professional development in addition to equipping them with critical digital competencies. The OMEGA project acknowledges that digital skills are the keys to unlocking a future full of potential and opportunities, not just tools for today.

Digital skill needs in the modern labor market

The modern workplace has never required more digital skills than it does in this fast-paced, constantly-changing world. The days of being able to get by in most jobs with just one or two computer programs under your belt are long gone. Employers in today's workforce demand that workers be tech-savvy and proficient with a variety of digital tools and platforms. Regardless of their line of work or sector, all employees now require the ability to use digital technologies effectively. Digital skills are crucial for an organization's success as a whole, not just for individual workers. The efficiency and competitiveness of a company can be greatly increased by utilizing digital technologies for data analysis, collaboration, and communication. In particular, this is true for businesses that implement remote work policies. Workers can work remotely, connect with clients and coworkers globally, and instantly access information and resources thanks to digital tools and platforms. These benefits may result in higher productivity, lower expenses, and happier clients or customers.

The rising demand for digital skills in modern workplaces

The digital economy is expected to continue expanding, and new technologies will inevitably lead to a greater need for people with digital skills. According to Entrepreneur (2014), companies in the US were reportedly losing $1.3 trillion a year as a result of a lack of workers with digital skills in 2014. Of course, since then, the disparity has only widened. According to another study, 88% of young workers acknowledge that digital skills will be crucial for their careers, and 60% of business owners predict that their reliance on advanced digital skills will grow over the next several years (WorldSkillsUk, 2022). Nonetheless, despite the growing need for digital skills from employers, fewer people are taking advantage of digital skills training programs. Since 2015, there has been a 40% decrease in the number of Gen Zers and Millennials enrolled in GCSE IT courses (WorldSkillsUk, 2022). Furthermore, a recent study found that the growing use of digital technologies will necessitate reskilling for more than 50% of all workers by 2025 (WeForum, 2023). To stay competitive, it is therefore essential for businesses (and even job seekers) to make investments in digital education and training. Investing in digital training for employees can help organizations become more profitable and successful by producing a workforce that is more skilled and productive.

The importance of digital skills for the modern workplace

To succeed in the modern workplace, one needs a number of fundamental digital skills. These competencies may differ based on the sector, nature of the work, and particular digital tools and platforms that the company uses. Some of the most important digital competencies are as follows:

- Computer literacy: Employees in every industry need to be able to perform basic computer tasks like using word processing software, operating systems, and the internet.
- Communication skills: For seamless teamwork, both on-site and remote employees must be able to communicate effectively using digital tools like email, instant messaging, video conferencing, and social media.
- Data analysis: Data drives modern businesses. Decision-making thus depends more and more on the capacity to gather, evaluate, and interpret data using digital tools like databases, spreadsheets, and analytics software.
- Cybersecurity: There is an increase in cybercrimes. Employees need to know how to safeguard confidential data and adhere to best practices in light of the growing threat landscape in order to prevent compromises that could endanger their companies' cybersecurity defenses.
- Digital marketing: Given the increasing significance of online marketing, staff members must be capable of developing and implementing campaigns using a variety of digital marketing platforms, including social media, email, and search engines.
- Project management: For efficient task, deadline, and resource management, digital tools like project management software are crucial.
- Programming and coding: Employees in technical fields like software development, web design, and data science can benefit from having a basic understanding of coding.

Businesses and digital skills gap

The current digital skills gap needs to be closed, and business owners need to find strategies to get around it. It's a lengthy process that needs consistent work and money. That said, here's a helpful guide for companies looking to address the lack of digital skills within their own walls.

- Find the skills gaps: Determining the gaps in the organization is the first step towards solving the problem. To perform a skills analysis, evaluate your employees' competencies, compare them to the specific digital skills needed for their roles, and highlight the areas that require development.
- Provide possibilities for digital learning and development: After you've determined where there are skills gaps, give your staff members the online learning and growth opportunities they require to fill them. Online courses, internal training courses, workshops, and mentoring are a few examples of this.
- Promote self-directed learning: Give your staff members the tools they need to take charge of their own education by giving them access to blogs, webinars, and other online resources. Establish a culture that values lifelong learning and motivates staff members to impart their expertise to other members of the team.
- Encourage a digital mindset: Instill a digital mindset throughout the company by stressing the value of digital competencies and the advantages of digital transformation. Instill in your employees a mindset that welcomes change and promotes trying out new technologies.
- Invest in technology: Arrange for your staff to always have access to the newest gadgets and tools that can help them become more proficient with technology. This could include cloud-based platforms, hardware, and software that facilitate communication and teamwork.
- Work together with educational institutions: Form alliances with universities and community colleges to give your staff members access to training courses and certification programs. Additionally, it can assist you in luring and keeping top talent with the digital skills your company requires.

Fit in the real world demands

The OMEGA project works in unity with the changing needs of the modern labor market. It makes sure that every course in its curriculum is carefully designed to correspond with the specific digital skills that employers are actively looking for these days. The project targets the following particular needs for digital skills:

Data Analysis and Interpretation: The capacity to gather, examine, and draw conclusions from data is highly valued in a world where data-driven decision-making is the norm. Data-analytical young women have an advantage in a variety of fields, including market research and healthcare administration. They are not only competent in managing data; they are also skilled in turning data into insightful understandings that inform strategic choices.

Cybersecurity: As operations become more digitally oriented, there are more risks to data security. Comprehending cybersecurity principles is imperative not only for IT specialists but also for individuals operating in the financial, healthcare, and government sectors. Participants in the OMEGA project gain knowledge that goes beyond their own interests. It gives them the ability to support the creation of a safer online space for businesses and society at large. This awareness contributes to maintaining the integrity of digital operations and safeguarding sensitive data—skills that are essential in the digital age.

Web development: In the digital age, having a strong online presence is essential for companies and organizations. Proficiency in web development is highly valued in a variety of industries, including e-commerce and education. The OMEGA project equips young women with the necessary skills to establish and improve the digital footprint of any businesses they may start or their future employers by teaching them the foundations of web development. They contribute to the digital ecosystem as developers and creators in addition to being online content consumers.

Digital Marketing: Digital marketing expertise is in high demand in this day and age, as it is the primary driver of brand exposure and income generation. In order to be valuable assets in today's business environment, OMEGA project participants are guaranteed to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to create and manage digital marketing campaigns. With focused digital marketing tactics, these young ladies can impact consumer behavior, improve brand recognition, and propel company expansion.

Social Media Management: The use of social media platforms in contemporary communication and brand promotion has become essential. Being able to handle social media platforms well is a highly sought-after skill. The project gives young women the tools they need to help organizations develop their online presence, engage their audiences, and strengthen the voice of their brand on digital media. They are adept managers who understand how to leverage social media to propel business success, not just users of the platform.

Coding and Programming: Software developers are no longer the only ones with a basic understanding of coding and programming. They are now more important than ever in industries like automation, digital design, and data analysis because they have crossed conventional boundaries. The OMEGA project makes certain that participants have a basic understanding of computer programming, a skill that can lead to a variety of career options outside of traditional software development positions. They are builders and problem solvers who can design unique solutions for a range of difficulties; they are more than just users of digital tools.

The OMEGA project not only teaches particular digital skills but also stresses the value of flexibility and lifelong learning. Rapid and constant change characterizes the digital world, so being able to adjust to new tools and systems is a valuable skill in and of itself. The project emphasizes that learning is a continuous process that doesn't end with the acquisition of digital skills, which helps participants develop a growth mindset. Rather, it lasts the entirety of a person's career. This way of thinking fosters adaptability, a sense of constant improvement, and a willingness to accept new methods and technologies.

In today's modern workplace, having digital skills has become essential for success. Effective use of digital technologies has become an essential skill for all employees to have. For both individuals and companies, investing in digital education and training is a wise decision due to the growing demand for digital skills. In today's digital economy, individuals can improve their employability and career prospects and organizations can gain a competitive advantage and greater success by developing the necessary digital skills. The project equips young women with highly sought-after competencies and positions them as competitive candidates in an increasingly digitalized world by addressing the specific needs related to digital skills. The OMEGA project acknowledges that possessing these abilities is about more than just landing a job; it's also about future-proofing one's career and making a positive impact on modern companies and organizations. It gives young women the confidence to lead change in the digital workplace rather than just react to it. They are prepared to succeed in the constantly changing digital landscape because they have a solid foundation in these abilities and an adaptable mindset.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUTH WORKERS AND TRAINERS

THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORKERS IN OMEGA

The goal of the OMEGA project is to equip young women entrepreneurs with the knowledge and abilities necessary to improve their employability, start their own businesses, and prosper in the digital age. The project will tackle the urgent issues that these women face. Youth workers are essential to this project because they help make these goals a reality. Their role is pivotal.

Empowering young women entrepreneurs

In enterprises and entrepreneurship, empowering women is crucial to advancing economic progress and gender equality. In addition to generating employment and boosting the economy, women-owned businesses also have a big impact on the communities in which they operate. Moreover, if given equal opportunity and resources to start and grow their businesses, women can become powerful change agents who contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society. Even with the recent progress made toward gender equality, women still face significant obstacles at work, particularly in entrepreneurship. For instance, financial and resource limitations, limited access to education and training, and discrimination based on gender are common challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. It is imperative to advance gender equality in small businesses and entrepreneurship to guarantee that women have equal opportunities to succeed in the workforce alongside men. If women have equal access to resources, money, and education, they can overcome the barriers that keep them from starting and growing businesses. A more diverse and inclusive workforce may arise from the elimination of gender prejudice and discrimination in the workplace, which benefits society at large as well as women.

OMEGA comprehends the vital significance of empowering young women entrepreneurs, especially in light of the obstacles they face as a result of barriers related to gender and the digital transformation of the contemporary workplace. In order to do this, youth workers can play a crucial role as mentors and guides, providing young women with the support and direction they need to develop their entrepreneurial skills and navigate the digital world.

Development of a practical information guide

A key aspect of the youth worker's job description at OMEGA is to actively participate in the creation of a useful informational handbook specifically designed for young female entrepreneurs without jobs. With the help of this guide, young women can better navigate the current entrepreneurial digital mindset and capitalize on its advantages in the job market. Youth workers collaborate with experts and project stakeholders to produce an all-inclusive resource. This resource includes information from stakeholder analyses, research with young female entrepreneurs in the project's target demographic, and preparations for the project. The guide explores important subjects like digital culture, its importance, the advantages of digital technology for female entrepreneurs, and useful advice on how young female entrepreneurs can make the most of digital tools. In order to maintain this manual up to date and representative of the changing digital environment, youth workers actively participate in surveys and research projects.

Educational material production

The creation of educational resources that give young female entrepreneurs the know-how and abilities to confidently pursue their career paths is greatly aided by youth workers. These materials highlight the significance of digital health and wellness in addition to addressing the practical aspects of safe internet usage, thanks to collaboration with experts in the fields of digital communications and the health sector. In a world where digital interactions are becoming more and more ingrained in daily life, it is critical to comprehend and maintain personal safety online. In their capacity as intermediaries, youth workers help to develop tools that enable young women to safeguard their personal data, their online safety, and themselves. These resources teach the fundamentals of responsible and secure digital usage in addition to providing education.

Digital marketing techniques

The OMEGA project acknowledges that digital marketing plays a critical role in today's business environment. In this situation, youth workers work together to create instructional materials that provide knowledge of digital marketing strategies that are crucial for aspiring young women business owners. Reaching and interacting with customers through digital channels has become essential for business success as the world moves more and more towards the internet. The development of resources that help young women effectively use digital marketing to promote their brands and businesses is overseen by youth workers.

Serious game production

Serious games, which combine a fun element with an educational primary goal, are developed with input from youth workers. These are cleverly crafted games that are meant to improve the educational process while drawing in and involving young female students. Serious games are useful tools for knowledge transfer because they combine entertainment and education. The development and execution of these games involve youth workers, who make sure they complement the OMEGA project's learning goals.

Hands-On seminar on IT basics and social media

Understanding the growing significance of technology in today's world, youth workers lead interactive workshops covering the principles of social media and IT use. These workshops are incredibly helpful in filling in any knowledge gaps that participants may have and in getting them up to speed on digital tools so they can produce PR materials and get ready for further training. Youth workers assist participants in developing the fundamentals of digital literacy so they can use technology to advance both personally and professionally.

Youth workers play a crucial role in advancing the goals of the OMEGA project by actively helping young women entrepreneurs succeed in their business ventures and embrace the digital age. The success of the project lies in the active involvement, mentorship, and guidance of young women in various project activities. This has helped shape a more inclusive and dynamic future for female entrepreneurship in the digital world, as well as in developing their digital skills and entrepreneurial mindset.

Training youth workers in digital competencies

The digital era has completely changed how young people interact with the outside world, communicate, and obtain information in the twenty-first century. Youth workers therefore need to develop critical digital competencies in order to adjust to this new reality. This chapter defines digital competencies, examines the urgent need for training youth workers in them, and offers development strategies. The OMEGA project acknowledges the critical role that youth workers play in enabling this transformation in addition to its commitment to equipping young women entrepreneurs with necessary digital skills. A thorough program has been created to teach youth workers digital competencies in order to guarantee the project's success and provide them with the tools they need to mentor and guide the target groups.

Understanding the need for training

Youth work has entered a new era marked by the digital revolution. It has transformed the manner in which youth workers relate to and assist young people. The delivery of youth programs and their engagement now heavily relies on social media, mobile devices, and online platforms. The need to provide youth workers with the skills they need to successfully navigate the digital landscape is highlighted by this digital transformation. It also emphasizes how critical it is to close the digital divide. It's possible that not all young people, particularly those from underprivileged homes, have equal access to digital resources. Youth workers can try to close this gap and make sure that every young person has the chance to gain from digital support by offering training in digital competencies. OMEGA's efforts to close the skills gap in digital literacy among young women are led by youth workers. But in order for them to carry out this role in an efficient manner, it is imperative that they are armed with the digital perspectives and skills that they need. Youth workers may have different backgrounds and levels of digital literacy, which is acknowledged in the training curriculum. In order to address the particular needs of youth workers, it is made to be inclusive, approachable, and customized. Youth workers play a critical role in guaranteeing the OMEGA project's success and its positive effects on young women, as acknowledged by the program.

Key elements of youth worker training

Digital competency training for youth workers includes a number of essential components that are necessary for productive interactions with youth in the digital age. These fundamental elements provide youth workers with the necessary tools to navigate the digital terrain and empower the young people they work with.

- Digital literacy: The development of digital literacy is central to the training of youth workers. To do this, one must develop a thorough awareness of the internet, online communication, and the capacity to evaluate digital content critically. Youth workers who possess digital literacy are better able to assist young people in navigating the digital world in a responsible and safe manner.
- Online safety and ethics: Teaching youth workers about online safety, cybersecurity, and ethical behavior in the digital sphere is a crucial part of their training. This involves instructing youth on how to defend against cyberbullying, secure private data, and honor other people's digital privacy.
- Virtual engagement: It is essential to be proficient in the use of a variety of digital tools and platforms for virtual engagement. In order to effectively engage with the youth they serve in the digital sphere, youth workers need to learn how to create dynamic and engaging online spaces.
- Digital storytelling: Youth workers can create engaging digital narratives by using digital storytelling, which is a potent tool. This ability improves their capacity to use digital media to inspire youth, share experiences, and spread messages.
- Data literacy: In the digital age, understanding data and its implications is essential. It should be able to gather, analyze, and interpret data for youth workers. They are better able to enhance their programs, offer more assistance to young people, and make data-driven decisions that are advantageous to the young people they work with thanks to this data literacy.

Empowering youth workers to empower others

Giving youth workers the digital competencies they need to effectively empower the next generation is just as important as improving their skill set. With the help of these skills, youth workers can establish connections with young people online. They can establish significant relationships, offer priceless resources, and provide the encouragement required for both academic and personal development by having a thorough understanding of digital culture. In this way, empowering the youth they work with is the goal, and training youth workers in digital competencies is a means to that end.

The ultimate objective of the training program is to enable youth workers to enable young women entrepreneurs. Youth workers who receive extensive training in digital competencies are equipped to mentor, advise, and support young women as they pursue digital skills and success as entrepreneurs. They acquire the self-assurance and expertise required to support, encourage, and assist young women in developing their digital skills and entrepreneurial mindset.

The impact of trained youth workers

The field of youth work is affected by well-trained youth workers with digital competencies. It leads to improved engagement with young people, more accessible support, and more effective and efficient programs. Youth workers with empowerment can close the digital divide by reaching out to underserved communities and offering fair opportunities. Their influence is evident in the lives of the young people they assist as well as in the sector's overall advancement in digital age adaptation for youth work.

Teaching youth workers digital competencies has a significant knock-on effect. Youth workers with empowerment can act as change agents in their organizations and communities. They take on the role of advocates for digital literacy, female entrepreneurship, and the transformative potential of technology. Their role as mentors and advisors is crucial in reducing the gender disparity in entrepreneurship and promoting a dynamic and inclusive digital economy.

One essential component of contemporary youth work is the training of youth workers in digital competencies. It reacts to both the societal digital divide and the digital revolution that young people are going through. The skills needed to engage, inform, and empower the young people they work with are imparted to youth workers by this training. As a result, the youth employment sector is now more impactful, inclusive, and efficient, and it is prepared to meet the demands of the digital age.

Transmitting digital skills to young women

Learning digital skills is essential for people from all walks of life in the digital age, but it's especially powerful for young women. The significance of teaching young women digital skills is examined in this chapter, along with the ways in which these competencies can empower them, the essential components of teaching these skills, methods for developing digital skills, and the potential transformative influence of such initiatives. Giving young women the digital skills they need to succeed in the modern world is one of the main goals of the OMEGA project. This chapter explores the tactics and approaches used to successfully teach these fundamental digital skills, enabling young women to succeed in the digital era.

Empowering young women through digital competencies

For young women, the digital world can be a doorway to empowerment as it offers an infinite array of opportunities. Young women can succeed in the digital space even though they face particular difficulties and obstacles. Giving them digital skills is about more than just leveling the playing field; it's about giving them chances to succeed in tech-related fields, build their confidence, and overcome stereotypes that have prevented them from participating fully in the digital world. Gaining digital skills can lead to better job prospects. Young women who possess these competencies will find it easier to pursue lucrative careers, start their own businesses, and work as independent contractors in the digital industry. This helps close the gender pay gap and increases their financial independence, enabling them to follow their goals and make decisions. Young women who are proficient in digital skills are remarkably more confident and capable of taking on leadership roles. They gain a sense of agency and the capacity to lead in a tech-driven world as they become proficient in navigating the digital landscape. Their newly acquired self-assurance frequently carries over to other spheres of their lives, enabling them to transcend social norms and self-imposed constraints.

Giving young women access to digital skills is a way to support their independence, creativity, and financial self-sufficiency in addition to imparting knowledge. Digital skills are not only useful in today's technologically advanced world, but also essential for successfully navigating its digital terrain. The OMEGA project gives young women the tools they need to participate actively in the digital world as producers as well as consumers by imparting these skills.

Key elements of transmitting digital skills

Digital Literacy: The development of digital literacy is fundamental to the transmission of digital skills. It is important for young women to know how to use basic software, navigate the internet, and critically assess digital content. All other digital skills are based on digital literacy, which is why teaching young women digital literacy is crucial to their development as critical thinkers and responsible digital citizens.

Coding and Programming: One of the most important aspects of teaching digital skills is teaching code and programming languages. These skills give young women the ability to design websites, apps, and digital solutions, and they also lead to a plethora of opportunities in the tech sector. Learning to code gives young women a way to express their creativity and gives them a highly sought-after skill in the job market.

Cybersecurity Awareness: It's critical to teach young women about privacy protection, online safety, and moral behavior. These abilities enable them to preserve their online safety, secure sensitive data, and defend against the constant threat of cyberattacks. They also learn how to make the internet a safer place for all users.

Data analysis: Another essential component of transmitting digital skills is comprehending and interpreting data. This competency enables young women to solve problems, make well-informed decisions, and pursue careers that are data-driven. In the fields of policy analysis, market research, and data science, among others, data literacy is an essential competency that offers insightful knowledge and the ability to solve problems.

Digital Communication: Effective digital interaction requires familiarity with digital communication platforms and tools, such as social media, email, and collaboration tools. Young women gain skills in self-expression, teamwork, and online presence development, all of which are beneficial to their professional and personal development.

The OMEGA project uses a variety of strategies to efficiently transfer digital skills:

1. Customized learning paths: The project adjusts learning paths to take into account people from different backgrounds, acknowledging that people have different levels of digital literacy. At their own pace, participants can advance from basic to advanced digital skills.
2. Practical skill building: Practical learning is given priority in this project. To ensure they gain practical proficiency, participants participate in projects, exercises, and real-world applications of digital skills.
3. Mentoring and guidance: As young women embark on their digital learning journey, trained youth workers are essential in providing them with guidance and support. They offer encouragement, support, and responses to inquiries.
4. Role models and inspirational stories: The project highlights the accomplishments of women who have used their digital skills to launch successful careers by incorporating success stories. Participants are motivated by these role models, who also show what can be accomplished with digital competencies.
5. Project-Based learning: When learning is connected to practical projects, it is frequently most successful. In order to complete projects, participants must use their digital skills in real-world problem-solving situations. These initiatives fill the knowledge gap between theory and practice.
6. Continuous assessment and feedback: Participants can monitor their development and make adjustments with the support of regular assessments and feedback loops. Iterative processes like these guarantee that participants are always improving their digital competencies.

7. Digital safety and ethics: The OMEGA project highlights the significance of digital safety and ethics in addition to technical skills. Participants gain knowledge about the ethical use of technology as well as how to protect themselves and their data online.
8. Cooperation and peer education: Participants are urged to work together and absorb knowledge from one another. Peer support and group activities help to create a feeling of community and mutual development.

Digital skill development strategies

Inclusive education: It's critical to design accessible and inclusive educational initiatives. This guarantees equal opportunities for young women to acquire digital skills from a variety of backgrounds, including marginalized communities and those with disabilities. Regardless of their circumstances, inclusive education empowers young women to become digital leaders and promotes diversity and innovation.

Mentorship and role models: It's important to encourage mentoring and give young women in the tech sector visible role models. Young women can be inspired to pursue digital careers with more confidence and zeal when they see and engage with successful women in the field. Young women who participate in mentoring programs receive direction and advice that helps them overcome obstacles and make wise career decisions.

Experiential learning: Using projects and real-world activities to promote experiential, hands-on learning is a good way to transfer digital skills. Young women acquire valuable experience that is directly related to their career goals by learning by doing and applying what they have learned to real-world situations. This method works especially well for learning how to code and program.

Online resources: One useful strategy to support self-directed learning is to make use of online courses, digital libraries, and open-source resources. Young women are empowered to access educational material at their own pace and convenience thanks to the wide variety of online educational content available, which includes everything from interactive coding platforms to video tutorials. This flexibility makes digital skill development more accessible by accommodating people with different time commitments and learning styles.

Collaborative initiatives: Establishing a supportive ecosystem for digital skill development requires collaborating with organizations, educational institutions, and local communities. Through these collaborations, long-term digital skills initiatives can be sustained and a wider audience of young women can be reached by gaining access to resources, funding, and expertise. By bridging the knowledge gap between academia and business, collaborative efforts guarantee that the skills young women acquire are marketable and relevant.

The OMEGA project uses a number of efficient techniques to teach young women digital skills:

- Digital literacy and its significance: Participants acquire a comprehensive comprehension of the role that digital literacy plays in the modern world. This covers social inclusion, safety and security, information access, economic empowerment, and the value of lifelong learning.
- Digital marketing techniques: Young women acquire the knowledge and abilities necessary to effectively promote their brands and businesses online by learning the foundations of digital marketing.

- Data collection, analysis, and interpretation: The project teaches how to gather, examine, and extrapolate information from data. With this ability, young women can use data to their advantage in a variety of fields and make well-informed decisions.
- Cybersecurity awareness: It's critical to comprehend online safety best practices and potential threats. The project makes sure that users can safely traverse the digital world and safeguard their personal data.
- Coding and programming fundamentals: Participants gain a basic understanding of coding, which cultivates an appreciation for technology and its uses, even though not all of them will go on to become professional programmers.
- Social media management: Young women possess the skills necessary to interact and manage social media sites. They can interact with audiences and establish an online presence thanks to this ability.
- Lifelong learning and adaptation: The idea of constant learning and flexibility is ingrained in the participants. This kind of thinking is very helpful in the ever evolving digital world.

The transformational impact

Economic empowerment: Giving young women digital skills can have a big impact on their ability to be economically empowered. It prepares them for financial independence, entrepreneurship, and well-paying jobs. Young women who gain digital competencies will have an easier time finding work in technology-related fields, where there are many opportunities for advancement and salaries that are frequently competitive. Additionally, having digital skills gives them the freedom to start their own businesses or pursue freelance work, which could lead to higher income and more career control.

Gender equality in tech: One of the most important ways to close the gender gap in the tech industry is through the transfer of digital skills. Women have historically been underrepresented in technology-related fields, such as data science and software development. Nonetheless, the industry is becoming more inclusive and diverse as more young women pursue careers in digital skills. In addition to promoting creativity and innovation, gender diversity in the tech industry makes sure that a wider range of viewpoints are taken into consideration when designing new products and services.

Leadership and confidence: Young women with digital skills are more capable of leading and exhibiting confidence. They gain confidence and a sense of mastery as they gain digital competencies. This increased self-assurance frequently permeates other facets of their lives and transcends the digital sphere. It gives them the tools to take on leadership roles, speak up, and face obstacles in their workplaces, communities, and educational institutions. Seeking digital skills can often be a life-changing experience that develops young women into proactive problem solvers and leaders in the tech industry and beyond.

Breaking stereotypes: Young women are defying stereotypes and preconceived ideas about gender roles in the digital age by embracing technology and learning digital skills. They break through the glass ceiling that has traditionally prevented them from using technology and develop fresh stories. Young women in technology break new ground, motivating others to do the same and demonstrating that a person's gender need not be a hindrance to success in the digital era. Their existence and accomplishments subvert social mores and promote an inclusive culture that values and celebrates diversity.

One effective way to empower and advance young women in the digital age is to teach them digital skills. We can close the gender gap in technology and enable young women to lead and innovate in the digital sphere by supplying the required skills, promoting inclusive education, and creating supportive ecosystems. It is an important endeavor in today's world because of the impact, which goes beyond personal changes to include broader societal and economic transformation. A more equitable, diverse, and progressive digital landscape is created by young women who break down barriers and gain digital skills, which eventually benefits society as a whole.

Transformative change is driven by the OMEGA project, which teaches young women digital skills. Along with technical proficiency, participants leave with a mindset of lifelong learning, independence, and empowerment. They are ready to welcome the digital era, get past obstacles based on gender, and take an active role in the digital economy. Beyond the individual, the influence creates a more dynamic and inclusive digital society, opening doors for a new wave of empowered young women entrepreneurs.

BUSINESS SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

DEFINING DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The way businesses function has changed significantly with the advent of the digital age. The growth of digital entrepreneurship has been one of the biggest shifts. The term "digital entrepreneurship" describes the process of starting, running, and expanding new businesses using digital technologies. It entails utilizing social media, the internet, and other digital tools to develop creative business models that make the most of technology. We will examine the definition of digital entrepreneurship and its advantages in this post.

The process of starting, building, and managing a business in the digital sphere is known as "digital entrepreneurship." It entails creating new goods and services, marketing them, and closing deals with clients by leveraging digital technologies. To launch and expand their companies, digital entrepreneurs employ a range of technologies, such as mobile apps, social media, e-commerce platforms, and search engine optimization. Software development firms and tech startups are not the only businesses engaged in digital entrepreneurship. It includes any company that develops cutting-edge goods or services using digital tools. A digital entrepreneur would be a clothing store that conducts its business online. In a similar vein, a business that provides coaching or online courses is a digital entrepreneur.

One of the main advantages of being a digital entrepreneur is that it doesn't cost much to get started. When compared to conventional physical businesses, digital enterprises require substantially less initial investment. Anyone can launch a digital business from anywhere in the world as long as they have a laptop and an internet connection. This increases the number of people who can pursue entrepreneurship, especially those who might not have access to conventional funding sources. Working remotely and whenever they choose is one of the benefits of digital entrepreneurship for entrepreneurs. They can now design a work-life balance that fits their needs and way of life thanks to this. Their work hours and location are flexible, allowing them to work from home, a coffee shop, or even on the go. Digital entrepreneurship promotes originality and inventiveness. Digital tools can be used by entrepreneurs to develop new goods or services that address pressing issues in society. To build a long-lasting company, they can also try out different revenue streams and business models.

Digital entrepreneurship, also known as online entrepreneurship, e-entrepreneurship, or internet entrepreneurship, is a term that refers to a change in the conception, development, and management of businesses. This type of entrepreneurship encompasses a wide range of activities that use digital tools and the internet to launch and expand businesses; it is not restricted to any particular sectors or industries. Among the fundamental components of digital entrepreneurship are:

- E-commerce: One of the most well-known facets of digital entrepreneurship is e-commerce, or electronic commerce. It entails the online purchase and sale of goods and services. Entrepreneurs that want to display and sell their products can set up online stores or marketplaces. These can include digital products like software, e-books, and online courses as well as tangible goods like clothes, electronics, and household goods. Setting up an online store has become easier for business owners thanks to e-commerce platforms like Shopify, WooCommerce, and BigCommerce.
- Software Development: Software development is a common activity for digital entrepreneurs. This involves developing software programs, apps, and other digital tools with a variety of uses. Some business owners create desktop software, web apps, and mobile apps for different platforms. The Software as a Service (SaaS) model, which enables companies to create and offer software applications to clients on a subscription basis, has grown in popularity in recent years.
- Digital Marketing: An essential element of digital entrepreneurship is digital marketing. It includes promoting goods and services online through the use of email, social media, search engines, and content marketing. Digital marketing techniques are used by entrepreneurs to connect and interact with their target market. Entrepreneurs can better manage and maximize their digital marketing efforts with the aid of tools like email marketing platforms, Facebook ads, and Google Ads.
- Content Creation: Within the context of digital entrepreneurship, content creation is a broad field. Content can be produced by entrepreneurs in a variety of formats, such as blog entries, podcasts, videos, and visual materials like photos and infographics. Via sponsored content, affiliate marketing, advertising, and subscription models, content creators can make money off of their creations. Content creators now have more opportunities to share their work and make money thanks to platforms like WordPress, Patreon, and YouTube.
- E-learning and Online Courses: Platforms for e-learning and online courses have emerged as a result of the growth of digital entrepreneurship. These entrepreneurs create instructional materials and distribute them online. These classes can cover a broad range of topics, including academic subjects, professional skills, and hobbies. Online course developers can reach a worldwide audience and make money from course sales and subscriptions by using platforms such as Teachable, Udemy, and Coursera.
- Virtual Services: A range of virtual services are available to digital entrepreneurs. Web design, graphic design, writing, consulting, and other services could be included in this list. Virtual service providers and clients typically communicate via online platforms and communication tools, obviating the necessity of a physical presence. For example, freelancers use Fiverr and Upwork to find clients and advertise their services.
- Digital agencies: These companies help other companies with things like web development, social media management, search engine optimization (SEO), and digital advertising. These companies use their knowledge to assist clients in reaching their objectives for online presence and digital marketing. Digital agencies frequently work with a group of experts who work together to provide clients with all-inclusive digital solutions.

Aspiring entrepreneurs have the chance to establish and run companies in the digital sphere by utilizing each of these fundamental components of digital entrepreneurship. The decision of which element to pursue is frequently influenced by a number of variables, including one's abilities, interests, and the demand for the product on the market. Because digital entrepreneurship is flexible, entrepreneurs can choose a path that best suits their objectives and strengths. They can investigate and combine various components as they set out on their adventures to produce distinctive and avant-garde digital endeavors.

The relevance of digital entrepreneurship

Digital entrepreneurship is essentially revolutionary and still relevant in today's business environment, as it can break through conventional boundaries. Businesses now have access to a worldwide market as it has effectively broken down geographical barriers. Every business can use the internet to showcase goods and services to a global audience, regardless of whether they are based in a busy city or a small town. Because of this increased market reach, entrepreneurs now have more equal opportunities, and the obstacles to starting a new company have decreased dramatically.

Digital entrepreneurship has also made business ownership more accessible by reducing the initial and ongoing costs associated with launching and operating a business. Previously, the amount of capital needed for marketing, inventory, and physical infrastructure might be unaffordable. But thanks to cloud computing, e-commerce, and a plethora of online resources, starting a business nowadays can be accomplished with little cash up front. This change has opened up entrepreneurship to a wider range of people, which has encouraged diversity and innovation in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Innovation and adaptability are key components of digital entrepreneurship since they allow companies to quickly adjust to changing market conditions. Digital businesses, in contrast to traditional ones, are not limited by brick and mortar establishments, allowing them to quickly iterate, try new ideas, and pivot their strategies. In a world where consumer preferences and technological advancements are constantly changing, a dynamic and adaptable approach is essential.

The abundance of data in the digital sphere emphasizes the importance of digital entrepreneurship even more. Large volumes of data about consumer behavior, industry trends, and operational efficiency are available to businesses. By utilizing data analytics tools, business owners can obtain insightful knowledge that helps with decision-making, product development, and creating customized experiences for customers. Businesses can maintain their competitiveness by providing customized solutions and improved strategies that address changing customer demands thanks to this data-driven approach.

One characteristic that sets digital entrepreneurship apart is scalability, which enables companies to grow quickly both in terms of operations and reach. Particularly startups have the ability to quickly go from small beginnings to becoming well-known brands throughout the world if they have sound strategies and the resources they need. Digital entrepreneurs can take advantage of growth opportunities and establish a more significant market presence thanks to this scalability. Because of this, digital entrepreneurship has opened up new opportunities for growth and development that are not present in the conventional business environment.

The ability of digital entrepreneurship to overcome operational, financial, and geographic obstacles is a key component of its significance. This revolutionary force in contemporary business enables entrepreneurs to use data-driven decision-making, innovate quickly, reach a worldwide audience, and grow their companies quickly. But this change also presents new difficulties, such as fierce rivalry, cybersecurity threats, complicated regulations, and the need to stay up to date with rapidly advancing technology. Digital entrepreneurs have the power to transform industries, promote economic expansion, and ignite innovation in the twenty-first century by successfully navigating these obstacles. The groundwork for a deeper examination of digital entrepreneurship, its tactics, and its wider effects on the entrepreneurial scene is laid out in this chapter.

Impact on various sectors

A revolution in retail has been sparked by digital entrepreneurship. The emergence of virtual marketplaces and electronic commerce platforms has significantly transformed the way that consumers shop. By utilizing these platforms, entrepreneurs have been able to develop creative online shops that provide a wide range of goods and services. Consumers can now take advantage of AI-powered chatbots for customer service, user-generated reviews, and personalized product recommendations. This change gives consumers more convenience while also giving entrepreneurs easier access to international markets. The expansion of e-commerce sites such as Amazon, eBay, and Alibaba demonstrates how digital entrepreneurs have revolutionized the retail industry by improving its accessibility, convenience, and variety for customers.

Digital entrepreneurship has brought about a significant transformation in the education sector. Access to high-quality education has become more accessible thanks to startups in educational technology, virtual classrooms, and online learning platforms. Entrepreneurs in this industry have created and delivered educational materials, providing a wide variety of programs and tools that are available from any location in the world. Learning is now more suited to the needs of the individual thanks to this shift, which also gives people the freedom to pursue lifelong learning and skill improvement. Furthermore, digital education has played a key role in removing barriers related to geography and finances, opening up access to high-quality education for people all over the world. Online learning environments such as Coursera, Khan Academy, edX, and Udemy have been essential to this revolution in education.

Telemedicine and healthcare have advanced because of digital entrepreneurship. Platforms for secure health information management, remote patient monitoring, and virtual doctor visits have been developed by entrepreneurs. Specifically, telemedicine has emerged as a vital instrument for maintaining healthcare continuity, particularly in times of emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The way healthcare is provided and accessed has been completely transformed by startups like Teladoc and Doctor on Demand. A more patient-centric approach to healthcare has been fostered by the integration of wearable technology, mobile health apps, and electronic health records, which has also given people more power to take charge of their health.

The financial technology industry, or fintech for short, has led the charge in the revolution of digital entrepreneurship. To compete with established financial institutions, fintech startups have brought peer-to-peer lending platforms, robo-advisors, digital payment methods, and blockchain-based services.

The effectiveness and accessibility of financial services have improved for both businesses and consumers thanks to these creative solutions. Fintech digital entrepreneurs have also concentrated on financial inclusion, offering accessible and reasonably priced financial services to underbanked and unbanked populations in order to meet their needs. The financial industry has undergone a transformation thanks to fintech firms like Square, PayPal, and Robinhood.

Digital entrepreneurship has led to significant changes in the media and entertainment sectors. Content producers, such as podcasters, YouTubers, and social media influencers, have discovered new ways to reach a worldwide audience and make money from their work through sponsorships, advertising, and product sales. Taking advantage of digital distribution, streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Spotify provide enormous libraries of on-demand entertainment content. Consumers now enjoy more engaging and personalized media experiences thanks to digital advertising and targeted content delivery. The emergence of digital entrepreneurship has given people the ability to produce and consume media content, upending the established media gatekeepers.

The real estate sector has been greatly impacted by digital entrepreneurship thanks to property technology (PropTech). To make the processes of searching for, purchasing, selling, and managing real estate more efficient, entrepreneurs have created mobile apps and web platforms. With the widespread use of digital transactions, virtual property tours, and property listings, real estate has become more affordable and practical for both buyers and sellers. In the real estate industry, these technological developments have improved data-driven decision-making and transparency. By embracing digital innovation, startups like Redfin, Airbnb, and Zillow have upended the real estate market. Blockchain technology is also set to change real estate transactions by increasing their security and transparency.

Digital entrepreneurship has led to the emergence of ride-sharing services, electric vehicles, and mobility apps in the transportation sector. Uber and Lyft are two examples of companies that have revolutionized urban transportation by offering practical substitutes for traditional taxis. Future generations of electric vehicle startups are helping to create a more ecologically conscious and sustainable world. With the help of mobility apps, users can select from a range of transportation options and navigate cities more effectively thanks to real-time transit information. Convenience, sustainability, and flexibility are becoming more important in the way people move through and engage with urban environments as a result of these digital innovations.

Even though it's frequently seen as a traditional industry, digital entrepreneurship is present in agriculture. IoT-based crop monitoring, online marketplaces for agricultural products, and precision farming are just a few of the innovations brought about by agritech startups. These innovations increase crop yield, cut waste, and establish a direct line of communication between farmers and customers. The farming industry benefits from increased efficiency and sustainability as a result of digital entrepreneurship. It is essential for tackling the problems associated with global food security because it maximizes resource utilization and improves the sustainability of farming methods.

Digital entrepreneurship has had a revolutionary impact on these industries, improving accessibility, convenience, efficiency, and sustainability. By utilizing digital technologies, entrepreneurs have not only upended established paradigms but also met urgent societal demands.

They have completely changed the way that people travel, shop, learn, get healthcare, handle money, consume media, and interact with agriculture. These industries are probably going to see more innovation and advancements as digital entrepreneurship develops, which will benefit society and the world economy as a whole. Digital entrepreneurship has shown that it is capable of coming up with novel solutions to persistent problems, making the world more accessible and connected.

Challenges and opportunities

Digital entrepreneurship has both challenges and opportunities, which are presented below:
Opportunities:

- Global reach: The opportunity to reach a large global audience through digital entrepreneurship is unmatched. Geographical boundaries do not limit online businesses, giving owners the opportunity to present their goods and services to a wide range of clients. Increased sales and global brand recognition may result from this broader reach.
- Reduced entry barriers: For entrepreneurs, the digital sphere has greatly reduced entry barriers. In the past, starting a business required a sizable initial investment for marketing, inventory, and physical infrastructure. But by lowering initial expenses, digital entrepreneurship has made company ownership more accessible. Open-source software, cloud computing, and reasonably priced online tools enable entrepreneurs to start and run businesses with little capital.
- Innovation: Agility and inventiveness are fostered by digital entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs are able to quickly adjust to shifting market conditions and try out new ideas. It is possible to continuously improve and evolve products and services by refining them without being constrained by conventional business processes.
- Data-driven decision-making: A wealth of information about consumer behavior, industry trends, and operational performance is available thanks to the digital environment. Through the use of analytics tools, entrepreneurs can leverage this data to obtain insightful knowledge. It becomes possible to develop products, make informed decisions, and provide individualized customer experiences, all of which increase a company's relevance and competitiveness.
- Scalability: The potential for scalability in digital businesses is unparalleled. Startups that possess effective strategies, appropriate resources, and the capacity to adjust to market demands can quickly grow from localized operations to multinational enterprises. One characteristic that sets digital entrepreneurship apart is its scalability, which permits quick development and expansion.

Challenges:

- Intense competition: There is fierce competition in the digital sphere. Numerous business owners are competing for attention and market share because there are low entry barriers. In order to thrive in competitive markets, entrepreneurs need to identify their distinct value proposition, focus on particular markets, and consistently introduce new ideas.
- Cybersecurity risks: Businesses that operate online are more susceptible to security threats such as data breaches and cyberattacks. Preserving confidence and safeguarding private client information are critical. Businesses need to put a high priority on cybersecurity measures, making investments in reliable security solutions and remaining alert to ever-changing threats.

- Regulatory and legal complexities: Regulations pertaining to the digital environment are constantly changing, especially those that deal with data protection, privacy, and digital rights. To maintain compliance with local, national, and international laws, entrepreneurs have to negotiate a challenging legal environment. To prevent financial and legal repercussions, it is imperative to remain informed, collaborate with legal professionals, and adjust to evolving regulations.
- Technological change occurs quickly: This presents both a challenge and an opportunity. It allows business owners to come up with creative solutions, but it also necessitates that they stay current with emerging trends. Maintaining a competitive edge and making sure a digital business stays relevant in the constantly changing tech landscape require staying up to date with emerging technologies.
- Market saturation: This is a concern in certain digital niches. Gaining a substantial audience share can become more difficult as more businesspeople enter well-known markets. To stand out from the competition, entrepreneurs need to come up with innovative ways to distinguish their products and services, offer clients something special, and create winning marketing plans.
- Monetization strategies: For digital entrepreneurs, creating successful monetization strategies can be a major challenge. They have to decide whether to use e-commerce, advertising, subscription services, freemium products, or other strategies to make money. To ensure financial sustainability, the audience and business model must be taken into consideration when selecting the appropriate strategy.
- Data privacy and ethics: When it comes to user trust and data privacy, entrepreneurs must make ethical decisions. Data handling errors or invasions of user privacy may result in negative public opinion and legal repercussions. To preserve trust and safeguard their brand, digital entrepreneurs need to put a high priority on ethical data practices, open communication with users regarding data usage, and adherence to privacy laws.

The dynamic digital landscape is intricately linked to both the opportunities and challenges of digital entrepreneurship. Proactive and flexible entrepreneurs can take advantage of the enormous prospects for expansion, creativity, and worldwide exposure. They must, however, also exercise caution when dealing with the difficulties, which include fierce competition, cybersecurity risks, intricate regulatory frameworks, and the requirement for ongoing technological adaptation. In a constantly changing digital ecosystem, digital businesses must be able to navigate these complexities with success.

DIGITAL SKILLS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The acquisition of digital skills has become essential for both employment and entrepreneurship in today's rapidly changing digital landscape. The importance of digital skills, their wide range of uses in the contemporary workforce, and their contribution to the success of entrepreneurship are all covered in this chapter. The revolution in digital skills is changing how we interact, work, and do business. There is a growing need for a broad range of digital skills as technology develops. These include data analysis, programming, digital marketing, and digital literacy, among other things. It is impossible to overestimate their significance because they enable people to prosper in the digital era as both employees and business owners.

The dual relevance of digital skills

1. Employment: Digital skills are now required on the job market rather than a perk. Nowadays, a fundamental understanding of digital tools and platforms is required for many traditional job roles. In today's workforce, office software, data analysis, and digital communication tool proficiency are critical. Furthermore, more specialized skills lead to high-demand, high-paying job opportunities. Examples of these skills include coding, data science, and digital marketing. This chapter's section explores the particular digital skills that employers in a variety of industries are looking for, as well as the advantages they offer to job seekers in terms of competitiveness.
2. Entrepreneurship: Equally important are digital skills for entrepreneurs. They really serve as the cornerstone of digital entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs in this field need to be proficient in web development, e-commerce management, digital marketing, cybersecurity, and data analytics. Entrepreneurs that possess these skills are able to reach their target market, build an online presence, assess market trends, and defend their company from online threats. This section examines the various ways that digital skills are applied in entrepreneurship and offers insights into how these applications spur innovation and business expansion.

Bridging the digital skills gap

The revolution in digital skills is changing how we interact, work, and do business. There is a growing need for a broad range of digital skills as technology develops. These include data analysis, programming, digital marketing, and digital literacy, among other things. It is impossible to overestimate their significance because they enable people to prosper in the digital era as both employees and business owners. A critical issue is the discrepancy between the supply of skilled labor and the demand for digital skills, or the "digital skills gap." Businesses, governments, and educational institutions are proactively attempting to close this gap. To make sure that people have the skills necessary to navigate the digital landscape, initiatives like public-private partnerships, digital skills training programs, and incentives for businesses to upskill their workforce are being implemented. In addition to meeting the immediate needs of the workforce, this cooperative endeavor promotes digital inclusivity, enabling people from all backgrounds to take advantage of the advantages of the digital era.

Digital skills training: methods and resources

Learning digital skills involves both self-directed learning and structured training. To accommodate diverse learning needs and preferences, a range of training methods and resources are offered. Reputable online learning environments like Coursera, edX, and Udacity offer courses that cover a broad range of digital skills, from data analysis and coding to cybersecurity and digital marketing. Coding bootcamps are a quick way to become proficient in software development for individuals seeking focused, intensive training. These courses, which typically last several weeks, give aspiring programmers and developers practical experience and skills. Furthermore, a person's proficiency in particular fields, like search engine optimization or digital advertising, is verified by digital skills certifications from companies like Google and HubSpot. Budget-conscious learners can consider self-directed learning because of the abundance of free and open-source resources, such as YouTube channels, forums, and coding tutorials. These materials are especially helpful for people who can adjust to their own goals and would prefer a more flexible learning schedule.

EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR THE LABOR MARKET

Women's efforts for equal opportunities in the workforce have advanced significantly in many parts of the world. Nonetheless, the gender gap still exists, and women frequently encounter particular obstacles that prevent them from fully engaging in the workforce. In order to equip women with the skills, information, and resources they need to succeed in the workforce, this chapter explores the various approaches and programs that have been put in place.

EQUIPPING WOMEN WITH NECESSARY TOOLS
EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The foundation for women's empowerment in the workforce is education. It is crucial to guarantee that women and girls have access to high-quality education at all levels. This covers opportunities for further education and skill development in addition to basic and secondary education. It is critical to support programs that increase girls' school enrollment and retention rates and encourage women to enter STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, where they are traditionally underrepresented. Furthermore, adult education programs and vocational training are essential in providing women with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a variety of industries. Societies can unleash the potential of women and create a workforce that is both skilled and inclusive by investing in education and skill development.

Digital literacy

Digital literacy is a crucial skill for engaging in the economy in the increasingly digital world we live in today. An essential part of empowering women is teaching them how to use digital tools, navigate the internet, and harness the power of technology. Programs that promote digital literacy help close the digital gap and guarantee that women have the skills needed to succeed in the workforce. These programs enable women to use technology as a tool for learning, career advancement, and entrepreneurship. They cover everything from fundamental computer skills to more complex digital competencies like coding and data analysis. In the digital age, digital literacy not only fosters employability but also independence and confidence.

The OMEGA project acknowledges that digital literacy is not only advantageous but also absolutely necessary in an age where technology is pervasive. In order to achieve this, young women receive in-depth instruction in digital literacy, covering everything from the principles of widely used software programs to the subtleties of email correspondence and the complexities of social media administration. Encouraging participants to actively participate in the digital aspects of contemporary workplaces is the aim, in addition to providing them with the ability to conduct online job searches. Digital tool proficiency is not only advantageous, but also a basic skill that helps young women to innovate, adapt, and stay competitive in an increasingly tech-driven job market.

Financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills

One important factor in the empowerment of women is financial independence. Women who receive financial literacy training are better able to manage their finances, make long-term plans, and make educated financial decisions.

Moreover, women who acquire entrepreneurial skills are better equipped to launch and expand their own businesses, generating jobs for both themselves and their communities. Programs for financial literacy educate women on debt management, investing, saving, and budgeting so they have the knowledge and skills necessary to safeguard their financial future. Women who receive an entrepreneurial education are better prepared to recognize business opportunities, take calculated risks, and overcome the obstacles that come with being an entrepreneur. With these abilities, women can drive economic growth and innovation and take charge of their financial futures.

A frequently disregarded but essential skill for professional success is financial acumen. Acknowledging this, the OMEGA project teaches financial literacy on a range of subjects, including managing personal finances and budgeting and saving. Financial literacy enables women to plan for their financial future, make well-informed financial decisions, and successfully negotiate the frequently complex realm of personal finance. This tool increases their confidence in making wise financial decisions while also preparing them for financial success.

Networking and mentorship

Mentorship and networking are essential for women's professional advancement. Making connections with peers and mentors who can provide opportunities, support, and guidance can be very beneficial for women. In order for women in a variety of industries to develop meaningful professional relationships and get the guidance and assistance they require to progress in their careers, networking and mentoring programs are crucial. These opportunities, which can take the form of official mentoring programs, women's networking groups, conferences, or professional events, enable women to gain valuable insights, learn from the experiences of others, and effectively navigate the intricacies of the labor market. In addition to promoting career advancement, networking and mentoring help women feel more connected to the community and support each other as they pursue their careers.

It is important to remember that entering the job market can be difficult, and that advice is invaluable. Acknowledging this, the project pairs participants with mentors who offer unshakable support along with insightful guidance. These mentors provide sound advice and act as role models, sharing their own experiences-based insights. They share insightful viewpoints, offer guidance on advancing one's career, and lead participants through the complexities of the working world. Not only do support networks within the project and the larger community facilitate professional development, but they also provide emotional support and a feeling of community. By offering emotional resilience and a community of like-minded people with similar goals, these networks foster a supportive environment where young women can flourish.

Workplace training and equal opportunity initiatives

Women's career success depends on the establishment of inclusive workplaces that support diversity and equal opportunities. Programs and policies aimed at eradicating gender bias, advancing women's professional development, and offering workplace training that gives women the skills they need to succeed in their roles are widely available within organizations. Programs for developing women's leadership potential and equipping them with the know-how to assume leadership positions within their organizations are the main objectives of these initiatives. In order to make sure that women are fairly compensated for their contributions, initiatives that address the gender pay gap and promote equal pay for equal work are essential. A more empowering and encouraging work environment is also facilitated by flexible work schedules, work-life balance-promoting policies, and diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Societies can unleash the enormous potential of half of their population, promoting innovation, accelerating economic growth, and creating a more inclusive and equitable labor market, by providing women with the right resources and assistance. The significance of attending to women's particular needs and obstacles is emphasized in this sub-chapter in order to guarantee their complete and meaningful involvement in the workforce. Gender equality aside, empowering women is also a smart economic move that helps whole countries and communities.

The strategy used by the OMEGA project to provide women with the tools they need is to provide a wide range of information and resources that go beyond basic employability. It includes a vast array of abilities, know-how, and tools that enable young women to not only land jobs but also advance their careers, realize their full potential, and succeed in a labor market that is changing quickly. In addition to helping women find employment, this empowerment aims to develop a new generation of competent, self-assured women who can thrive in a variety of professional settings, forge ahead with their own careers, and shatter stereotypes in the contemporary workforce. The project hopes to change lives, improve career paths, and encourage women to pursue their career goals by taking a comprehensive approach.

ADDRESSING THE EFFECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Wide-ranging social, economic, and psychological repercussions can result from unemployment, especially for women. In order to empower women for the workforce, it is imperative that these effects be addressed. This sub-chapter examines the various issues that result from unemployment as well as the plans and resources created to lessen these issues.

Economic impact

The economic well-being of women and their families is negatively impacted by unemployment, which frequently results in financial instability. Financial stress brought on by irregular income can make it difficult to pay for needs like housing, healthcare, and education. For women who are losing their jobs, government programs like food assistance and unemployment benefits are vital sources of financial support. These safety nets help women maintain their financial stability and meet basic needs by acting as a buffer during times of unemployment. Giving unemployed women the chance to retrain or upskill improves their employability when they reenter the workforce. These initiatives, which frequently collaborate with academic institutions or workforce development organizations, give women the new skills and credentials they need to land desirable jobs.

Unemployment can have severe financial consequences that can cause stress, anxiety, and unstable finances. In order to address this, the OMEGA project provides financial literacy training, giving young women the know-how and abilities needed to successfully manage their finances while they are unemployed. Participants gain knowledge about saving, budgeting, and making wise financial decisions. Their financial savvy not only enables them to overcome their current financial difficulties but also sets them up for long-term financial security. Investing in upskilling and skill development is one practical way to combat the effects of unemployment. During periods of unemployment, participants can improve or learn new skills thanks to the OMEGA project's continuous learning opportunities. These abilities help young women stay involved and active in the job search while also improving their employability. It is a proactive strategy for both professional and personal development that combats the demotivation that can result from extended unemployment.

Psychological and emotional effects

Mental health and general wellbeing can suffer from unemployment. Anxiety, sadness, and feelings of inadequacy can result from losing a job. In order to assist women in their job search and professional resilience, it is imperative to address the psychological and emotional effects of unemployment:

- Psychiatric services: Access to counseling and mental health services is essential for women who are feeling the emotional toll of unemployment. These programs provide a secure environment for talking about stress and anxiety, and they can give women coping mechanisms.
- Helping groups: For women without jobs, starting support groups and peer networks can foster a sense of belonging and camaraderie. Feelings of loneliness can be reduced and self-esteem increased by exchanging experiences and guidance with people going through comparable experiences.

One's emotional and psychological health suffers a great deal when they are unemployed. The project gives people access to mental health resources and counseling because it understands how important emotional support is. Young women can receive emotional support and strategies to manage stress, anxiety, and uncertainty from qualified counselors and mental health professionals as they navigate the emotional challenges of unemployment. Participants will be more capable of navigating the ups and downs of the job market thanks to this support, which cultivates emotional resilience.

Family and social impact

The effects of unemployment frequently extend beyond the unemployed person to include their families and larger social networks. An all-encompassing strategy is required to address the effects of unemployment on families and society:

- Family-friendly programs: Providing family support programs can lessen the strain that unemployment has on family relationships. Programs for financial literacy, family counseling, and childcare support can help women who are balancing work and family obligations.
- Community engagement: It is essential to involve communities in order to support women who are unemployed. Resources like job fairs, child care, and skill-building workshops can be provided by neighborhood associations and neighborhood projects to assist women in reestablishing themselves in the workforce.

Empowerment through re-employment

Re-employment strategies that empower women not only help them find employment but also address the complex issues surrounding unemployment. Societies can assist women in regaining their self-assurance and sense of purpose as they return to the workforce by offering them financial, psychological, familial, and social support. It is critical to see unemployment as a chance for women to grow as individuals, develop new skills, fortify their mental fortitude, and fortify their support systems—all of which will ultimately improve their employability in the long run and general well-being. One of the main goals of the OMEGA project is to prepare young women for the workforce by addressing the effects of unemployment. The project cultivates resilience and well-being among participants by offering financial literacy training, emotional and psychological support, upskilling opportunities, networking and peer support, career counseling, resume building guidance, access to job market information, support in overcoming barriers, and the promotion of realistic expectations.

This comprehensive approach guarantees that young women not only gain the knowledge and abilities required for the labor market, but also have the emotional resilience and support networks required to deal with the difficulties associated with unemployment. The OMEGA project aims to enable women to thrive and maintain their resilience in the face of a changing labor market by means of these initiatives. It is about promoting a sense of empowerment even in the face of adversity, focusing on personal and emotional well-being rather than just employability.

Using gaming experiences for educational purposes

The gaming industry has developed into a potent tool for skill development and education, going far beyond simple entertainment. This subsection delves into the utilization of gaming experiences for educational objectives, emphasizing the empowerment of women to acquire essential skills and knowledge in an enjoyable manner. Gaming experiences have developed into more than just recreational activities; they are now effective teaching tools that motivate and captivate students of all ages. The OMEGA project incorporates this creative strategy into its framework in recognition of the educational potential of gaming. This section delves into the ways in which the project uses gaming experiences to improve education, make learning more dynamic, and engage and assist young women in learning.

Gamification in learning

Gamification, or the application of concepts and elements from games to non-gaming environments, has become popular in the field of education. It provides a dynamic learning environment that promotes involvement and active participation. Teachers and trainers can create immersive, interactive learning experiences that accommodate a variety of learning styles by incorporating gaming elements into their educational content. Gamification is the process of introducing aspects of game design—like challenges, rewards, and competition—into non-gaming environments, like education. The OMEGA project employs gamification strategies to increase young women's motivation and enjoyment of learning. Participants actively engage in problem-solving, critical thinking, and skill development when instructional content is transformed into a game-like experience. Gamification incentivizes individuals to commit more to their learning process by creating a sense of accomplishment and advancement.

Benefits of gamification in learning

1. Engagement and motivation:

Gamification is highly effective in grabbing and holding learners' attention. Games frequently include aspects that are naturally motivating, such as challenges, rewards, and a sense of accomplishment. The captivating aspect of gamification can be a huge benefit for women, particularly those in traditionally male-dominated fields. Stereotypes that might discourage women from pursuing particular careers can be challenged with its assistance. In the real world, the sense of achievement one gets from conquering challenges in games can inspire women to pursue jobs they may have previously deemed intimidating.

2. Active learning and retention

Gamification of learning is an interactive process. The decision-making, problem-solving, and virtual environment exploration required of players improves their comprehension and retention of the subject matter. Because interactive games provide a hands-on learning experience, women can benefit especially from this feature of educational games. A game-based learning environment can help women become more engaged and less overwhelmed by traditional lectures or coursework.

3. Problem-solving and critical thinking

A lot of educational games require players to work through obstacles and find solutions. These problem-solving abilities can be applied in practical settings. This part of gamification is very beneficial to women because it gives them the tools to solve complicated problems, make choices, and exercise critical thought. These abilities are extremely valuable in fields like technology and entrepreneurship where problem-solving is crucial.

4. Adaptive learning

Adaptive learning, which adjusts the experience to the learner's skill level, is a common feature of educational games. The pressure that comes with traditional educational settings is lessened for women thanks to this personalized approach, which guarantees that they can advance at their own pace. It is especially beneficial for women from varied backgrounds and skill levels because it allows for a more inclusive learning environment and accommodates individual learning styles.

5. Competitive spirit and collaboration

A lot of educational games have competitive components, which can promote constructive rivalry and teamwork. In a more laid-back, game-based setting, women who are reluctant to take the lead can develop their leadership and confidence. Additionally, cooperative games promote communication and teamwork, two qualities that are crucial in today's job market.

6. Real-world application

Real-world scenarios are frequently simulated by gamification. This hands-on approach makes education more relevant and useful by allowing women to apply what they have learned directly to their chosen field. It helps women become more equipped to handle the obstacles they may encounter in the job market by bridging the knowledge gap between theory and practice.

Women can gain a great deal from gamification in school programs as they get ready for the workforce. It provides a stimulating and empowering learning environment that gives women the abilities, know-how, and self-assurance they need to succeed in a range of fields, including those in which they have historically been underrepresented. Teachers and trainers can better assist women in pursuing fulfilling careers by utilizing the advantages of gamification.

Educational games for digital skills

Educational games have become a vibrant and interesting way to learn digital skills, which are becoming more and more necessary in today's workforce. For women who want to succeed in digital marketing, data analysis, or coding, educational games provide an engaging and participatory learning environment.

- Coding games: Players are introduced to the world of programming through coding games, which are frequently created as puzzle or adventure games. Players can learn coding skills in a fun way by playing these games, which cover everything from fundamental programming ideas to more complex languages like Python, Java, or JavaScript. Coding tasks like debugging code, developing algorithms, and constructing basic apps are frequently taken on by players. Coding games reduce the intimidating aspect of the subject and make learning to code fun and approachable. They are especially helpful for women who want to work in IT, web design, or software development.

- Digital marketing simulations: Digital marketing simulations submerge users into the intricate realm of internet marketing. Digital marketing scenarios such as content creation, social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and campaign management are all simulated in these games. Gamers can test out various data analysis techniques, marketing tactics, and decision-making techniques that affect their virtual company or brand. For women who want to succeed in digital marketing roles—where a thorough understanding of online promotion is essential—the hands-on experience these simulations provide is priceless.
- Data analysis puzzles: Engaging challenges centered around data manipulation, interpretation, and problem-solving are provided by data analysis games. Working with datasets, generating predictions, and deriving conclusions from data are common tasks in these games. Gamers can practice different data analysis tools and techniques in a safe, game-like setting. These games help develop the analytical and statistical skills necessary for success in these fields, making them ideal for women interested in careers as data scientists, analysts, or business intelligence professionals.
- Virtual labs for science and technology: Virtual labs are becoming more and more common in STEM fields. Through the use of these educational games, users can explore difficult scientific concepts, simulate scientific processes, and conduct virtual experiments. These virtual labs can help women who want to work in STEM fields by giving them the opportunity to obtain real-world experience in a safe and engaging setting. For women pursuing careers in STEM fields where practical laboratory work is essential, these experiences can be especially empowering.
- Cybersecurity challenges: For women who are interested in the constantly changing field of cybersecurity, educational games about cybersecurity are essential. In these games, which frequently mimic cyberthreats, players assume the role of cybersecurity experts entrusted with protecting systems and data from intrusions. Women can prepare for careers as cybersecurity experts by taking part in cybersecurity challenges and learning vital skills in ethical hacking, network security, and incident response.
- Professional simulation games: Professional simulation games give players an inside look at daily tasks and decision-making by immersing them in a particular industry or profession. Women can, for instance, learn the nuances of entrepreneurship, make strategic decisions, and manage a virtual business through business simulation games.

The OMEGA project's incorporation of gaming experiences for educational purposes shows a dedication to making learning not only educational but also entertaining, successful, and engaging. The project fosters a dynamic learning environment where young women can acquire critical skills related to digital entrepreneurship and other relevant fields by embracing gamification and serious games. These encounters promote motivation, the growth of skills, teamwork, and a more thorough comprehension of difficult ideas. Most significantly, they turn the educational process into a thrilling journey in which participants actively engage in their own personal development. The OMEGA project hopes to empower young women and increase their access to education by using this creative approach, which will position them for success in the job market.

DATA INSIGHTS FROM BELGIUM, GREECE, NORTH MACEDONIA, ROMANIA, AND TURKEY

FIELD STUDY

The OMEGA Project, titled "Young Female Entrepreneurs Embracing the Digital Era," represents a substantial global initiative aimed at promoting the digital capabilities of young women entrepreneurs. The core objective of its purpose is to enhance the digital skills and competencies of young women, so increasing their prospects for successful integration into the labour market. The project employs a comprehensive approach, integrating research, surveys, and analysis, in order to shed light on the trajectory towards digital entrepreneurship that is inclusive of all genders.

The survey played a vital role in the project's research endeavours, as it aimed to thoroughly evaluate the extent of awareness and knowledge regarding digital tools and digital culture among young women. Through an in-depth exploration of this complex framework, the poll aimed to not only ascertain the current state of digital literacy but also identify the precise digital skills that are crucial for the successful development of startups. The survey's emphasis on young women entrepreneurs is representative of a wider objective to augment their employability, so stimulating their entry into the digital industry.

The survey aims to collect data pertaining to the demographic attributes of the participants, followed by their business management experience, knowledge with digital culture, and utilisation of digital technologies with their proficiency in digital skills. Furthermore, regarding the survey, it comprises a total of 29 inquiries. Specifically, four of these inquiries pertain to the initial category, while the other 25 inquiries aim to gather data on women who engage in establishing their own start-up ventures and their level of awareness regarding digitalism.

The project's desired result is realised through the creation of a comprehensive report that is carefully crafted to encompass all of the survey's findings. This study serves as a complete collection of insights, providing a detailed depiction of the present state of affairs while simultaneously outlining the path towards transformation. This statement highlights the fundamental aspects of the digital problems and opportunities encountered by young women within the realm of entrepreneurship.

The research has the potential to serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, stakeholders, and advocates who are committed to promoting equity in the digital realm. The value of this document goes beyond simple documentation. It functions as a guiding light, providing well-informed recommendations and successfully detailing alternative solutions to address the gender inequities deeply rooted throughout the digital entrepreneurship scene. The report serves as a catalyst for informed decision-making by crystallising a dynamic repository of knowledge. This, in turn, creates an atmosphere that is favourable to the blossoming of young women entrepreneurs.

Within the academic sphere, the OMEGA Project serves as a notable example of the convergence between scholarly investigation and practical implementation, symbolising the efficacy of cooperative initiatives in reshaping the socio-economic environment. The survey and subsequent study exemplify the successful integration of quantitative data and qualitative narratives, enabling a comprehensive comprehension of the complex obstacles encountered by young women in their digital entrepreneurial endeavours.

The present survey functions as a great instrument for collecting the distinct viewpoints, difficulties, and ambitions of young females in regards to digital competencies, entrepreneurship, and employment. Through active interaction with the specific demographic under study, the survey acquires significant data that facilitates a more comprehensive exploration of the requirements, inclinations, and obstacles encountered by adolescent females within the digital domain. The thorough examination of the survey findings facilitates a more nuanced comprehension of the particular challenges encountered by young women in the context of digital technology and entrepreneurship. The aforementioned statement underscores the specific domains that require focused interventions and assistance, pinpointing deficiencies in digital literacy, access to resources, and business prospects. The poll additionally provides insights into the particular obstacles encountered by women entrepreneurs, including impediments related to securing capital, establishing professional networks, and accessing mentorship opportunities.
In conclusion, the survey conducted by the OMEGA Project serves as a crucial component in the effort to empower young women entrepreneurs in the digital era, effectively combining scholarly investigation with practical remedies. This academic project exemplifies the significant role that research plays in guiding efforts towards achieving gender equality in digital empowerment. The upcoming report consolidates a substantial amount of valuable knowledge, positioned to act as a guiding principle in promoting gender-inclusive digital business.

A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF FIELD STUDY

The engagement and inclusion of women have emerged as critical factors for promoting economic growth and creativity in the fast-changing digital economy of today. In order for women to enhance their digital abilities and make use of the advantages of digitalization, there are both common challenges and particular possibilities, according to an analysis of many nations, including Belgium, Greece, North Macedonia, Romania, and Turkey.

Women's underrepresentation in the digital world, including engagement, employability, earnings, and the overall benefits of digitalization, is a prevalent theme across these nations. Underneath these difficulties, though, is a positive trend: women are very motivated to launch enterprises and improve their digital skills. Recognising this drive as a force for transformation, closing the gender gap in the digital sphere calls for targeted, strategic initiatives.

Increasing funds to offer comprehensive training opportunities to women has been suggested as one consistent option. It is believed that having enough financial resources is necessary to give women access to top-notch programmes that equip them with the skills they need to successfully navigate the digital world. The development of extensive networks that centralise data and updates is a complementing strategy. These networks, which could take the shape of websites or networking organisations, make sure that women have simple access to the tools necessary to support their development in the digital industry.

Programmes for hands-on training are also emphasised as a key component of closing the gender gap in technology. These programmes give women the chance to apply what they've learned while also imparting knowledge. The development of problem-solving techniques and abilities, which enable women to come up with answers on their own and not just rely on outside assistance, is equally vital.

Country-specific factors enhance this narrative even further. Customised techniques are suggested for Belgium, Greece, North Macedonia, Romania, and Turkey to get beyond historical obstacles, discriminatory practises, and restricted access to resources. These techniques include a wide range of topics, from programming to data management to artificial intelligence, reflecting the complexity of the digital ecosystem.

In conclusion, despite the fact that each nation's setting is different, the overall objective—to enable women to prosper in the digital age—remains the same. The gender gap in the digital sphere can be gradually closed by eliminating hurdles, promoting motivation, and offering comprehensive assistance through funding, networking, and useful training. By doing this, women business owners may significantly influence economic growth, innovation, and sustainable development in a wide range of countries. Beyond being necessary, the quest for gender parity in the digital domain holds great promise for creating a more welcoming and successful future.

BELGIUM

INTRODUCTION

As of January 1, 2020, the legally registered population in Belgium reached 11,492,641 inhabitants, according to official figures from Statbel, the Belgian statistical office. 51% (5,832,577 people in absolute figures) are women, and 49% (5,660,064 people) men.

The increase in the population at the national level is mainly due to two demographic factors :

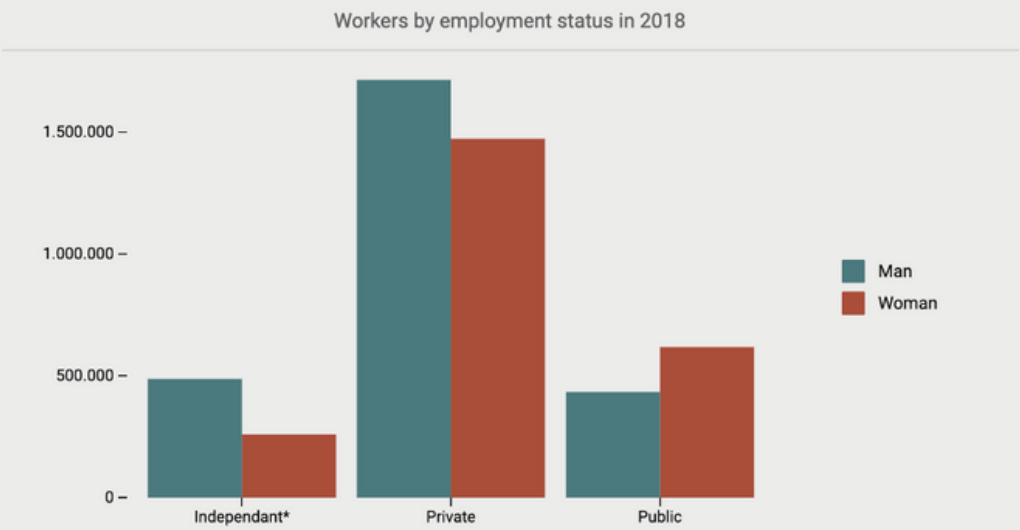
- a positive 'natural balance', with births outnumbering deaths (+6,820 people in 2019), which represents 11.0% of total population growth, but above all;
- by the positive migratory balance: immigration exceeds emigration (+55,031 people in 2019). This balance explains by far the major part of this growth rate (89.0%)

In Belgium, there are three different regions that also have different numbers for the regions which are diverging sharply. Firstly, the Flemish Region; the population increased by 40,074 people (36,102 in 2018), again a fairly significant growth of 0.6% of the total population. Secondly, in the Wallonia Region, During the year 2019, the population increased by 11,448 people. This is more than in 2018, when 9,418 people were added to the population. In percentage, the increase amounts to 0.3%. Third region which is Brussels-Capital Region; During the year 2019, the population increased by 9,713 people. In 2018, this increase was 9,816 people. This is much more than what was observed in 2016 and 2017 (3,714 and 7,122 people), but still less than the average increase for the period 2011-2015 (average increase of 13,760 people).

The State of Art In The Labor

According to the latest figures of StatBel, the Belgian statistical office, on the labour market; the unemployment rate of women has been below the level of men, since the third quarter of 2017. Yet men are still more often at work. In the third quarter of 2019, 74.8 % of men aged 20 to 64 have a job, compared to 66.6 % of women in that age group.

The infographics from 2018, shows that in the public sector, %57 of the employees are female, while only 1 out of 3 women is self-employed.

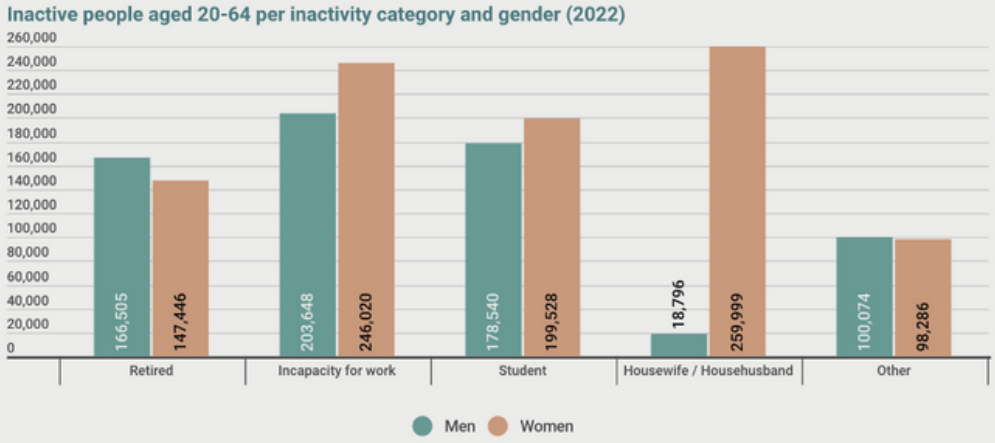


Mostly the majority of clerical support workers, service and sales workers, professionals and elementary occupations (domestic helps, etc.) are taken by women. However, women represent only a tiny percentage of craft and related trades workers, plant and machine operators, skilled agricultural workers or armed forces occupations. Also, only one out of three women is a manager.

"In Belgium, 54.4 % of women aged 30 to 34 have a higher education diploma, compared to 40.6 % of men of the same age group. In 2018, the number of early school leavers among 18-24 year old women amounted to 6.5 % compared to 10.6 % among men.

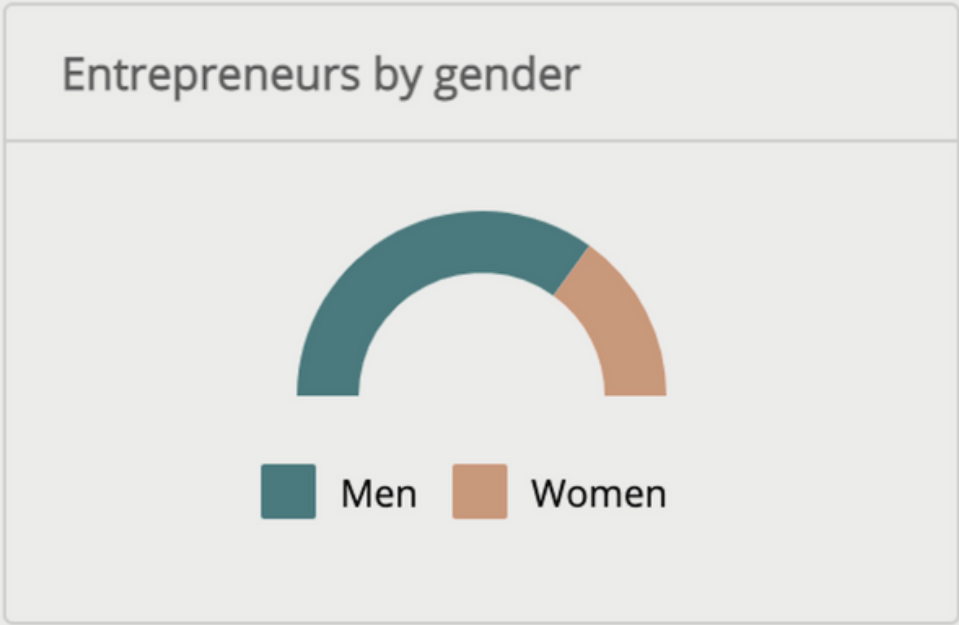
Besides, 53 % of working women have a higher education diploma, compared to 41 % of working men.

Nevertheless, in 2018, a woman earned an hourly wage that was on average 6.0 % lower than a man's hourly wage. And yet, Belgium performs better than most of the other European countries in terms of pay gap between women and men. Within the EU, the gender pay gap is 14.8 %."

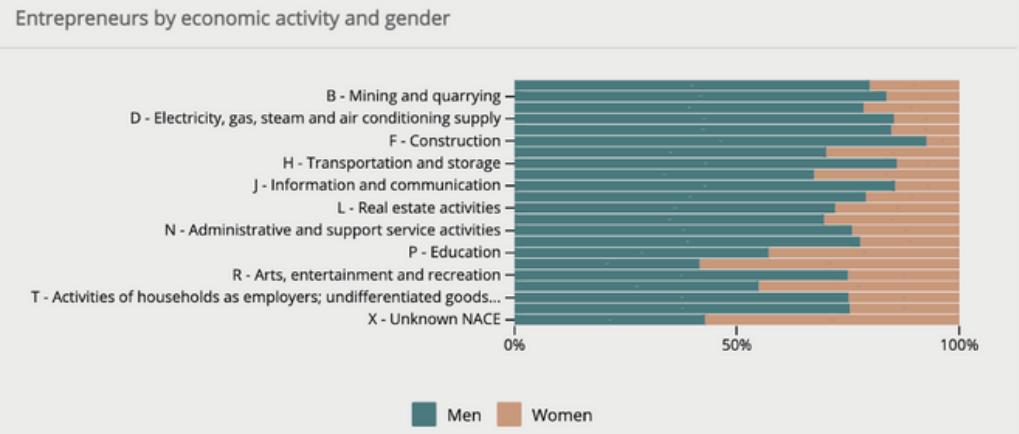


Women in Entrepreneurship

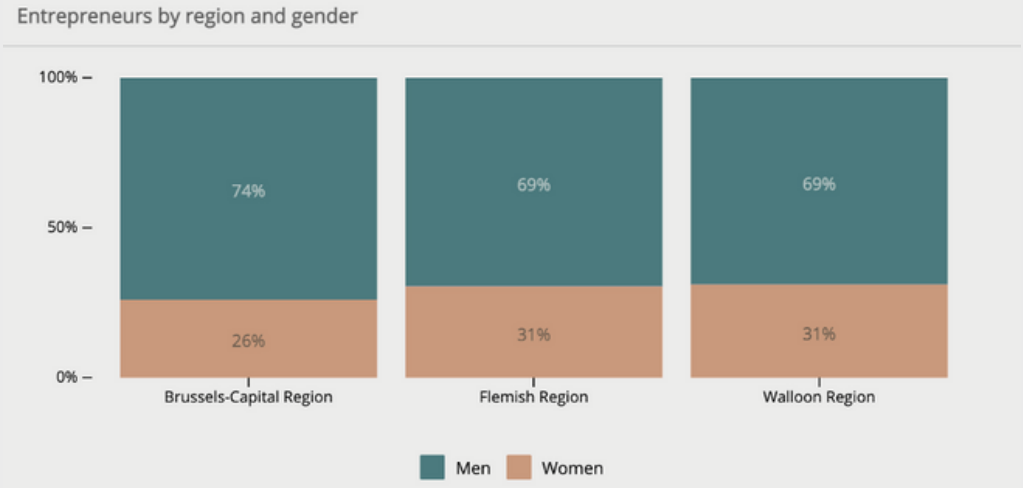
Based on StatBel figures, there are approximately 1,433,477 positions of founders, directors and business managers of Belgian enterprises of which 30% were women in 2019.



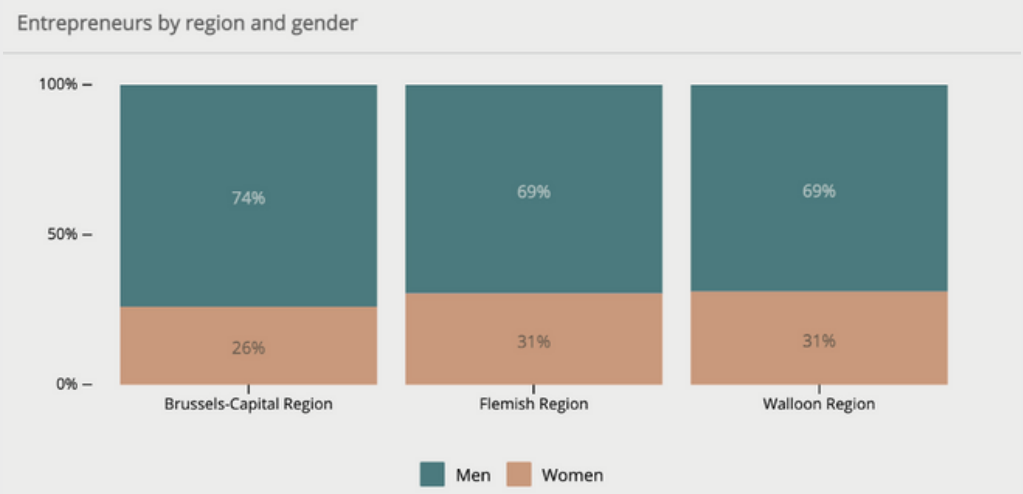
Women are represented in the health sector with %59 of percentage of self-employed entrepreneurs. The two other highest ranks are other service activities and education.



The percentage of women entrepreneurs by region and gender is always lower than the men. The infographics are showing close values in 3 different regions.



Women are proportionally more active in the lower age groups.



M Professio...	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
< 30 year	9.750	9.883	19.633	50%	50%
30 - 39 year	19.185	31.653	50.838	38%	62%
40 - 49 year	21.448	44.409	65.857	33%	67%
50 - 59 year	16.360	46.063	62.423	26%	74%
> 60 year	7.539	35.532	43.071	18%	82%
Total	74.282	167.540	241.822	31%	69%

In 2021, 54% of all individuals and 52% of all women in the EU had basic or above basic overall digital skills, while that percentage was significantly higher among girls (16-19 years old) with 70%. Overall digital skills refer to five areas: information and data literacy skills, communication and collaboration skills, digital content creation skills, safety skills and problem-solving skills. Also, the highest shares of girls with basic or above basic overall digital skills among the EU countries were: Malta (96%), followed by Croatia and Finland (both 93%), Czechia (89%) and Austria (87%). The lowest shares were registered in Germany and Romania (both 47%), Bulgaria (51%), Italy (59%) and Luxembourg (60%).

The Commission's 2021 Women in Digital Scoreboard confirms that there is still a substantial gender gap in specialist digital skills. Only 19% of ICT specialists and about one third of science, technology, engineering and mathematics graduates are female. There is no progress, as these figures have been stable over the last few years. The Digital Compass has set the target that the EU should have 20 million employed ICT specialists, with convergence between women and men, by 2030.

The employment rate for women aged 15-64 in Belgium is 61.8% in 2021. In addition, the employment rate of women aged 15 to 64 in Belgium is lower than that of neighbouring countries over the past five years. Following the changes to definitions made by Eurostat in 2021, the evolutionary analysis with previous years should be considered with caution. The entrepreneurship rate among Belgian women aged 18-64 is 8.9% in 2021. This means that just under one in ten women aged 18-64 in Belgium declares to be self-employed in 2021.

ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Women in Digital Scoreboard 2021

Belgium

	Belgium Women value	Belgium Women rank	Belgium Men value	EU Women value	EU Men value
1 Use of internet					
1.1 Internet users % individuals, 2020	89%	10	*91%*	85%	87%
1.2 People who have never used the internet % individuals, 2020	6%	8	*6%*	10%	8%
1.3 Online banking % internet users, 2020	82%	8	*82%*	65%	67%
1.4 Doing an online course % internet users, 2020	17%	15	*22%*	15%	15%
1.5 Online consultations or voting % internet users, 2019	5%	23	*6%*	11%	12%
1.6 e-Government users % internet users submitting forms, 2020	63%	19	*69%*	64%	64%
1 Use of internet Score (0-100)	63	14		60	
2 Internet user skills					
2.1 At least basic digital skills % individuals, 2019	58%	10	*63%*	54%	58%
2.2 Above basic digital skills % individuals, 2019	32%	14	*37%*	29%	33%
2.3 At least basic software skills % individuals, 2019	60%	10	*65%*	56%	60%
2 Internet user skills Score (0-100)	57	11		53	
3 Specialist skills and employment					
3.1 STEM graduates Per 1000 individuals aged 20-29, 2019	8	24	20.7	14	28
3.2 ICT specialists % total employment, 2020	1.9%	10	*7.8%*	1.7%	6.5%
3.3 Unadjusted gender pay gap % difference in pay, 2019	11%	2		19%	
3 Specialist skills and employment Score (0-100)	47	14		47	
Women in Digital Index Score (0-100)	55.6	12		53.2	

In a scope of digital skills and womens' interest and participation in the area is the second layer of this study that we can see on the left, a general infographic which shows us the percentage of " Women in Digital" based on the data received until 2021 in Belgium by comparing with the statistics of men in Belgium, women and men in EU.

The table categorises each data under three different levels of being engaged with Digital: 1 - Use of Internet, 2 - Internet user skills and 3- Specialist skills and employment.

Under the first category, it is visible that women in Belgium use the internet with a bigger percentage than women in EU (in online banking, internet users, doing an online course) except e-Government users and online consultation or voting.

For the second category which shows the different skills of internet users has different rankings. Basic digital skills are known by %58 of the women in Belgium which is higher than the women in EU but with not much of a big difference in between. The grade for 'above basic digital skills' shows that the percentages are not more than %50 anymore. It is visible that the percentage of above basic digital skills for men and women in Belgium and in the EU, dramatically decreased down till %30-29. In terms of the increasing need of digital skills and increasing employment in digital fields until 2030, this is a gap which should be filled by empowerment and digital courses.

Moreover, the third category is following with the lowest percentages of STEM graduates and ICT specialists. Women in Belgium's Digital Index has %55.6 value and it is a little bit higher than the value of women in the EU. Regarding this scoreboard, it is clear that women in Belgium have an increasing interest in digital, however the need for support and empowerment to do and learn more is also lying behind the scores. For this reason, 'what has to be done and how' is one of the many questions which leads the experts to create an efficient strategy for boosting digital skills of women, increasing their capacity and employability. OMEGA Project's survey will be contributing well at this point which will be analysed in the next parts of the study.

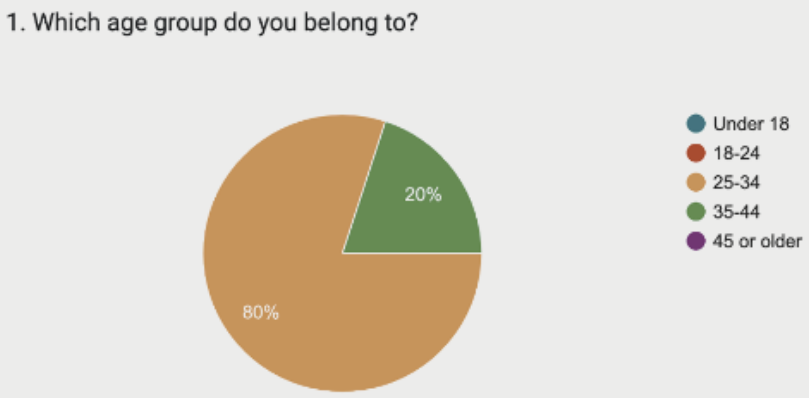
Survey Implementation

The OMEGA Project - " Young Female Entrepreneurs stepping into the Digital Age " is an international project aims at developing the digital skills and competencies of young female entrepreneurs to increase their opportunities of integration into the labour market.

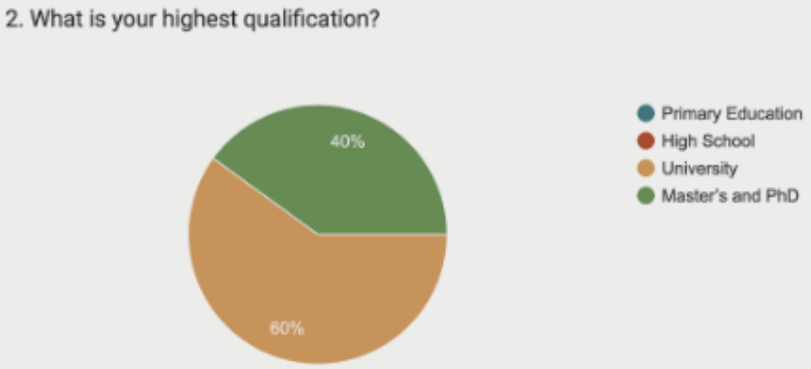
The aim of the survey was to reach the relevant data on awareness and knowledge of digital tools and digital culture and the need to develop necessary digital skills of young women to increase their employability for women who are motivated to build their own start ups. This study will be presenting a report of the OMEGA survey to the readers in order to define the current situation and possible solutions and recommendations to support women's entrepreneurship in the digital field. This study which can be called as a report on "OMEGA Survey of Young Women Entrepreneurs and Digital Culture" had been answered by the local female entrepreneurs in Belgium. The survey was promoted and the data was gathered and analysed by YEU International - Youth for Exchange and Understanding in Brussels, Belgium. The survey was in English in a google form format and it has four different categories: First, information about the characteristics of the respondents; second, experience in running a business; third, familiarity with the digital culture; fourth, use of digital tools and level of digital skills. Moreover, about the survey, it contains 29 questions; 4 questions are related to the first category; 25 questions were seeking data on women building their own start-ups, awareness about digitalism.

Questionnaire Analysis

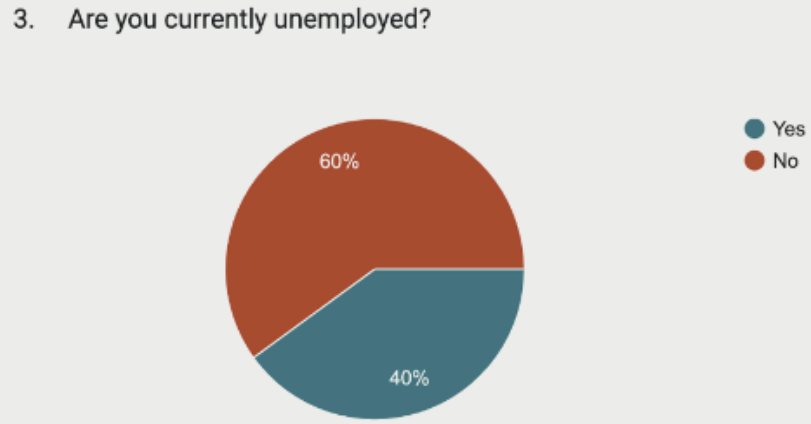
Regarding the survey results, %20 of the respondents are aged between 35-44; while the %80 of them are aged between 25-34. The survey has been sent by YEU International which is an INGYO in the field of youth work and so the type of network that YEU has is mostly young people. That's why the date reached by YEU at the end of the survey has a bigger range in between 25-34 ages.



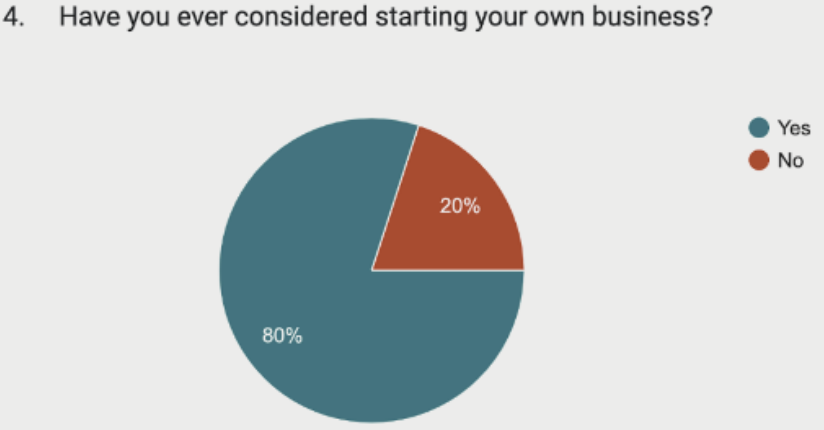
From the results of the second question of the survey, it is visible that the respondents have qualifications %60 University and %40 Master's and PhD which shows that they are academically skilled and/or highly skilled and/or motivated.



%60 of the respondents are currently employed and %40 of them are currently unemployed. The aim of the survey is to reduce the number of unemployed ones by addressing the need in terms of digital skills.

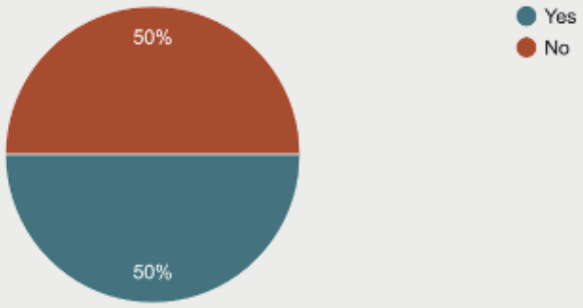


%80 of the respondents are motivated to start their own business which is a good and positive figure.



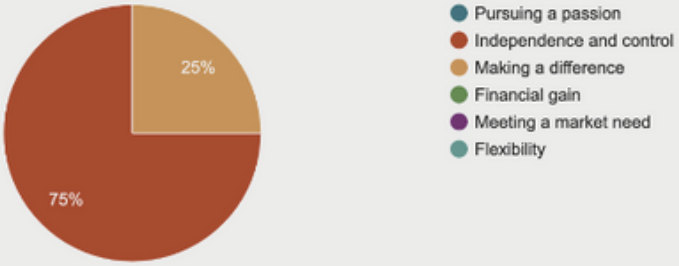
Half of the respondents have experience in managing the business which means half of them are highly-skilled and had experience of running a business.

5. Do you have experience in managing business?



There are 2 answers given by the respondents in 6 optional answers. First one is “independence and control” with %75 and second one is “making a difference” with %25.

6. What is the motivation for starting the business?

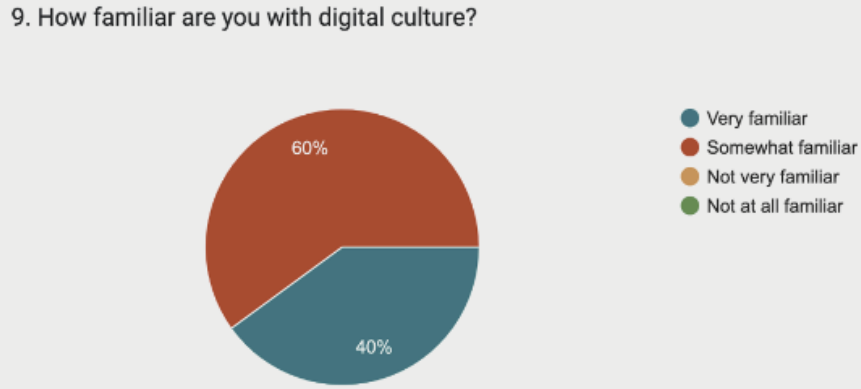


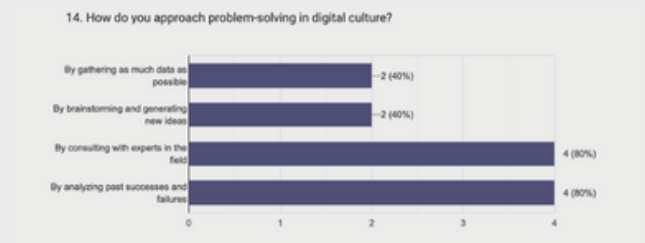
Based on the results, all respondents are planning to be in a firm with not more than 10 employees.

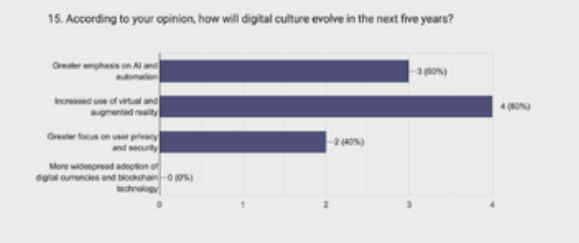
7. What firm size are you planning to be in?

The most preferred sector is “services” with %75 and the second one is “Health and wellness” with %25.

One of the most important questions is the 9th one which shows us %40 of the respondents are very familiar with the digital culture which is a positive figure and on the other hand %60 is somewhat familiar with the digital culture.

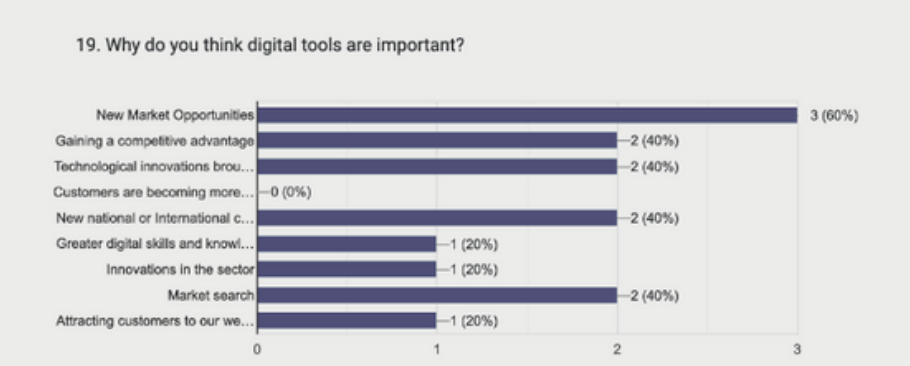


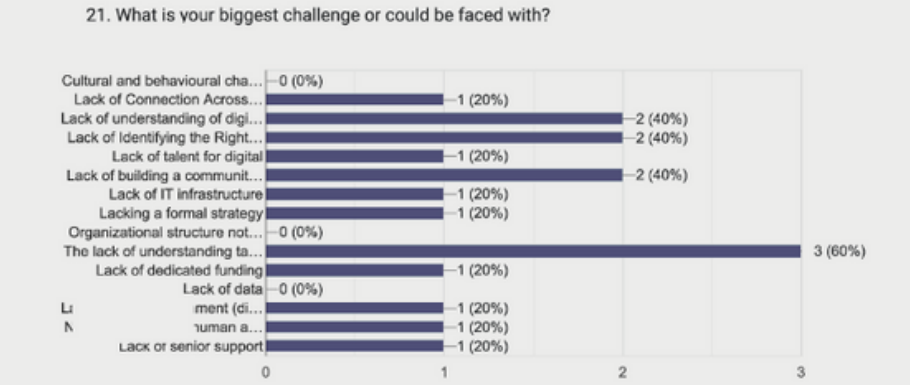




The results of question numbers 11-12-14-15 show us the biggest challenges in the digital culture, the most crucial characteristic of creating a digital culture, the way of approaching problem-solving in digital culture and the estimated evaluation of the digital culture in the thoughts of respondents. The biggest challenge is lack of funding for gaining digital skills and taking part in digital culture which is fair when we think of the financial part of the training courses, devices and different softwares. The second biggest challenge is lack of training and lack of knowledge and experience which are two different answers and supporting each other's frameworks. Lack of knowledge and experiences can be solved by trainings and creating networks among relevant people in the field. This outcome can be done by funding and a useful working strategic plan.

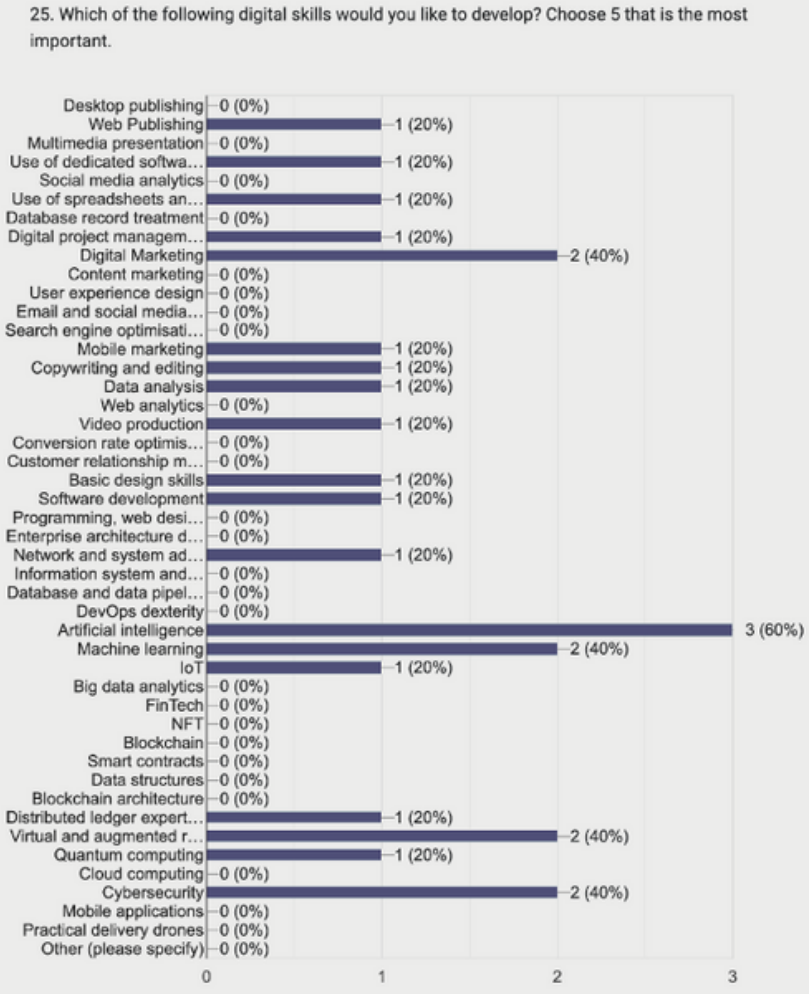
According to respondents, it is expected to have more impact on firstly the increased use of virtual and augmented reality and secondly onArtificial Intelligence (AI) and automation in the next five years. Also the different approaches on problem solving in digital culture have different dimensions in the eyes of respondents. While "by consulting with experts in the field" and "by analysing past successes and failures" were the first most selected approaches, the second ones were "by gathering as much as possible data" and "by brainstorming and generating new ideas". So it means most of the respondents need an expert to solve the digital problems. Only a small percentage of them are choosing the way of brainstorming and solving new ideas. Based on the answers again, the most crucial characteristic of creating digital culture is being collaborative and then data-driven, commercially minded and being open-transparent.





The reasoning behind the significance of digital tools based on our respondents is mostly its link with the new market opportunities. By following it as second highest answers; gaining a competitive advantage, technological innovations and market search. On the other side, more detailed, the biggest challenge for the respondents is the lack of understanding target audiences. It can be defined by lack of addressing the patterns and priorities as the digital trend and keep being updated about the needs of target audiences and being informed about the solutions.

The most important digital skills based on our respondents that they would like to develop is “artificial intelligence” and after “digital marketing”, “ machine learning” , “virtual and augmented reality” , “cybersecurity” is following it as a secondary choice for them.



Furthermore, %80 of the respondents answered that they have received support and/or mentorship for their digital business skills and some of them defined this digital support as Youtube Videos, Google courses, E-learning platforms. Apparently, %60 of the respondents have taken at least one digital course/training which are online trainings on digital marketing and digital literacy, online coding course. Apart from that, the obstacles standing in front of them to take courses on digital skills are defined as “lack of time, lack of access to training programs” but the most ranked one is “ lack of awareness of available training programs”. It might show us the lack of network as well as the promotion and communication.

%80 of the respondents think there are enough resources available to help individuals to improve their digital skills. The ones who answered as no with the percentage of %20 refined as more cyber security and coding resources should be made available.

Reflection

The OMEGA project's survey provided us with the relevant data so based on its results and the research made by YEU, the report reached some conclusions. It claims that women have a lower percentage of almost all infographics that are showing their participation, employability, salaries and advantages in terms of digitalism. In order to minimise these disadvantages, it is crucial to address them clearly in a right way. There are quite promising numbers as their motivations to build their own start-ups and develop new digital skills.

Thanks to the OMEGA Survey, it helped a lot to define the micro and macro reasonings and obstacles in between women and digital skills. First pillar of the solution is the funding which needs to be increased for providing more trainings. Second pillar is creating a network to keep women updated and make the data/news/updates reachable in one common platform which can be a website/networking group designed as an umbrella network of the other digital networks of trainings/courses etc. Third pillar of the solution is efficiently designed and wisely planned courses/trainings which are also allowing women to practise what they have learnt. On the other hand, of course it is important to get the information as well as learning how to get the information. Another important point is to provide methodology and mindset for women learners to reach the solution without any experts' support.

G R E E C E

INTRODUCTION

In Greece, there is a noticeable trend of fewer women showing interest in participating in the digital sector, whether it is in higher education, employment opportunities, or entrepreneurship. The representation of women in the field of information and communication technology (ICT) initiatives is significantly lower, and there is limited integration of gender-specific issues within these initiatives. This underrepresentation of women can be observed across various levels of the digital sector in Greece. In terms of higher education, fewer women are pursuing studies and careers related to ICT fields. This gender disparity is evident in enrollment numbers and graduation rates in ICT-related courses and programs.

Moreover, within the job market, women in Greece are underrepresented in the digital sector. They face challenges and barriers when accessing and securing employment opportunities in ICT-related industries. This gender gap can be observed in technical and leadership roles within the digital sector. Furthermore, when it comes to entrepreneurship, women in Greece face obstacles and limited support in establishing and growing digital businesses. The representation of women-led startups and female entrepreneurs in the digital sector remains relatively low. There is a lack of initiatives and resources specifically designed to address women's unique challenges in the digital entrepreneurship landscape.

In Greece, digital networks and sector models have the potential to serve as catalysts for the professional growth of women entrepreneurs across diverse sectors. These digital technologies offer significant opportunities to expand business options for women in entrepreneurship. However, these tools are often not readily accessible to women working in industries where male dominance is prevalent. For women, the development of digital competencies plays a crucial role in accelerating their career progression. Digital tools, when effectively structured and combined with appropriate self-management skills, have the power to enhance the well-being and create greater opportunities for development and advancement in the careers of women. By embracing digital technologies, women entrepreneurs can broaden their reach, access new markets, and engage with a wider customer base. These tools enable them to streamline business processes, enhance efficiency, and stay competitive in an increasingly digital business landscape.

Furthermore, digital networks provide a platform for women entrepreneurs to connect, collaborate, and share knowledge and experiences with their peers, both locally and globally. Such networking opportunities foster valuable connections, mentorship, and support systems that contribute to the growth and success of women-led businesses. Developing digital competencies is not only essential for women entrepreneurs to navigate the digital realm but also serves as a means to empower them in their careers. By acquiring digital skills, women gain a competitive edge, enabling them to leverage technology for innovation, business expansion, and professional advancement. These competencies equip women with the tools to adapt to changing market dynamics and seize emerging opportunities in the digital economy. Moreover, combining digital tools and self-management skills can enhance women's well-being in their professional lives. With efficient digital workflows and effective time management, women entrepreneurs can achieve a better work-life balance, reduce stress, and improve their overall job satisfaction.

In Greece, the utilisation of digital networks and sector models has the potential to propel the professional development of women entrepreneurs across diverse industries. By combining digital competencies with self-management skills, women can unlock new opportunities, enhance their well-being, and advance their careers in the digital age. It is crucial to create an inclusive and supportive environment that facilitates women's access to digital tools, knowledge, and networks, enabling them to thrive and contribute to the growth and innovation of Greece's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Overall, Greece experiences a situation where women are less inclined to participate in the digital sector, and their representation and integration within ICT initiatives are limited. This gender gap highlights the need for targeted efforts to promote and support women's involvement in the digital field, ensuring equal opportunities and addressing the barriers that hinder their participation and advancement.

State of Art in the Labour Market

Greece's score in the domain of work is 64.2, showing progress of 1.7 points change since 2015. With this score, Greece remains the second last in the EU. The employment rate (of people aged 20-64) is 49 % for women and 70 % for men. With the overall employment rate of 60 %, Greece has not reached its national EU 2020 employment target of 70 %. The full-time equivalent (FTE) employment rate decreased from 34 % to 31 % for women and from 61 % to 48 % for men between 2005 and 2017, narrowing the gender gap (from 27 percentage points (p.p.) to 17 p.p.). Between women and men in couples with children, the gap is six times bigger than in couples without children.

Twice as many women (14 %) work part-time as men (7 %). On average, women work 39 hours per week and men 44 hours. The uneven concentration of women and men in different sectors of the labour market remains an issue: 23 % of women work in education, health and social work, compared to 8 % of men. Fewer women (4 %) than men (20 %) work in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) occupations. In general, Greece has very low shares of both women and men working in STEM occupations, compared to the rest of the EU Member States.Gender equality has been the object of law and policymaking in Greece mainly since the 1980s.

Gender equality in the labour market, however, was introduced mostly through the harmonisation of the national legislation with the EU acquis. The priority given to gender equality in European employment strategies was a determining factor in the development of the legal framework in Greece. Until the late 2000s, the relevant legislation was aimed mainly at the reconciliation of working and family life among Greek women. The protection of women against dismissals during pregnancy, maternity and paternity leave, benefits for marriage and children were guaranteed under Greek law.

In 2006, Law 3488/2006 against gender discrimination in the labour market was approved by the Greek parliament in order to promote equal pay for equal work and measures against sexual harassment. In addition, several positive action pilot programmes were implemented by successive governments prioritizing women's entrepreneurship and the integration of vulnerable categories of women in the labour market (unemployed, poor, single mothers, dependent members, mothers with many children, migrant and ethnic women). Today, Greece has a progressive legal framework on gender equality in the labour market, but its implementation is partial and incomplete. Despite significant progress with regard to female participation in the labour market, deep-rooted practices of gender discrimination continue to undermine the implementation of gender equality objectives.

Since the 1980s, the combination of more employment opportunities in the tertiary sector, more educational opportunities for women and the extension and improvement of public child and elderly care services have propelled the steady increase in female labour force participation. The gap between male and female participation has narrowed, especially since the economic crisis started in 2009, but inequalities persist. In 2015, the female employment rate was 41.5 per cent and the male employment rate was 60.4 per cent. Greece's transformation into a service-based economy was a determining factor in this process. Currently more than 78 per cent of women are employed in the tertiary sector. A large percentage of those are self-employed.

Officially, self-employment in Greece is much more widespread than in other EU societies. It should be stressed, however, that self-employment in the Greek labour market often conceals long- term full-time employment relations without any of the rights attached to salaried employment. Until recently, there were no provisions for paid maternity leave, parental leave or other benefits, even for self-employed women who worked on a longterm basis for the same employer. In 2015, however, a new law (4097/2012) was voted in the Greek parliament mainstreaming gender equality in self- employment. While a large percentage of women are self-employed, a significant number of women work as full-time salaried employees. In 2008, one-third of female salaried employees worked as permanent public servants. Although women are still underrepresented in the higher ranks of the public sector, it constitutes a safer working environment for female employees since gender equality provisions (including paid pregnancy leave, parental leave and benefits for children) are respected and the wage gap between men and women is minimal. The public sector acts as a protective net for women mainly because it is the only sector in which gender equality law is implemented effectively.

Figure 1: Self-employed women rates over total self-employed population (Greece, EU-28, 2021)

Female employment has risen also in the private sector, where there is a wide gender wage gap and gender discrimination is commonplace. Although women's labour participation rose faster than that of men in all sectors of the private labour market, women still cluster in the lower paid and low skill jobs and are still underrepresented in high ranking, executive and managerial jobs, especially in large companies. Women, especially ethnic and migrant ones, are also overrepresented in the »feminised« sectors of the labour market (such as in cleaning, health, children and elderly care, and private education), in which unregulated, informal and part-time employment is the norm.

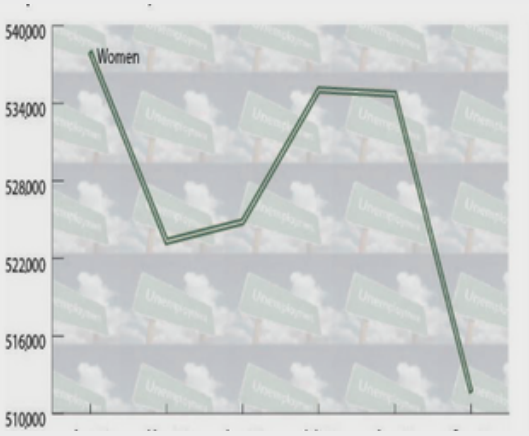
Figure 2: Total self-employed population over total workforce (Greece, EU-28, 2022)

The under-utilization of the labour potential of women and the young constitutes a major disadvantage for Greece. The integration of young people and women in the world of work contributes to their own well-being, promotes social and intergenerational cohesion, and adds valuable resources to the economy, increasing its productive capacity and growth potential. Given the economic and social impact of the 2010s crisis, and more recently, of the pandemic, strong economic recovery along a sustainable path is a challenge of the utmost importance and urgency for Greece. To this end, mobilizing human capital needs to be a top policy priority. In this context, this study focuses on the difficulties that young people face both in accessing the labour market and in making their first professional steps once employed. The research places emphasis on the gender dimension by exploring in more detail the difficulties faced by young women.

Analysis of Women's Entrepreneurship

The penetration rate of women at the highest levels of management of Greek businesses shows a rise over time, appearing dynamically at the forefront of the Greek economy and their "success stories" have been increasing rapidly in recent years, focusing on technology, innovation and research.Despite decades of anachronistic perceptions, social barriers and difficulties, women founders and Startuppers are now one of the strongest "pillars" of the Greek Startup ecosystem and highlight their talent, creativity and leadership skill

A century ago the presence of women in business was as rare as pink diamonds at that time or in our days the... Californium. A few decades ago analysts said that successful examples in business were the "exception to the rule", but the truth (as history proved later) was that they were behind dozens of "success stories" around the world.However, in recent years, women have officially and dynamically entered the forefront of entrepreneurship, with technology and innovation as their "springboard", highlighting some of the rarest characteristics of top entrepreneurs such as unconventional thinking, pioneering perception, creativity and of course intelligence. After all, in the Guinness Book of Records the man with the highest IQ in world history (with 228) is a woman: the American Marilyn Vos Savant.By the criteria of the international organization high IQ Mensa is far smarter than the most famous men of science, literature and business such as Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, Thomas Edison, Nikola Tesla, Alan Turing or Leonardo da Vinci, since the measurement of her IQ exceeds any previous record. A contemporary "Marie Curie."



According to the official data of international studies in Europe, Asia and America, in the last decade thousands of founders who created successful Startups with international recognition and businesses that evolved into giants with a value of hundreds of millions up to ... billions, they are women. A new generation of women with high quality education, significant professional experience and especially with confidence, know-how, creativity, leadership skills and vision. Many of the most famous business stories both globally and in Greece, which overturn the common perception of the traditional "entrepreneur" (man, white, smart, perfectionist and successful), bring the... seal of a woman. Even more pronounced is the participation of women in senior management positions of multinationals and groups, on the boards of companies and even in the position of managing director (CEO).

Figure 4: Necessity-driven entrepreneurship of women and men (Greece, 2021-2022)

In fact, on the issue of female entrepreneurship, Greece has made leaps forward thanks to the heyday of start-ups specializing in technology, where women have been able to show off their entrepreneurial skills, despite their low presence in the field of research and science. In the last 3 years the issue of female entrepreneurship has come to the forefront not on the occasion of International Women's Day as usual but the announcements for funding and acquisitions, starring female founders, Startuppers and fund managers. A study of the Greek Startup ecosystem by Found.ation showed that only 9 out of 47 Startups have been founded by women and therefore 19.14% (almost 2 out of 10 companies). According to the CapsuleT accelerator (of the Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and Industry) in the 7 programs it has completed so far, 23.6% of the founders or co-founders are women as well as 28.2% of their executives.

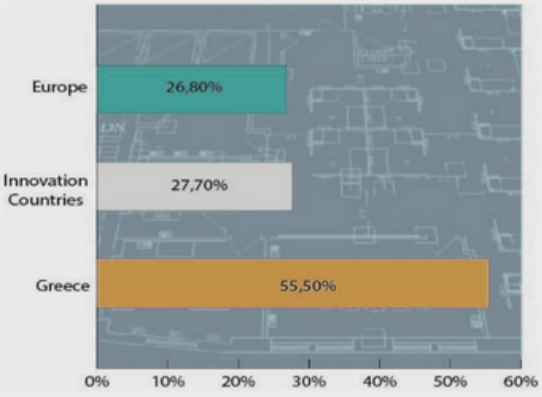


Figure 5: Informal women investors

Also, a survey by IOBE had recently shown that the percentage of early-stage female entrepreneurship in Greece doubled to 7.6% in 2019 from 3.8% in 2018. However, this upward trend was halted in 2020, due to the pandemic (2020-2021).

Survey Implementation

The survey conducted as part of the project aimed to gather relevant data on the awareness and knowledge of digital tools and digital culture among young women. It also aimed to identify the specific digital skills required for young women who aspire to establish their own startups, thereby increasing their employability. The findings of this survey will be presented in a comprehensive report, providing insights into the current situation and offering potential solutions and recommendations to support women's entrepreneurship in the digital field. The study, commonly referred to as the "OMEGA Survey of Young Women Entrepreneurs and Digital Culture," specifically targeted local female entrepreneurs in Greece. The promotion of the survey and the subsequent data collection and analysis were carried out by the Social Innovation and Cohesion Institute - Fifty Fifty, based in Thessaloniki, Greece. The survey was conducted in English and utilized a Google Forms format, consisting of four distinct categories: characteristics of the respondents, business experience, familiarity with digital culture, and the use of digital tools and proficiency in digital skills. In total, the survey comprised 29 questions, with four questions pertaining to the respondents' characteristics and 25 questions focused on gathering data related to women's efforts in establishing their own startups and their level of awareness regarding digitalism.

The survey aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the digital landscape for young women entrepreneurs in Greece. By exploring their experiences, knowledge, and utilization of digital tools, the survey sought to shed light on the challenges and opportunities faced by these entrepreneurs in the digital realm. The insights obtained from the survey will serve as a foundation for informed decision-making and the development of strategies to empower and support young women entrepreneurs in their pursuit of success in the digital era.

Questionnaire Analysis

Based on the findings of the survey, it was revealed that 30% of the respondents fell within the age range of 35-44, while the remaining 70% were aged between 25-34. These results can be attributed to the distribution of the survey by Fifty Fifty, an NGO specializing in youth work. Given the nature of their network, which predominantly consists of young individuals, it is understandable that the data collected through the survey would exhibit a larger proportion of respondents within the 25- 34 age bracket. The emphasis on reaching out to young people aligns with the objectives of Fifty Fifty, as they aim to support and empower the younger generation in various aspects of their lives, including entrepreneurship and digital skills development. By targeting this specific age group, the survey aimed to capture the experiences, perspectives, and needs of young women entrepreneurs within the digital domain. The larger representation of respondents between the ages of 25-34 provides valuable insights into this demographic's challenges, aspirations, and digital competencies. These findings can inform the development of tailored strategies, programs, and initiatives to address the specific needs of young women entrepreneurs within this age range, allowing for more effective support and fostering of their entrepreneurial endeavors in the digital landscape.

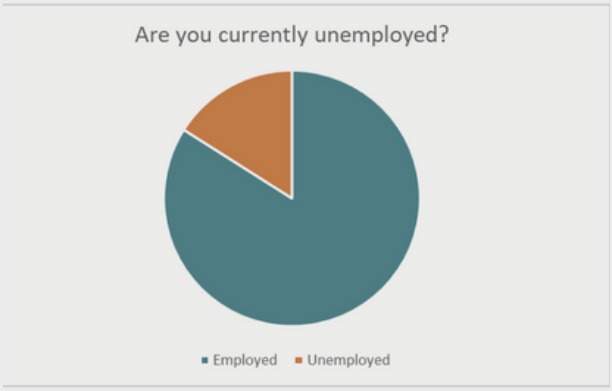
The analysis of the survey's second question reveals that an equal distribution of respondents, 50% each, possess educational qualifications at the university level and Master's or PhD level.

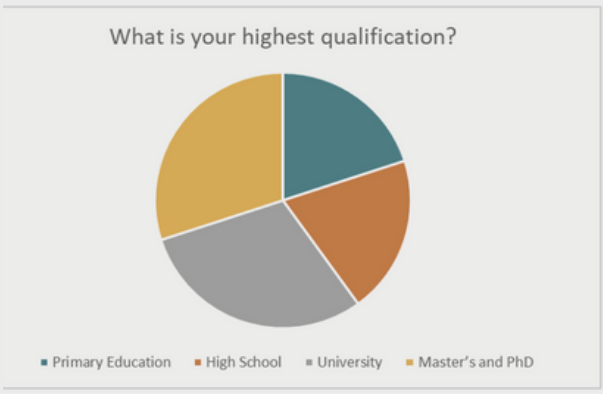
This data showcases that the surveyed individuals are highly educated, demonstrating their academic proficiency, advanced expertise, and strong motivation. The fact that half of the respondents hold university degrees underscores their commitment to attaining higher education and acquiring essential knowledge and skills in their respective fields. This level of academic achievement suggests a solid foundation for professional growth and potential success as entrepreneurs in the digital realm.

Pie 1: What is your highest qualification?

Furthermore, the other half of the respondents who possess Master's or PhD degrees reflect an even higher level of educational attainment. Their advanced qualifications indicate specialized expertise and a deeper understanding of their chosen domains. These individuals are likely equipped with advanced analytical and critical thinking abilities, making them well-suited for navigating the complexities of the digital landscape and confidently pursuing entrepreneurial ventures.

Based on the survey results, it is evident that 85% of the respondents are currently employed, while the remaining 15% are currently unemployed. This data highlights the majority of respondents being actively engaged in the workforce, indicating a positive level of employment among the surveyed population. However, the survey's primary objective is to address the needs of the unemployed individuals specifically, focusing on reducing their numbers by providing targeted support in terms of digital skills.





Pie 2: Are you currently unemployed?

By identifying the portion of respondents who are currently unemployed, the survey underscores the importance of addressing their unique challenges and equipping them with the necessary digital competencies. Enhancing the digital skills of the unemployed individuals can open up new employment opportunities and empower them to compete effectively in today's digital-driven job market.

The survey aims to bridge the digital skills gap among the unemployed, recognizing that proficiency in digital technologies is increasingly crucial for employability. By addressing this need through targeted interventions, such as training programs, workshops, and resources tailored to their specific requirements, the survey strives to empower the unemployed respondents and increase their chances of finding meaningful employment in the digital era.

Through its focus on reducing unemployment rates and addressing the digital skills gap, the survey contributes to fostering a more inclusive and prosperous labor market. By equipping the unemployed individuals with the necessary digital skills, they can enhance their employability, seize emerging opportunities in the digital sector, and ultimately improve their socio-economic well-being.

The survey results reveal that 63% of the respondents express a strong motivation to embark on their entrepreneurial journey, which is a promising and encouraging figure. This indicates a significant proportion of individuals who are enthusiastic about starting their own businesses and taking charge of their professional destinies. Furthermore, an impressive 70% of the respondents possess previous experience in business management, suggesting that a substantial portion of the surveyed individuals have already gained valuable expertise in running their own ventures. This finding implies that approximately half of the respondents are not only highly skilled but have also acquired practical knowledge through hands-on experience in entrepreneurial endeavors.

Pie 3: Have you ever considered starting your own business?

The high motivation demonstrated by most respondents signifies their drive, ambition, and determination to pursue entrepreneurial paths. It highlights their willingness to take risks, embrace challenges, and seize opportunities in order to build and grow their own businesses.

Moreover, the substantial number of respondents with prior experience in managing businesses signifies a wealth of knowledge and expertise within the surveyed group. This accumulated experience equips them with valuable insights into various aspects of entrepreneurship, such as marketing, finance, operations, and strategic planning. Their entrepreneurial acumen positions them favorably to navigate the complexities of the business landscape and increases their likelihood of success in future ventures.

According to the findings, it is evident that all respondents have expressed their intention to be part of a company that consists of no more than 18 employees. This preference for smaller-scale firms highlights the desire for a more intimate and closely-knit working environment, where individuals can potentially have a greater impact and play a more significant role in the organization. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of 85% of the respondents have indicated a strong inclination towards the services sector.

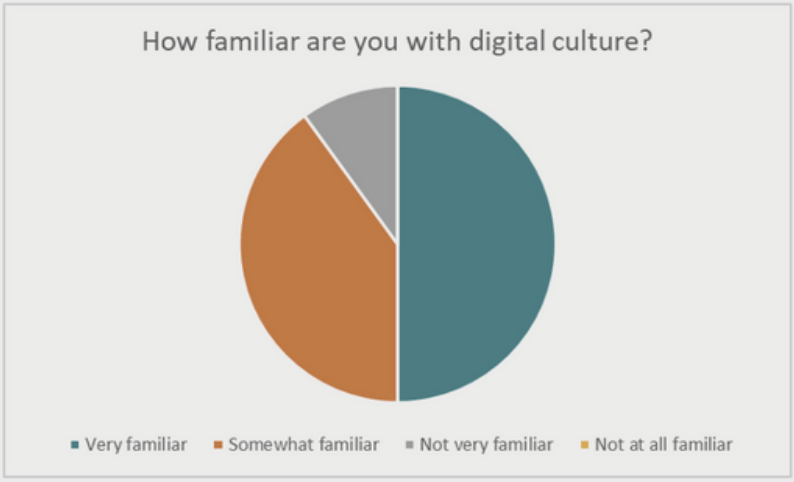
This sector encompasses a wide range of industries, such as consulting, hospitality, marketing, and technology services, among others. The significant preference for the services sector suggests that respondents are drawn to the potential for offering specialized expertise, delivering value-added solutions, and engaging in customer-centric roles.

Additionally, 15% of the respondents have shown interest in the "Mental Health" sector. This sector encompasses fields related to healthcare, fitness, wellness services, and related industries.

Pie 4: In which sector are you willing/planning to do your business?

By identifying these sector preferences, the survey sheds light on the areas where respondents envision their entrepreneurial endeavors taking shape. The emphasis on smaller firms and the specific sectors of services and health and wellness suggests a focus on personalized customer experiences, specialized expertise, and the potential to make a positive impact in people's lives. These preferences provide valuable insights for policymakers, support organizations, and aspiring entrepreneurs looking to foster an ecosystem that nurtures and supports ventures in these sectors. By understanding the preferences and aspirations of respondents, stakeholders can design targeted programs, initiatives, and resources that cater to the specific needs of entrepreneurs venturing into these sectors, fostering growth, innovation, and success.

One of the pivotal questions in the survey revolves around the respondents' familiarity with digital culture. The results indicate that 50% of the respondents are highly familiar with the digital culture, which is an encouraging figure. On the other hand, the remaining 50% have some level offamiliarity with the digital culture. This balanced distribution underscores the importance of digital literacy and highlights the need for further education and awareness in this domain.



Pie 5: How familiar are you with digital culture?

The outcomes of questions 11-15 reveal the primary challenges faced, the critical characteristics required for fostering a digital culture, approaches to problem-solving within the digital context, and the overall evaluation of the digital culture according to the respondents' perspectives. The most prominent challenge identified by the respondents is the lack of funding for acquiring digital skills and participating in the digital culture. This finding aligns with the financial aspects associated with training courses, acquiring devices, and obtaining necessary software. The second major challenge identified is the lack of training, knowledge, and experience. These interconnected factors can be addressed through targeted training programs, knowledge-sharing initiatives, and the creation of networks among relevant individuals in the field. Effective solutions to these challenges can be achieved through strategic planning and funding allocation.

According to the respondents, the anticipated impact of digital culture over the next five years is expected to be primarily focused on the increased utilization of virtual and augmented reality, followed by the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation. This projection underscores the growing significance of these technological advancements and their potential to shape various industries and sectors. When it comes to problem-solving approaches within the digital culture, the respondents exhibited diverse perspectives.

The most commonly selected approaches were "consulting with experts in the field" and "analyzing past successes and failures." These choices highlight the importance of seeking guidance from experienced professionals and learning from previous experiences. Conversely, a smaller percentage of respondents preferred the approach of "brainstorming and generating new ideas" to solve digital problems. This finding suggests that the majority of respondents perceive the need for expert guidance in addressing digital challenges, while a smaller portion emphasizes creative thinking and innovative problem-solving methods.

By analyzing these insights, it becomes evident that fostering digital literacy, addressing funding challenges, providing targeted training opportunities, and facilitating collaboration among experts are essential for developing a robust digital culture. The survey findings serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, organizations, and stakeholders seeking to enhance the digital capabilities and problem-solving capacities of individuals within the digital landscape.

Moreover, an impressive 80% of the respondents indicated that they have received support and/or mentorship to enhance their digital business skills. The forms of digital support mentioned by the respondents encompass a range of resources, including YouTube videos, Google courses, and e-learning platforms. Notably, 60% of the participants have already participated in at least one digital course or training program. These courses predominantly cover areas such as digital marketing, digital literacy, and online coding.

However, several obstacles were identified that hinder individuals from pursuing digital skills courses. The primary challenges cited include "lack of time" and "lack of access to training programs." Additionally, the most prominent obstacle reported by the respondents was the "lack of awareness of available training programs." This finding suggests that there is a need for improved promotion, communication, and networking opportunities to enhance awareness and accessibility of digital skills training.

Pie 6: If you have yet to take any digital skills courses or training programs, what are the reasons why?

Encouragingly, 90% of the respondents believe that there are sufficient resources available to help individuals improve their digital skills. This positive perception indicates that respondents perceive the presence of valuable resources and support systems in the digital skills landscape. However, the remaining 10% expressed the need for more resources in specific areas, particularly in the realms of cybersecurity and coding.

Pie 7: Do you think enough resources are available to help individuals improve their digital skills?

These findings highlight the importance of fostering awareness, expanding access to training programs, and promoting networking opportunities in the digital skills domain. By addressing the obstacles identified, such as lack of time and awareness, individuals can further develop their digital competencies and thrive in the digital age. Additionally, the feedback regarding resource availability provides valuable insights for stakeholders, indicating areas where additional support and resources are needed to meet the evolving demands of the digital landscape.

Reflections

In conclusion, the OMEGA project's survey, combined with research conducted by YEU, has provided valuable insights into the digital landscape for women in Greece. The findings indicate that women are underrepresented in various aspects, including participation, employability, salaries, and the benefits of digitalization. To address these disparities, it is crucial to take focused and strategic actions.

The survey results reveal promising numbers, highlighting women's motivation to establish their own start-ups and develop digital skills. Building upon these motivations, a multifaceted approach is required to overcome the existing obstacles. The first pillar of the solution involves increasing funding to provide more training opportunities for women. Adequate financial resources will ensure that women can access quality programs and enhance their digital competencies.

The second pillar emphasizes the importance of establishing a comprehensive network that centralizes information and updates. This network could take the form of a website or a networking group, serving as an umbrella network that brings together various digital training initiatives. By creating a unified platform, women will have easy access to relevant information and resources, fostering their continued growth in the digital field. The third pillar of the solution centers around the design and implementation of well-planned courses and training programs. These initiatives should not only impart knowledge but also provide practical opportunities for women to apply what they have learned. Additionally, it is crucial to equip women learners with effective methodologies and a problem-solving mindset, enabling them to find solutions independently, without the need for expert support.

In summary, the OMEGA survey has shed light on the challenges and opportunities that women face in developing their digital skills. By addressing the identified barriers through increased funding, a centralized network, and well-designed training programs, Greece can empower women to bridge the digital gender gap and seize the potential of the digital age. With concerted efforts and a supportive ecosystem, women entrepreneurs in Greece can thrive, contributing to the country's digital advancement and inclusive economic growth.

NORTH MACEDONIA

INTRODUCTION

Women make up the majority of the population in North Macedonia (50.4% are women and 49.6% are men), but according to statistics, they earn less, own less goods, while working more during the day and taking care of significantly more members in the family. According to the official data obtained from the Central Registry of the Republic of North Macedonia, two contradictions are noted. On the one hand, the number of newly founded legal entities in which women appear as owners is increasing, but the number of legal entities from the commercial register, in which women appear as founders/owners at the time of deletion, is even greater. Shown by statistical data, in 2019 the number of newly established legal entities was 1232, in 2020 it increased to 1488, in 2021 it reached 1992 legal entities. But for the same analyzed period, in 2019, 2122 legal entities were deleted in which women are the founders/owners, in 2020 the number is 1908, and in 2021 there were 2321 legal entities that stopped working and were founded or led by women.

Digital networks and sector models can be a driving force in the professional development of women entrepreneurs in various sectors. These technologies offer enormous potential in diversifying business options for women entrepreneurs. However, such tools are often unavailable to women working in companies where these activities are dominated by men. For a woman, developing digital competencies are important means of accelerating her career. Digital tools, when properly structured and combined with appropriate self-management skills, increase both women's well-being and opportunities for development and advancement in their careers.

In today's world, there is still a deep digital gender inequality and a disproportionate division in many activities. At the same time, as most studies show, Europe also faces a digital skills gap. This is an important cause for concern, due to the strategic importance of ICT in achieving the EU's goals of a more competitive international economy. The situation is alarming and worrying, but also promising for the future of young qualified employees, who see huge potential in the application of digitization in the social ecosystem.

According to the data of the State Statistics Office, in 2022, for the research on the use of internet technology in the Republic of Macedonia, women were represented by 88.2%, while men by 90%, which indicates the need to undertake appropriate policies for better representation of the female population in the use of Internet technology.

For example, the very data that for the last six years (information for 2021), in North Macedonia a total of 204 patents were registered that are owned by men and only 48 owned by women. Of the companies approved by the Innovation and Technological Development Fund, 63% are owned or managed by men and 37% by women. As for entrepreneurial activity, there are more than two male entrepreneurs for every female entrepreneur in North Macedonia.

Digital skills are nowadays seen as a key factor in the digital transition of countries, necessary for its success. Strengthening digital skills has therefore become an integral part of national digital transformation strategies. In 2018, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development defined digital skills as "the knowledge and skills a person needs to use ICT to achieve identified goals in personal and professional life." UNESCO defines digital skills as a set of abilities to use digital products, communication applications and networks to acquire and manage information. Digital skills allow people to generate and share digital content, connect and cooperate, and address challenges for effective and creative realization in private and professional life. The future requires a certain set of digital skills, indispensable for economic development and prosperity of society in any country. Hence, any gaps and deficits in these skills can be seen as a challenge to further progress.

Fewer women are interested in participating in the digital sector, be it in the field of higher education, jobs or entrepreneurship.

Women are under-represented at all levels of ICT initiatives and the integration of gender and/or women-specific issues is limited:

- Gender equality advocates are uninformed about the importance and relevance of ICT for the gender equality agenda;
- Access and opportunities for training to acquire basic skills are insufficient to promote equal access and participation of women in the ICT sector;
- Increasing the involvement of women in the development of online content that corresponds to their needs and priorities deserves increased attention;

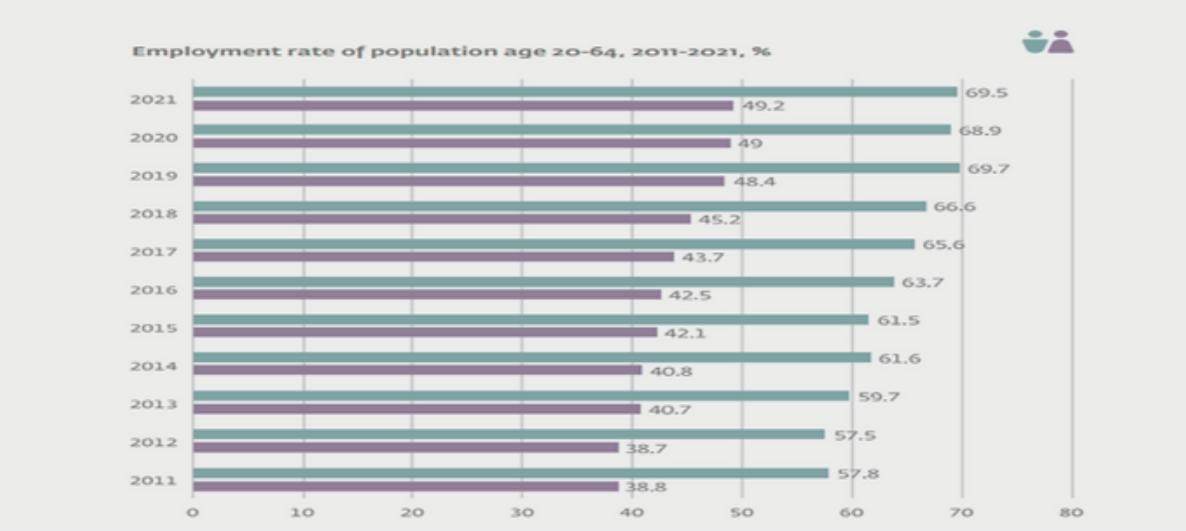
- Young women have greater opportunities to participate in ICT activities and environments, and older women need to receive additional encouragement and support for participation in this domain;
- A critical starting point for achieving gender balance in the ICT sector is a higher level of education.

The State of Art In The Labor

In the Republic of North Macedonia, women are significantly less active on the labour market than men. The employment rate of women in North Macedonia in 2021 was 38.3%, i.e., 55.1% of women were economically inactive. Comparatively, in the same year, the rate of active participation of men in the labour market was 56.2%, while the inactivity rate was 32.8%.

Analyses confirm that the employment rate of women in the period from 2011 to 2021 is regularly lower than that of men (figure1). The differences in the participation rates of women and men in the labour market led to a gender gap in the employment rate, which was 20.3% in 2021.

Figure 1: Employment rate of population age 20-64, 2011-2021, %



Source: State Statistical Office of North Macedonia, Women and Men in North Macedonia, 2023, p.79

The employment rate is highest among women and men aged 35 to 44 (table 1). The employment rate for the young population aged 15 to 29 was 33.4% in 2021. The employment rate for girls and women of the same age group was 27.6%, against 38.9% for boys and men.

Table 1 Working age population (15+) by economic activity, sex and age

	2021									
	Total		Total labor force		Employed		Unemployed		Inactive population	
	women	men	women	men	women	men	women	men	women	men
Total	840 977	841 824	377 179	565 825	322 142	472 945	55 036	92 880	463 798	275 998
15-19	55 222	58 609	3 250	5 221	1 247	3 122	2 003	2 099	51 972	53 387
20-24	60 966	64 960	21 353	37 574	13 184	25 341	8 169	12 233	39 613	27 386
25-29	71 893	75 798	48 423	63 077	37 398	49 188	11 024	13 888	23 470	12 722
30-34	78 036	82 340	54 238	75 261	46 085	61 601	8 153	13 660	23 799	7 078
35-39	79 959	83 380	59 186	76 632	52 059	65 326	7 127	11 307	20 774	6 747
40-44	76 199	80 139	53 809	75 741	48 208	66 489	5 600	9 252	22 390	4 398
45-49	73 425	74 944	47 815	68 203	43 211	59 217	4 604	8 986	25 611	6 741
50-54	70 822	71 265	41 411	64 501	37 967	55 552	3 444	8 949	29 410	6 763
55-59	69 316	69 078	30 908	56 369	26 566	48 826	4 343	7 542	38 408	12 709
60-64	66 048	63 811	14 310	36 222	13 741	31 353	569	4 869	51 738	27 589
65+	139 089	117 501	2 477	7 023	2 477	6 929	:	:	136 613	110 477
15-24	116 188	123 569	24 603	42 795	14 431	28 463	10 172	14 332	91 585	80 773
15-64	701 886	724 324	374 703	558 801	319 666	466 015	54 467	92 785	327 185	165 520

Source: Labor Force Survey

Source: State Statistical Office of North Macedonia, Women and Men in North Macedonia, 2023, p.69

Men are almost equally represented on the labour market in the rural and urban parts of the country, while the number of employed women in rural areas (37%) is significantly lower than the total number of employed women. Both in the urban and in the rural parts of the country, the largest share of the employed population has completed a 4-year secondary education, that is, 45% of employed women and 53% of employed men. In 2021, the most significant difference was observed in the share of employed persons with completed tertiary education - 42% of women had completed higher education, and the same applies to 28% of employed men. Comparatively, in rural areas, 23% of employed women have completed higher education against 12% of employed men.

The largest share of the total number of inactive women on the labour market, that is 46%, have completed only primary education, and 58% of them live in the rural parts of the country. Most of the inactive men have completed 4-year secondary education, i.e. 39%, against 29% of the inactive women.

The low employability of Macedonian women is a problem that is more discussed among citizens than within public debates and public policies. Unfortunately, even when state policies address the issue of the position of women in the labor market, this is not comprehensive. Namely, women's low activity was most often explained only through traditional norms that determine gender roles in society. A small number of research and policy studies in the country are dedicated to identifying the key factors that contributing to maintaining (or worsening) the status quo of the position of women in overall socio-economic relations.

Nevertheless, despite women's available human potential and capabilities for successful development of women entrepreneurship, there is a need for strong governmental support in order to increase female entrepreneurship in North Macedonia. Negligence of enabling factors for women entrepreneurship would result with a continual low engagement of females in business, untapped resources, non-equal gender opportunities and maintenance of the high unemployment rate among females.

In the ICT sector, women comprise 27% of the workforce and are represented with only 12% at management positions. Company owners and public sector jobs also see women to be underrepresented. The gap is reinforced in the ICT sector, in particular in senior and management positions, which sees a gender ratio of 80% men to 20% women. Such divides are rooted in the education system with substantially less women pursuing degrees in STEM.

Analysis of Women's Entrepreneurship In North Macedonia

Today, the role of women in entrepreneurship is becoming more visible and significant in all economies. Women entrepreneurs create: value for their societies, jobs, source of income for themselves, networks, innovative solutions and others.

Women represent two out of every five early-stage entrepreneurs that are active globally. Also noteworthy are some other findings:

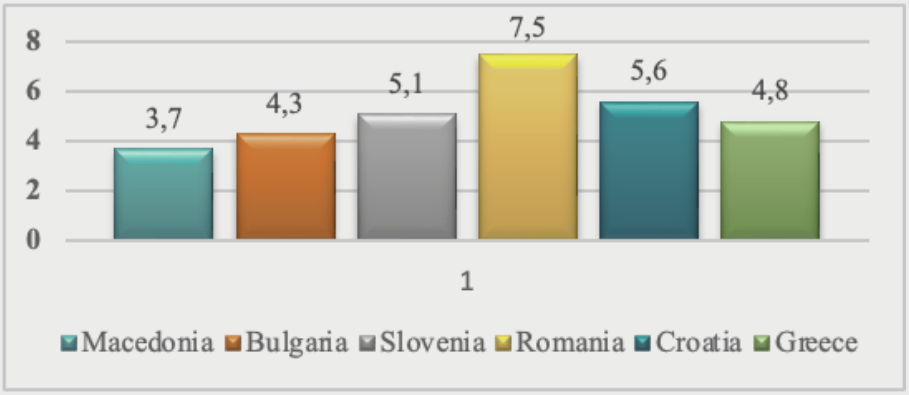
- Globally, women represent about one in three high-growth entrepreneurs and one in three innovation entrepreneurs that are focused on national and international markets.
- Women entrepreneurs in upper–middle-income countries represent some of the most innovative, high-growth entrepreneurs globally, and are at parity with men with regard to international market focus.
- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, women experienced similar declines to men in entrepreneurial intentions (to start a business) but sharper declines in startup rates in 2020. However, this was not the case in upper–middle-income countries, where both startup intentions and rates for women actually rose, by 4% and 11%, respectively, from 2019 to 2021.
- Overall, business exit rates for women rose from 2.9% to 3.6% over the two-year pandemic period, in contrast to the higher rates for men (3.5% to 4.4%). Women in upper–middle-income countries showed the largest pandemic impact on business exit with a 74% increase from 2019 to 2021, compared to only 34% for men.
- National experts generally rate the enabling environment for women entrepreneurs very low in most countries.

Several characteristics of women entrepreneurs specific to economies based on efficiency (which includes North Macedonia) can be highlighted. Hence, it can be established that:

- women are 30% less likely than men to start a business;
- women aged 25-34 and 35-44 are more likely to report entrepreneurial activity than those 18-24;
- women with higher education are more likely to start a new business than women without education and
- women with positive perceptions of their skill are more likely to start a new business.

The data on the TEA index of women from the countries in the region covered by the GEM report 2016/17 point to the conclusion that women from Romania, Croatia, and Slovenia are the most active in the efforts to establish or manage the personal business. Greece and Bulgaria have an index between 4 and 5, while from the analyzed countries, North Macedonia has the lowest index of 3.7 (see figure 2).

Figure 2: TEA index of women of the region 2015/2016



Source: Global Entrepreneurial Monitor - Global Report 2016/17, pp 58-59. Available Online: http://gemconsortium.org/report/49860

In North Macedonia, according to information available by the State Statistical Office, men dominate in every category of employees with the exception of the category of "unpaid family worker" where women are represented in significantly higher number (Table 2).

Table 2: Status of employment by gender in Macedonia for 2012-2016

Status of employment	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
		Men	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Employee	41	59	41,7	58,4	41,8	58,2	42,5	57,5	41,4	58,6
Employer	26	74	28,4	71,6	23,4	76,6	24,8	75,2	24,9	75,1
Employed at own account	19	81	20,4	79,6	15,6	84,4	18,4	81,6	20,7	79,3
Unpaid family worker	65	35	64	36	61,7	38,3	61,7	38,3	60,6	39,4
Total	40	60	40	60	39,2	60,8	40	60	39,2	60,8

Source: State Statistical Office , 2018, Processed data from publication "Man and women in Macedonia" 2013-2017, available at http://www.stat.gov.mk/PublikaciiPoOblast.aspx?id=23&rbrObl=37

Women are generally less represented in formal employment - 41% and in informal employment - 33% (Table 3). Only 19% of the total number of employers in North Macedonia in 2021 were women. Similarly, 78% of the own-account workers were men, while 22% were women. In 2021, the largest number of unpaid family workers were women from rural areas, in a total number of 18,634. Additionally, 59% of inactive women aged 20-64 are inactive in the labour market due to their own obligations compared to 2.3% of men.

Table 3: Formal and informal employment, by sex and age groups

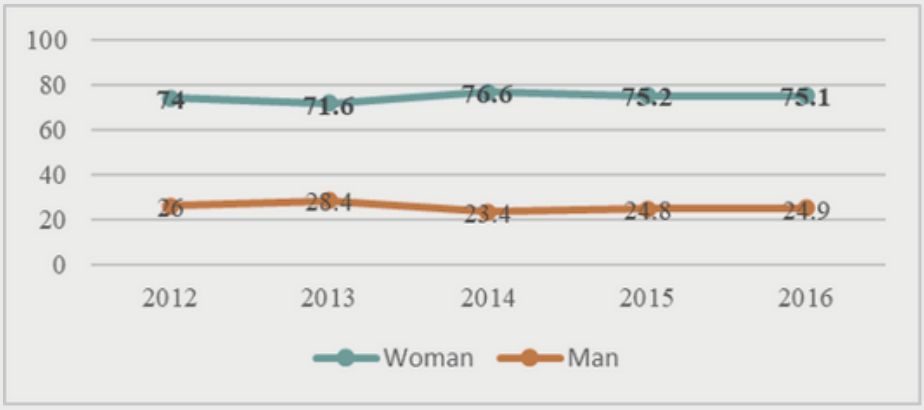
	2021					
	total		formally employed		informally employed	
	women	men	women	men	women	men
Total	322 142	472 945	290 019	408 917	32 123	64 028
15-24	14 431	28 464	12 945	22 658	1 486	5 806
25-34	83 483	110 789	77 853	97 649	5 630	13 140
35-44	100 267	131 815	92 075	116 000	8 192	15 815
45-54	81 178	114 769	72 955	100 033	8 223	14 736
55-64	40 306	80 179	33 571	70 409	6 736	9 770
65 +	2 477	6 929	620	2 168	1 856	4 761

Source: Labor Force Survey

Source: State Statistical Office of North Macedonia, Women and Men in North Macedonia, 2023, p.65-66. Available on https://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/2023/ZeniteMazite_2023_en.pdf. Accessed on 20.05.2023.

The trends for women in the role of employer confirm that they are represented by a small percentage share in the total number of employers in the country, i.e from 26 percent in 2012, then 28.4 percent in 2013, with the next tendency of decrease in 2014 year and a slight increase in 2015 (24.8 percent) and 2016 (24.9 percent) (figure 3).

Figure 3: Changes in women's entrepreneurship rate in North Macedonia 2012-2016



Source: State Statistical Office, 2018, Processed data from publication "Man and women in Macedonia" 2013-2017, available at http://www.stat.gov.mk/PublikaciiPoOblast.aspx?id=23&rbrObl=37

An analysis based on the World Bank Enterprise Study shows that women own 29.4 percent (which represents a significant increase compared to 2005, when it was 18.6 percent) and manage 26.3 percent of surveyed businesses. Women manage few businesses and women managers work mainly in women-owned businesses. The same analysis, which deals with established small, medium and large businesses, shows that 29.4 percent of firms in the Republic of North Macedonia have women's ownership, compared to 33 percent in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) and 37 percent worldwide. Macedonia's position is between Low-income countries with 26, 4 percent and Low and middle countries with 34, 3 percent of the firms with female participation ownership.

According to information available by the State Statistical Office and the Central Register of the Republic of North Macedonia, the share of legal entities established by at least one woman (with a share of more than 50 percent) in the total number of new registered or established legal entities in the last 7 years varies between 25-27 percent. However, the number of legal entities owned by women and the number of women employed is very low in the rural areas where a woman's primary role is as a wife and a mother. This situation is not because Macedonian women do not know how to run or manage companies, but above all, because they still put the family in the first place, and managerial functions involve many sacrifices of private and family life. The largest percentage of women entrepreneurs in the country are determined to lead smaller family firms that are looking for a smaller working engagement. Macedonian women entrepreneurs are most numerous in small family businesses, and less in the big companies and institutions. In North Macedonia, there are about 20,000 business entities owned by at least one woman in which over 50,000 people work. Most of them 8,139 are in the section of wholesale and retail trade, and only 1,835 are in the manufacturing industry.

According to the size of the enterprises, women as employers in North Macedonia have the biggest share in micro enterprises with 1 to 10 employees (table 4), so this participation compared with men is not more than 30.5 percent in 2013 for women, while in 2014 a fall (24.9 per cent) was recorded, with an insignificant trend of further enhancement (26 per cent in 2016).

Table 4: Employers in North Macedonia according to gender and size of enterprises 2012-2016

Size of the entreprise	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
1-10 employed	7868 (27%)	21408	8910 (30,5%)	20355	5955 (24.9%)	18002	6949 (25.7%)	20073	7462 (26%)	21185
11-19 employed	266 (22%)	947	77 (4,9%)	1493		1167		1377		1393
Over 20 employed	37 (6%)	620	0	841		1437		1402		1468

Source: State Statistical Office , 2018.Authors calculations and processed data from publication "Man and women in Macedonia" 2013-2017, available at http://www.stat.gov.mk/PublikaciiPoOblast.aspx?id=23&rbrObl=37

According to the European Commission, 2017, 99 percent of legal entities in women's ownership are in the category of small (73.91 percent) and medium enterprises (25.67 percent). Legal entities owned by at least one woman employed are only 10.5 percent of the total number of employees in those enterprises.

The highest share of women ownership - 37.8 percent have export companies compared to 31.6 percent in ECA and 36.7 percent of all countries. 26.3 percent of Macedonian companies have women in top management, which is more than the average in ECA (21.3 percent) and the world average (19.0 percent). The share of women managers is again significantly higher among export companies - 35.7 percent of firms have women top managers, compared with 16 percent in ECA and 14.7 percent of all countries and 24.9 percent of non-exporting firms in the Republic of Macedonia.

Certain research on women entrepreneurs confirms that women as entrepreneurs face certain problems in running a business, namely:

- liquidity and other financial problems,
- access to finance,
- the problem with the balance between work and family,
- limited time for personal development and improvement,
- access to networks for business purposes,
- access to information, etc.

Legislation

In the Republic of North Macedonia in recent years serious moves have been made in order to improve the role of women in the economy and society in general. At the beginning of 1999 were established Association of Women Entrepreneurs APNA and NIZA that launched programs to encourage women entrepreneurship. The Union of Women's Organizations of Macedonia, as well as other non-governmental organizations are launching policies for activating and involving women in economic and political life. The Republic of North Macedonia has accepted all European guidelines for an elimination of various forms of discrimination, including all types of discrimination against women.

The Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, Gender Equality Declarations, National Action Plan for Gender Equality, Handbook for Protection against Discrimination, The strategy for the development of female entrepreneurship in the Republic of Macedonia, etc. was adopted. Within this, a Program for Women Entrepreneurship also has been adopted, which aims to strengthen the capacities of Macedonian women entrepreneurs and to contribute to the creation of a stimulating environment and support of their business activities. This program includes the following components: capacity building of women entrepreneurs through training and mentoring; daily support in management and decision making; advocacy and lobbying for the promotion of specific conditions for women's involvement in entrepreneurship; and improving the public image of women as leaders and entrepreneurs.

Relevant documents for supporting of female entrepreneurship in Republic of North Macedonia are:

- The strategy for the development of female entrepreneurship in the Republic of Macedonia, 2019 - 2023
- The Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women
- 2013-2020 Strategy for Gender Equality has been drafted and adopted by the Parliament of RM
- 2013-2016 National Action Plan on Gender Equality has been drafted and adopted
- Annual programmes of the Ministry of Economy and the Agency for Promotion of Entrepreneurship of RM (APERM) include activities related to women entrepreneurship
- APERM participates as a partner in the new EU Mentorship Project.

Also, many projects are being implemented under which the Government assists to women-run businesses. According to the Program for Development of Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness and Innovation of Small and Medium Enterprises adopted in 2012, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia provides financial support for women entrepreneurship. The subject of the measure is subsidizing enterprises owned by women (over 51%) and managed by women, citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia registered as sole ownership or LLC. Except for this condition, it is necessary for the companies to work at least one month before the announcement of the call for subsidies. The companies that are working longer need to have a positive financial result in the previous year, at least two employees and have settled all obligations towards others and the state. Measure is implemented by co-financing 60% of the proven costs, but not more than 120,000 denars (2,000 Euros) made for the following purposes: purchase of equipment, tools and inventory; arranging/improving the business space; preschool children care; 60% of the kindergarten or nanny expenses, but not more than 30,000 denars (500 Euros).

So far, 36 companies owned by women and managed by women have been supported, for which a total of 2,950,277 denars (48.000 Euros) were paid. Although it is a certain amount of aid, the amounts listed above are minimal and, of course, insufficient to subsidize women-run enterprises, and even less those who cannot exceed MKD 30,000 (500 Euros) for children's care.

The Project New-Mentor is an international Initiative of the European Network of Mentors for Women Entrepreneurs in North Macedonia, in which the Agency for the Entrepreneurship Promotion in cooperation with other partners focuses on the establishment of a national network of mentors for women entrepreneurs in North Macedonia aimed to support the development of women's entrepreneurship and assistance to women entrepreneurs to successfully overcome challenges in the first years of the operation of their businesses.

One of the most important steps for women's entrepreneurship development is an establishment of the first National Women's Entrepreneurship Council (NWEC) in May 2018. NWEC is a voluntary, informal unification of active actors from the civil sector, policymakers and relevant institutions that work in the areas of women's entrepreneurship. The Council aims to provide a necessary basis for influencing the overall development of women's entrepreneurship in the country, including the EU integration processes through the introduction of an effective mechanism for consultation, advocacy and influence. The NSWC is planning to be in charge of identifying and recommending solutions to issues critical to the women's entrepreneurship development in the country, to create a synergy of quality and impact of strong representation of the interests of women entrepreneurs in the front of the stakeholders of the legislative and executive government.

The Council also aims to promote examples of good practices, to provide better coordination of activities related to women entrepreneurship issues, monitor documents and legislation on women's entrepreneurship, share and prepare educational programs and to enable networking of women entrepreneurs on a national and international level.

The research data on available measures and programs for support (table 5) of entrepreneurship and especially female entrepreneurship in Macedonia confirm that several different institutions and organizations provide support to female entrepreneurship in financial and non-financial form and they contribute to a certain advancement of female entrepreneurship.

Table 5: Programs and measures to support entrepreneurship (women's entrepreneurship) in Macedonia

Institution/Organization	Measures and programs for support
Ministry of Economy **http://www.economy.gov.mk/doc/2343**	Competitiveness, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program
Agency for supporting entrepreneurship in the Republic of North Macedonia **http://www.apprm.gov.mk/proekti.asp**	Financial and non-financial forms of support for entrepreneurship and small business
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in the Republic of North Macedoniahttps://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/advice-for-small-businesses/fyr-macedonia.html **http://www.ebrdwomeninbusiness.com/**	Special measures to support women: ▪ Business trainings for women ▪ Business consulting - consulting projects ▪ Business coaching ▪ Industry expertise ▪ Access to finance - credit line
Employment agency **http://www.avrm.gov.mk/operativen-plan.nspx**	Support for self-employment (entrepreneurship) Different types of trainings and more Operational plan
Chamber of Crafts Skopjehttp://www.zkskopje.org.mk/mk/default.asp	Free women's counseling and other types of support for artisans
Fund for Innovation and Technological Development http://www.fitr.mk/#moznosti	Co-financed grants
Economic Chamber of North Macedonia **http://www.mchamber.org.mk/**	Different services for education
Center for development of entrepreneurs and managers **http://ceed-macedonia.org/**	Opportunities for mentors Network promotion opportunity Other
Association of Business Women – Macedonia https://www.facebook.com/AssociationofBusinessWomenMacedonia/ https://wecontribute.mk/ https://weplatform.mk/ https://weradio.mk/	Different project related to Women's Entrepreneurship National Council for Women's Entrepreneurship https://wecontribute.mk/ The project "NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP"
Foundation for Management and Industrial Researchhttp://www.mir.org.mk/	Different project related to Women's Entrepreneurship National Council for Women's Entrepreneurship https://wecontribute.mk/ The project "NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP"
Фондација Претприемачки Сервис за Млади ПМС **http://www.yes.org.mk/Default.aspx?r=6&l=63&c=22**	Various services for entrepreneurs)
Social Impact Lab **http://socialimpactlab.co/mk/programs-mk**	Programs to support social entrepreneurship

Source: own research

Survey Implementation

The survey is conducted within the project "Young Female Entrepreneurs stepping into the Digital Age -OMEGA" implemented by the Social Innovation and Cohesion Institute Greece, in partnership with ASOCIATIA ASEL RO Romania, INNOVA LAB BITOLA North Macedonia, Woman and Young Entrepreneurship Center Association Turkey, YOUTH FOR EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL AISBL Belgium and LYKEIO TON HELLENIDON - PARARTIMA VERIAS Greece, supported by the European Union.

Primary and secondary research was conducted for North Macedonia in order to prepare this Nacional Report. The secondary research is based on the most relevant research and papers, conference papers, open-access materials, national laws, study reports related to the research topic and other relevant publications.

The primary research on topic " Survey of Young Women Entrepreneurs and Digital Culture" in North Macedonia was conducted from project team of INNOVA LAB Bitola.

For the purpose of the primary research a survey was prepared in Macedonian language in the Google Form. The survey was divided into four sections:

1.Information about characteristics of the respondents.
2.Experience in running a business.
3.Familiarity with digital culture.
4.Use of digital tools and level of digital skills.

The survey questionnaire was sent electronically to 250 respondents from 1st May to 25th May 2023, but a response was received only from 53 respondents from North Macedonia. Even though this is a relatively small sample, nevertheless, the responses from the survey can be considered as sufficiently indicative and can present information useful in creating recommendations to support female entrepreneurship in the digital world. The INNOVA LAB project team conducted the survey in collaboration with educational institution and other NGOs, electronically by using e-mail and social media.

Questionnaire analysis

The survey included 53 respondents (women) from North Macedonia. From Table 6 can be seen that the research was mostly attended by woman with university degree (54.7%) follow by women with Master's and PhD degree (30.2%) and women with high school (15.1%). More than half of the respondents are in the category of young woman aged 18 to 34 (51%), follow by those women aged 35 to 44 (33.9%) and aged 45 and older (13.2%). The majority of respondents are employed women (71.7%) and also, most of the total respondents ie 73.6% had the desire or intended to start a business.

Table 6: Characteristics of the respondents

Characteristics of respondents	Number of respondents	%
Age 53		
Under 18	1	1.9
18-24	10	18.9
25-34	17	32.1
35-44	18	33.9
45 or older	7	13.2
Education level		
Primary Education		
High School	-	-
University	8	15.1
Master's and PhD	29	54.7
	16	30.2
Employability status		
Employed	38	71.7
Unemployed	15	28.3
Desire (intention) to start a business		
Yes	39	73.6
No	14	26.4

were asked to declare their intention to start a business, business experience and knowledge of digital culture.

From those respondents who have the intention or desire to start own business, according the question "Do you have experience in managing business?", (table 7), more than half of the respondents had no experience in running a business (57.5 %).

Table 7:Do you have experience in managing business?

Experience in running a business	Number of respondents	%
Yes	17	42.5
No	23	57.5

Those who have experience in running a business, their experience in running a business ranges from 1 year to 15 years.

The main motivation for starting a business (table 8) for 38.5% of respondents is financial gain, for 23.2% pursuing a passion, then the same number of respondents answered independence and control, and flexibility (12.8%), while only for 10.3% of respondents the main motivation was meeting a market needs.

Table 8: What is the motivation for starting the business?

Motivation for starting the business	Number of respondents	%
Pursuing a passion	9	23.2
Independence and control	5	12.8
Making a difference	1	2.6
Financial gain	15	38.5
Meeting a market need	4	10.3
Flexibility	5	12.8

Most of the female respondents in North Macedonia would like to run a micro-sized business with less than 10 employees (69.2%), the other 28.2% respondents declared for running a small-sized business with 10-49 employees (table 9).

Table 9: What firm size are you planning to be in?

Firm size	Number of respondents	%
Micro-sized business: less than 10 employees	27	69.2
Small-sized business: 10-49 employees	11	28.2
Medium business: 50-249 employees	1	2.6
Large-sized business: more than 250 employees	-	-

The most attractive sector for starting a business by female entrepreneurs in the country is the service sector, which was declared by more than the majority of respondents (56.4%) in the survey, followed by interest in the trade sector with 30.8% and the manufacturing sector with 10.3% (table 10).

Table 10: In which sector are you willing/planning to do your business?

Sector	Number of respondents	%
Manufacturing	5	12.8
Trade	12	30.8
Service	22	56.4

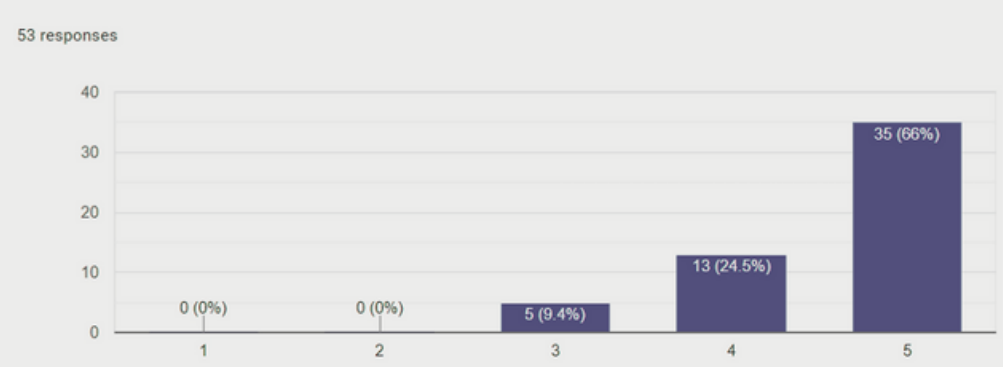
Regarding the familiarity with the digital culture among the respondents, it can be confirmed that only 1/3 of the total respondents in this survey, have a very good knowledge of the digital culture (37.7%), while the majority of them have a good (30.2%) or little (30.2%) knowledge about digital culture, from which it can be concluded that there is a need to increase knowledge about digital culture among women entrepreneurs or potential entrepreneurs (Table 11).

Table 11: How familiar are you with digital culture?

Familiar are you with digital culture	Number of respondents	%
Very familiar	20	37.7
Somewhat familiar	16	30.2
Not very familiar	16	30.2
Not at all familiar	1	1.9

It is important to emphasize that the majority of respondents confirm that digital culture is important (figure 4) and agree with grade 5 (66%) and grade 4 (24.5%).

Figure 4: How important is digital culture?



The respondents highlight the following as the three biggest challenges in digital culture (figure 5):

1. Lack of funding (32.1%)
2. Lack of training (32.1%)
3. Lack of knowledge or experience (30.2%)

Figure 5: What are or do you think will be your biggest challenges in the digital culture?

Based on the analysis of data from the research, five the most crucial characteristics of creating a digital culture can be distinguished as follow:

1. Innovative
2. Curios/exploring
3. Open and transparent
4. Customer-centric
5. Agile
6.

Regarding the question: "When making decisions about digital culture, how do you weigh the potential benefits against the risks?", the majority of the respondents, i.e. 77.4% of the respondents confirm that they weigh both the benefits and risks equally (table 12).

Table 12: When making decisions about digital culture, how do you weigh the potential benefits against the risks?

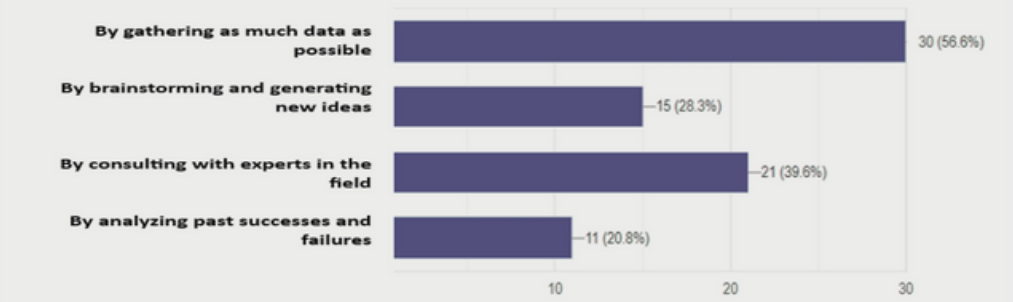
It is important to emphasize that the majority of respondents confirm that digital culture is important (figure 4) and agree with grade 5 (66%) and grade 4 (24.5%).

Figure 4: How important is digital culture?

Weigh the potential benefits against the risks	Number of respondents	%
I focus on the potential benefits	8	15.1
I focus on the potential risk	3	5.7
I weigh both the benefits and risks equally	41	77.4
I don't consider the risks or benefits	1	1.9

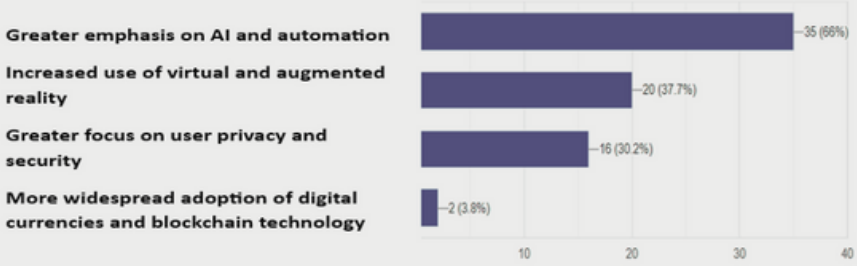
In terms of solving problems related to digital culture, respondents mostly use a decision-making approach based on gathering as much data as possible (56.6%) and consulting with experts in the field (39.6%), while a smaller part of them are focus on the brainstorming approach and analyzing past successes and failures (Figure 6).

Figure 6: How do you approach problem-solving in digital culture?



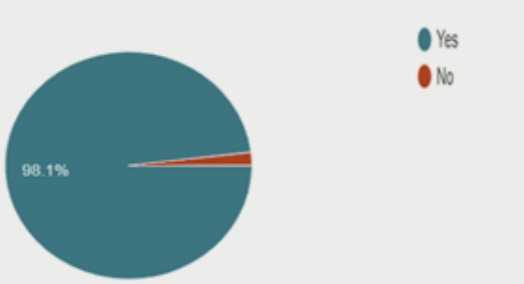
IThe largest part of the respondents (66%) believe that in the development of digital culture in the next five years (figure 7) greater emphasis will be put on AI and automation, then on the use of virtual and augmented reality (37.7%) as well as focus will be put on user privacy and security (30.2%).

Figure 7: According to your opinion, how will digital culture evolve in the next five years?



Almost all respondents agree that it is important to use digital tools (98.1%, or 52 respondents, see figure 8).

Figure 8: Do you think it is important to use digital tools?



About 85% or 44 respondents use digital tools, only 15.4% (8 respondents) do not use digital tools. Digital tools are mostly used for Facebook Ads (50%), content analysis (45.5%), data analysis and processing (36.4%), working with images (34.1%), Google Ads (31.8%) and others.

To the question "Why do you think digital tools are important?", respondents confirm that digital tools are important because of: gaining a competitive advantage (21.2%), new market opportunities (19.2%), new national or international collaborations (13.5%), technological innovations brought by digital culture (13.5%), attracting customers to our website/social media channel(s) (11.5%) and others (table 13).

Table 13: Why do you think digital tools are important?

Digital tools are important for	Number of respondents	%
New Market Opportunities	10	19.2
Gaining a competitive advantage	11	21.2
Technological innovations brought by digital culture	7	13.5
Customers are becoming more advanced in digital skills	4	7.7
New national or international collaborations	7	13.5
Greater digital skills and knowledge of supply chain	4	7.7
Innovations in the sector	2	3.8
Market search	2	3.8
Attracting customers to our website/social media channel(s) (to get ads revenue)	6	11.5

Almost 53% of the respondents (as a woman) have faced some kind of challenge in the digital culture (figure 9). Five biggest challenges or challenges that women may face in digital culture are as follows:

1. Lack of understanding of digital trends (35.8%)
2. Cultural and behavioural challenges (22.6%)
3. Lack of talent for digital (22.6)
4. Not having enough human and financial resources. (22.6%)
5. Lack of dedicated funding (18.9%)

Figure 9: Have you faced challenges as a woman in the digital culture?

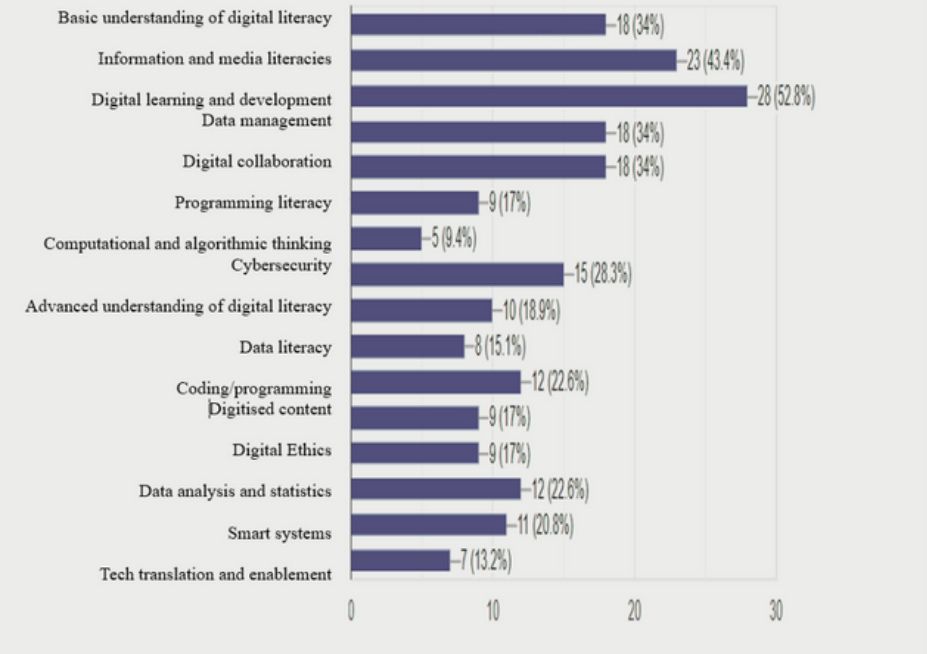
More than half of the respondents have an intermediate level of digital skills (54.7%), 24.5% are beginners, and only 18.9% of the respondents have an advanced level of digital skills Ttable 14).

Table 14: How would you describe your level of digital skills?

Level of digital skills	Number of respondents	%
Beginner	13	24.5
Intermediate	29	54.7
Advanced	10	18.9
None	1	1.9

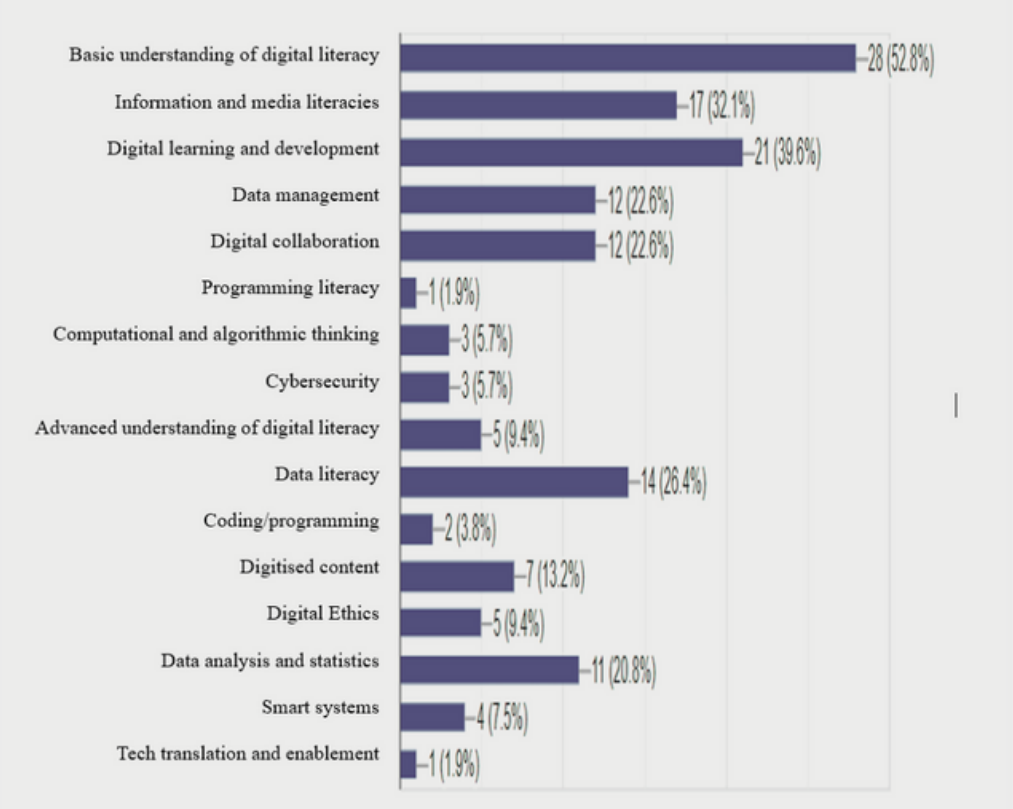
On the question "What kinds of digital skills would the most benefit in the digital culture?", the respondents mostly declared the following: Digital learning and development (52.8%), Information and media literacies (43.4%), Basic understanding of digital literacy (34%), Data management (34%), Digital collaboration (34%) and others (Figure 10).

Figure 10: What kinds of digital skills would the most benefit in the digital culture?



On the question "What are the digital skills that you feel confident in?", respondents emphasize the following digital skills the most: Basic understanding of digital literacy (52.8%), Digital learning and development (39.6%), Information and media literacies (32.1%) and others (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: What are the digital skills that you feel confident in?



The analysis of the research data confirms that the respondents are most interested in developing the following ten digital skills:

1. Digital marketing (50.9%)
2. Digital project management (39.6%)
3. Basic design skills (28.3%)
4. Web Publishing (26.4%)
5. Use of dedicated software for analytics (26.4%)
6. Mobile marketing (26.4%)
7. Multimedia presentation (24.5%)
8. Use of spreadsheets and digital graphics (22.6%)
9. Artificial intelligence (20.8%)
10. Content marketing (18.9%)

Only 3.8% of respondents received any support or mentorship for digital business skills, while 96.2% did not (table 15). Also, the analysis confirms that the number of respondents who attended digital skills courses or training programs is small (13.2%), while the remaining 86.8% did not attend such trainings or programs (table 15). Those who have attended trainings relate to the topic of digital marketing and graphic design.

Table 15: Have you received any support or mentorship for your digital business skills and taken any digital skills courses or training programs?

	Support or mentorship for your digital business skills		Taken any digital skills courses or training programs?	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
Yes	2	3.8	7	13.2
No	51	96.2	46	86.8

The following are highlighted as key reasons why they did not attend digital skills courses or training programs (table 16): Lack of time (47.2%), Lack of awareness of available training programs (30.2%), Lack of access to training programs (22.6%), and other (9.5 % - high prices, train myself).

Table 16:If you have yet to take any digital skills courses or training programs, what are the reasons why?

Reasons	Number of respondents	%
Lack of time	25	47.2
Lack of access to training programs	12	22.6
Lack of awareness of available training programs	16	30.2
Orthers	5	9.5

A significant part of respondents (79.2% or 42 respondents) believe that enough resources are available to help individuals improve their digital skills, while the remaining 20.8% or 11 respondents believe that additional resources are needed in the form of: online trainings, free trainings, financial support, etc.

Reflections

Women are an emerging market force and women-owned businesses are one of the most profound changes in the business world today, economy driving forces, untapped source of innovation, creator of new jobs and economic growth. Women entrepreneurs create: value for their societies, jobs, source of income for themselves, networks, innovative solutions and others. Women entrepreneurship should be stimulated and motivated, especially in the area of overcoming the prejudices that exist in North Macedonia. Some traditional societal attitudes and norms in Macedonia, such as gender-based barriers for starting and growing their businesses, discriminatory property, matrimonial and inheritance laws and/or cultural practices; lack of access to formal finance mechanisms; limited mobility and access to information and networks, inhibit many Macedonian women from even considering starting a business.

Women's entrepreneurship in North Macedonia is still underdeveloped and there is a lack of Governmental support into concrete policies. Women entrepreneurs need special assistance: education, acquisition of specific skills and knowledge, financing, technical assistance, instilling confidence through workshops, practical training, development of the digital skills and the like. It is necessary to create equal conditions and opportunities for men and women and to create the conditions for the removal of discrimination against women. Protection of the woman as a mother is very important, which means help them with children rising. In that context, many women's organizations and associations could help, especially in the area of women's struggle for economic independence, and thus to its emancipation and full equality with men.

The problem of the digital divide between the male and female population is a global problem. Research has confirmed that women entrepreneurs or potential entrepreneurs are aware of the importance of digital culture and digital skills, but they face a lack of time, finances and knowledge for the development of this topic.it can be concluded that there is a need to increase knowledge about digital culture among women entrepreneurs or potential entrepreneurs.

In addition to specific projects that provide support for the integration of women in the digital world, systemic and national support and programs in this field are necessary.

Certain initiatives, support programs and coordination are necessary to promote digital skills among the female population:

1. There is a need for active participation of women entrepreneurs in creating and adopting specific measures and programs, as well as policies for digital entrepreneurship, especially for developing digital skills and competencies;
2. To enable specific action to improve and upgrade digital skills for certain profiles of activities, where women have the main participation;
3. Institutional support is needed for the application of good programs and practices, in order to achieve the digital improvement of women entrepreneurs;
4. More support is necessary for women entrepreneurs oriented towards work-from-home programs (via the Internet) with less restrictions and conditions;
5. Women should first be trained in the most basic digital skills such as Word, Excel, Power Point, e-banking, paying bills online, submitting requests for documents online, in order to eased up everyday life;
6. The trainings should be divided into several categories, i.e. trainings for high school girls, trainings for those women who want to start their own business and trainings for those women who already have a business but want to improve it;
7. Programs for the application of digital technology for new knowledge and professional restructuring, especially among women with a different profession. Information profiling should offer new opportunities and new challenges, new digitized programs, which will strengthen the profiling of women, either in the labor market or as independent entrepreneurs;
8. Within the framework of any programs that will be translated, they should be practical, and the target group should be appropriate;
9. To enable the expansion of internet technology and digital access in rural areas.
10. Training and strengthening of digital skills among women to increase internet security.

National digital strategies should include specific and clearly defined goals, with agendas and precise dates for closing the digital divide and gender inequality. The main activities that will activate women at the target level of training, professional profiling, choice, selection and participation in entrepreneurship and employment with a focus on ICT should include:

- Actions that can benefit from the participation of women in digitalization;
- Actions that will improve the role of women in the field of technology and digital education;
- Actions that will enable independent application of digital skills, especially among women entrepreneurs, their encouragement and proactivity;
- Implementation of certain courses and trainings depending on the business goals of women entrepreneurs (research and data analytics, creation of websites, development of internet applications for learning certain skills, foreign languages, etc.).

It is vital to establish gender-sensitive policies aimed towards improving women's economic status, to implement different social and educational programs, and deliver training sessions.

For this purpose, certain recommendations have been identified that relate to achieving better results in supporting women:

- Raising awareness of the possibilities of digital education as a key factor for women's careers.
- Girls express much less desire to learn advanced digital skills, therefore the curricula should be changed and harmonized so that, even in primary education, emphasis should be given to subjects with informational content;
- Introduction of mandatory subjects in secondary education that will provide knowledge and training for creating a website, protection of digital personal data and other basic digital skills;
- To encourage young girls to study STEM programs (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) to bridge the gender gap in ICT fields;
- Access and opportunities for training to acquire basic skills are insufficient to promote equal access and participation of women in the digital sector;
- The increased involvement of women in the development of internet content that corresponds to their needs and priorities deserves more attention;
- Younger women have greater opportunities to participate in digital activities and environments, which of course requires additional encouragement and support for older women;
- A critical starting point for achieving gender balance in the digital sector is high-level education.
- There is a need to intensify dialogue between women entrepreneurs and policy makers to build a more inclusive digital economy;
- Further impact on future generations of women digital entrepreneurs by increasing synergy between advocates and communities through mentorship and training courses;
- Women entrepreneurs need to be quickly trained and involved in digitization programs, as many of the future businesses will be in a digitally transformed state.

Public policy holders need in addition to the public-private dialogue to continue to mobilize efforts to support women digital entrepreneurs and nurture certain areas such as: e-commerce, e-Marketing, e-courses, intended for groups of women entrepreneurs The results of the research carried out for North Macedonia within the OMEGA project confirm that there is not enough knowledge about digital culture and its scope and characteristics among women entrepreneurs, potential or women who have a desire for business. Hence, there is a need for education on this topic.

The respondents in the country also identified artificial intelligence and virtual reality as key to the development of digital culture, but the trends in the development of IT confirm the same. Hence, Artificial Intelligence as well as Virtual Reality are becoming more important in the education of women and women entrepreneurs. Most of the respondents have an intermediate or initial level of digital skills, hence the need for the development of more digital skills among women is identified in order to support female entrepreneurship in the digital world and the use of IT for business purposes.

The respondents are most interested in developing the following digital skills:

- Digital marketing
- Digital project management
- Basic design skills
- Web Publishing
- Use of dedicated software for analytics
- Mobile marketing
- Multimedia presentation

A large number of current women entrepreneurs, potential or women who have the desire but not the courage to start a business do not have enough information about measures and programs to support women's businesses, or are not familiar with them at all, so that a large number of measures remain unused. It is necessary to sort them and store them in one place and find suitable channels for their distribution and promotion.

Five biggest challenges or challenges that women may face in digital culture are as follows:

- Lack of understanding of digital trends
- Cultural and behavioural challenges
- Lack of talent for digital
- Not having enough human and financial resources
- Lack of dedicated funding

Women's entrepreneurship needs a positive environment with appropriate measures from political, social and financial aspects. Women represent great potential for every economy because they add value to business, bring family values with them into business, create new business models and new jobs, that is, they help shape and grow the economy at the local, national and global level.

Within this research, the need for financial support, mentoring support and educational support of existing and potential women entrepreneurs has also been determined.

ROMANIA

INTRODUCTION

In Romania, there is a clear and concerning trend of declining interest among women in actively participating in the digital sector, whether pursuing higher education, seeking employment opportunities, or venturing into entrepreneurship. The representation of women in information and communication technology (ICT) initiatives is notably lower, and unfortunately, gender-specific concerns are not adequately addressed within these initiatives. This gender disparity is evident across various levels of the digital sector in the country.

The enrollment and engagement of women in ICT-related fields at the higher education level are noticeably lower, leading to an imbalance in the number of male and female students graduating from ICT courses and programs. As a result, there exists a concerning gender gap in the field of ICT. Moreover, within the job market, women in Romania face challenges in accessing and securing employment opportunities in the digital sector, both in technical roles and leadership positions. The lack of female representation in key positions further compounds the issue. Additionally, when it comes to digital entrepreneurship, women in Romania encounter obstacles and a lack of adequate support. The number of women-led startups and female entrepreneurs in the digital sector is disappointingly low, and there is a dearth of initiatives and resources tailored to address the unique challenges they face.

Overall, these trends underscore the pressing need for concerted efforts to encourage and empower women in Romania to actively participate in the digital sector. Addressing these challenges and fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment will not only benefit women individually but also contribute to the growth and advancement of the digital industry as a whole.

In Romania, digital networks and innovative business models have the potential to act as catalysts for the professional advancement of women entrepreneurs across various sectors. These digital technologies offer exciting opportunities for expanding business options and ventures among women in entrepreneurship. However, these valuable tools are not readily accessible to women working in industries where male dominance prevails. The development of digital competencies plays a pivotal role in accelerating the career growth of women, empowering them to effectively embrace and utilize digital technologies. When complemented with essential self-management skills, digital tools can have a transformative impact on well-being and open up greater prospects for development and progress in women's careers.

By embracing digital technologies, women entrepreneurs in Romania can broaden their reach, tap into new markets, and connect with a wider customer base, thus streamlining business operations, enhancing efficiency, and remaining competitive in an increasingly digital business landscape.

Furthermore, digital networks provide a valuable platform for women entrepreneurs in Romania to connect, collaborate, and exchange knowledge and experiences with their peers, both locally and globally. Such networking opportunities foster meaningful connections, mentorship, and support systems that contribute significantly to the growth and success of women-led businesses. Acquiring digital competencies not only empowers women to navigate the digital realm but also equips them with a competitive edge to leverage technology for innovation, business expansion, and professional growth. These skills enable women to adapt to evolving market dynamics and seize emerging opportunities in the digital economy. Additionally, the combination of digital tools and self-management skills can enhance women's well-being in their professional lives, leading to improved work-life balance, reduced stress, and increased job satisfaction.

To bridge the gender gap in Romania's digital sector and promote women's participation, it is essential to create an inclusive and supportive environment that facilitates their access to digital tools, knowledge, and networks. By doing so, women can thrive and make significant contributions to the growth and innovation of Romania's entrepreneurial ecosystem. It is crucial to undertake targeted efforts to encourage and support women's involvement in the digital field, ensuring equal opportunities and addressing the barriers that hinder their participation and advancement. By nurturing women's digital talents and entrepreneurial endeavors, Romania can unlock the full potential of its female workforce and drive sustainable economic growth and development in the digital era.

State of Art in the Romanian Labour Market

Romania's score in the work domain stands at 63 %, showing a moderate progress of1.5 points since 2015. Despite this improvement, Romania remains second to last among EU countries. The employment rate for women aged 20-64 is 45%, compared to 70% for men. The overall employment rate in Romania is 60%, falling short of the national EU 2020 employment target of 70%. The full-time equivalent (FTE) employment rate for both women and men has decreased, with women declining from 35% to 29% and men from 65% to 42% between 2005 and 2017.

Part-time employment is twice as prevalent among women (15%) than men (6%), with women working an average of 39 hours per week and men 44 hours. Women are more concentrated in education, health, and social work (25%), while only 7% of men work in these sectors. In contrast, fewer women (3%) than men (22%) are employed in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) occupations. Romania exhibits relatively low percentages of women and men working in STEM roles compared to other EU countries.

Gender equality has been a key focus of law and policymaking in Romania since the 1980s, primarily driven by efforts to harmonize national legislation with EU standards. Early legislation focused on women's work-life balance, offering protection against dismissals during pregnancy, maternity and paternity leave, and benefits for marriage and children.

In 2006, Romania passed Law 3488/2006 to combat gender discrimination in the labor market, promoting equal pay for equal work and addressing sexual harassment. Successive governments have introduced several positive action pilot programs to prioritize women's entrepreneurship and the integration of vulnerable groups of women in the labor market.

Despite significant progress in female labor force participation, gender discrimination practices still hinder full gender equality achievement. The rise in female labor force participation can be attributed to increased opportunities in the tertiary sector, improved educational access for women, and better public child and elderly care services. However, inequalities persist, with women's employment rate at 40 compared to 60% for men in 2015. The transformation of Romania into a service-based economy has significantly contributed to this change, with over 78% of women currently employed in the tertiary sector, and a notable proportion are self-employed.

In Romania, self-employment is more prevalent compared to other EU countries. However, it's essential to recognize that self-employment in the Romanian labor market often masks long-term full-time employment relationships without the rights and benefits associated with salaried positions. Until recently, self-employed women working long- term for the same employer had no provisions for paid maternity leave, parental leave, or other benefits. In 2015, the Romanian parliament passed a new law (4097/2012) to promote gender equality in self-employment. While a substantial percentage of women are self-employed, a significant number also work as full-time salaried employees.

In 2008, one-third of female salaried employees worked as permanent public servants. Though women are still underrepresented in higher-ranking positions in the public sector, it offers a more secure working environment for female employees. The public sector effectively implements gender equality provisions, including paid pregnancy leave, parental leave, benefits for children, and minimal wage gaps between men and women. Consequently, the public sector acts as a protective net for women, particularly due to its commitment to gender equality.

Female employment has also risen in the private sector in Romania, but persistent gender wage gaps and discrimination remain significant concerns. Despite women's increased labor participation across all private sectors, they tend to occupy lower-paid and low- skilled positions and are underrepresented in executive and managerial roles, especially in large companies. Women, including ethnic and migrant women, are overrepresented in "feminized" sectors such as cleaning, health, child and elderly care, and private education. These sectors often involve unregulated, informal, and part-time employment.

The under-utilization of women's and young people's labor potential presents a considerable disadvantage for Romania. Integrating these groups into the workforce not only enhances their well-being but also fosters social cohesion and adds valuable resources to the economy, boosting its productivity and growth potential. Given the impact of the economic crisis in the 2010s and more recently, the pandemic, achieving a robust and sustainable economic recovery becomes a crucial and urgent challenge for Romania. Prioritizing the mobilization of human capital, particularly among young people and women, is vital for policy initiatives.

In this context, the study focuses on the challenges young people face in accessing the labor market and making their initial professional strides upon employment. It places a particular emphasis on the gender dimension, delving into the specific obstacles encountered by young women in their pursuit of successful careers.

Analysis of Romanian Women's Entrepreneurship

Over time, the presence of women in top management positions in Romanian businesses has shown remarkable growth. Particularly in technology, innovation, and research- focused ventures, there has been a surge in "success stories" led by women founders and entrepreneurs. Despite historical prejudices, social barriers, and challenges, these women have become a powerful force within the Romanian startup ecosystem, showcasing their talent, creativity, and leadership skills.

A century ago, it was extremely rare to find women involved in business in Romania, much like finding rare and precious gems today. Successful women entrepreneurs were once considered exceptions to the rule, but history has shown that they were behind numerous global "success stories." In recent years, women have emerged as influential and dynamic leaders in entrepreneurship, leveraging technology and innovation as a springboard to success. They possess unconventional thinking, pioneering vision, creativity, and intelligence, essential traits of top entrepreneurs. Remarkably, some of the most successful women entrepreneurs have achieved extraordinary intellectual accomplishments, with IQ scores surpassing those of renowned male figures like Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, and Leonardo da Vinci.

According to international studies, thousands of women founders have established successful startups with global recognition, building businesses worth hundreds of millions and even billions. The new generation of highly educated and experienced women in Romania exudes confidence, expertise, creativity, leadership skills, and visionary thinking. Many of the most celebrated business success stories, both globally and within Romania, are authored by women entrepreneurs, challenging the traditional perception of entrepreneurship as a male-dominated field. Significantly, women have made strides in increasing their representation in senior management positions within multinational companies, corporate boards, and as managing directors (CEOs). Their achievements demonstrate that women have broken barriers and are leading the charge in driving innovation and growth in various industries.

In Romania, female entrepreneurship has made impressive strides, particularly in the thriving technology startup sector, despite being less represented in research and science fields. Over the past three years, the rise of female entrepreneurs has gained widespread attention, not just on International Women's Day but also during funding and acquisition announcements, where female founders, entrepreneurs, and fund managers have taken the spotlight. Reports from organizations like Foundation indicate that 19.2% of startups, approximately 2 out of 10 companies, have been founded by women. Moreover, accelerator programs have witnessed a notable increase in female founders and co- founders, reaching 24% and 28.6% of executives, respectively.

A survey by IOBE revealed that early-stage female entrepreneurship in Romania doubled from 4% in 2018 to 8% in 2019. However, the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 did have a temporary impact on this upward trend. Nevertheless, Romanian women continue to demonstrate their leadership in the startup ecosystem.

The overall picture of women's entrepreneurship in Romania showcases remarkable growth and recognition in recent years, with women breaking barriers and making significant contributions in various sectors, especially technology and innovation-driven ventures. Despite facing challenges, they have proven to be exceptionally talented, resourceful, and visionary leaders, leaving a strong mark on the entrepreneurial landscape in the country. As the ecosystem continues to evolve, there are ample opportunities to further support and empower women entrepreneurs, creating a more inclusive and thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem in Romania. Providing additional resources and encouragement will undoubtedly contribute to the continued success of female entrepreneurs, making Romania's startup scene even more dynamic and diverse.

Survey Implementation

The "OMEGA Survey of Young Women Entrepreneurs and Digital Culture" focused specifically on local female entrepreneurs in Romania. The promotion, data collection, and analysis of the survey were carried out by ASOCIATA A.S.E.L. RO, an organization based in Bucharest, Romania. The survey was conducted in English through a Google Forms format, consisting of four categories: respondent characteristics, business experience, familiarity with digital culture, and the use of digital tools and proficiency in digital skills. In total, the survey included 29 questions, with four pertaining to respondent characteristics and 25 aimed at gathering data about women's efforts in establishing their startups and their level of awareness regarding digital technology.

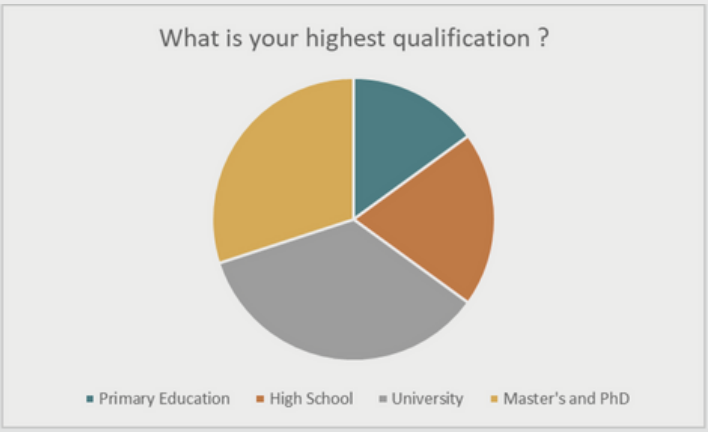
The primary goal of the survey was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the digital landscape for young women entrepreneurs in Romania. By exploring their experiences, knowledge, and utilization of digital tools, the survey aimed to shed light on the challenges and opportunities faced by these entrepreneurs in the digital world. The insights derived from the survey will serve as a foundational basis for informed decision-making and the formulation of strategies to empower and support young women entrepreneurs as they strive for success in the digital era. Ultimately, the project seeks to foster an environment where young women can thrive and make significant contributions to the digital entrepreneurship landscape in Romania.

Questionnaire Analysis

Based on the survey results, it was observed that 30% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 35-44, while the remaining 70% fell between the ages of 25-34. This distribution can be attributed to the promotion of the survey by ASOCIATIA A.S.E.L. RO, an NGO focused on youth work, which naturally attracted a larger number of young individuals to participate. By targeting the younger generation, the survey aligns within A.S.E.L. RO's mission to support and empower young people, especially in entrepreneurship and digital skills development. The emphasis on engaging this age group allowed the survey to gather valuable insights into the experiences, perspectives, and specific requirements of young women entrepreneurs in the digital sphere. The higher representation of respondents between 25-34 years old provides significant information about the challenges, aspirations, and digital proficiency of this particular demographic. This data serves as a basis for creating tailored strategies, programs, and initiatives to address the unique needs of young women entrepreneurs within this age range, ensuring more effective support and encouragement for their ventures in the digital world.

Regarding the survey's second question, the analysis reveals an equitable distribution of respondents, with 32% holding university-level qualifications, and the other 30% possessing Master's or PhD degrees. This data highlights that the surveyed individuals are highly educated, showcasing their academic excellence, advanced expertise, and strong motivation.

The fact that 32% of the respondents have completed university degrees emphasizes their dedication to pursuing higher education and acquiring essential knowledge and skills in their respective fields. This level of academic achievement provides a solid foundation for professional growth and potential success as entrepreneurs in the digital domain. The survey's findings underscore the impressive educational background of these women entrepreneurs, indicating their preparedness to thrive in the digital landscape.



Pie 1: What is your highest qualification?

Moreover, the other 30%, who have attained Master's or PhD degrees, exhibit even higher levels of educational attainment. Their advanced qualifications showcase specialized expertise and a deeper understanding of their respective fields. These individuals likely possess advanced analytical and critical thinking abilities, making them well-equipped to navigate the intricacies of the digital landscape and pursue entrepreneurial ventures with confidence.

Based on the survey results, it becomes apparent that 75% of the respondents are currently employed, while the remaining 25% are unemployed. This data underscores that a majority of the respondents are actively engaged in the workforce, indicating a positive employment situation among those surveyed. However, the primary focus of the survey is to address the specific needs of the unemployed individuals, with a targeted approach aimed at reducing their numbers by providing support and assistance in developing digital skills.

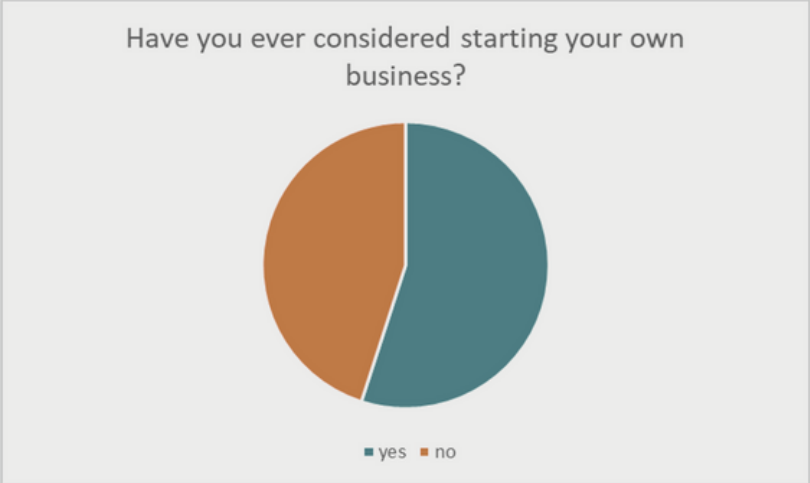
Pie 2: Are you currently unemployed?

The survey's identification of unemployed respondents emphasizes the significance of addressing their specific challenges and providing them with essential digital competencies. Empowering these individuals with enhanced digital skills can open up new employment possibilities and enable them to effectively compete in today's job market, which heavily relies on digital technologies.

The survey's primary goal is to bridge the digital skills gap among the unemployed, recognizing that proficiency in digital technologies is increasingly essential for employability. To achieve this objective, the survey focuses on implementing targeted interventions, such as training programs, workshops, and personalized resources. Through these efforts, the survey aims to empower the unemployed respondents and enhance their prospects of securing meaningful employment in the digital era.

By concentrating on reducing unemployment rates and addressing the digital skills gap, the survey plays a vital role in fostering a more inclusive and prosperous labor market. Equipping the unemployed individuals with the necessary digital skills can significantly improve their employability, enabling them to seize emerging opportunities in the digital sector and ultimately enhancing their socio-economic well-being.

The survey findings reveal that 55% of the respondents exhibit a strong desire to venture into entrepreneurship, which is a promising and uplifting statistic. This indicates a significant portion of individuals who are enthusiastic about initiating their own businesses and taking charge of their professional journeys. Additionally, an impressive 70% of the respondents have prior experience in business management, indicating that a substantial number of those surveyed have already acquired valuable expertise in running their own ventures. This finding suggests that approximately half of the respondents not only possess high levels of skill but have also gained practical knowledge through hands-on experience in entrepreneurial pursuits. These insights highlight the potential and readiness of the respondents to embrace the challenges and opportunities of entrepreneurship in their professional lives.



Pie 3: Have you ever considered starting your own business?

The strong determination and ambition displayed by the majority of respondents underscore their keenness to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors. It showcases their readiness to embrace challenges, take calculated risks, and seize opportunities to establish and grow their own businesses. Moreover, the significant number of respondents with prior experience in managing businesses reflects a wealth of knowledge and expertise within the surveyed group. This accumulated experience equips them with valuable insights into various aspects of entrepreneurship, including marketing, finance, operations, and strategic planning. Their entrepreneurial acumen positions them favorably to navigate the complexities of the business landscape and enhances their prospects for success in future ventures.

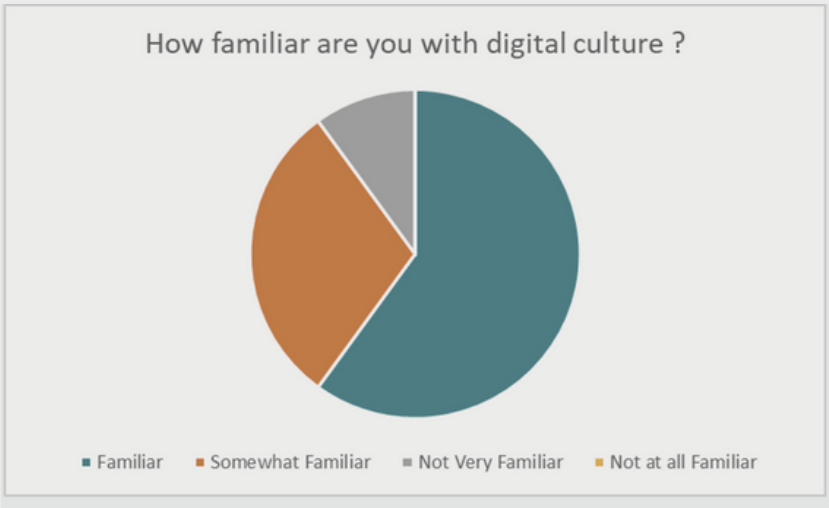
The survey findings reveal that all respondents share the intention of being part of smaller- scale companies with no more than 18 employees. This preference for smaller firms underscores their desire for a more intimate and closely-knit working environment, where individuals can potentially have a greater impact and play more significant roles within the organization. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of 85% of the respondents have a strong inclination towards the services sector. This sector encompasses a diverse range of industries, such as consulting, hospitality, marketing, and technology services, among others. The notable preference for the services sector suggests that respondents are attracted to the potential of providing specialized expertise, delivering value-added solutions, and engaging in customer-centric roles.

Furthermore, 15% of the respondents have expressed interest in the "Mental Health" sector, which encompasses fields related to healthcare, fitness, wellness services, and related industries. This demonstrates a particular attraction to businesses that contribute to the well-being and care of individuals. Overall, the survey results shed light on the respondents' entrepreneurial preferences, guiding their aspirations towards building successful ventures in sectors that align with their interests and values.

Pie 4: In which sector are you willing/planning to do your business?

By revealing these sector preferences, the survey provides valuable insights into the areas where respondents envision establishing their entrepreneurial ventures. The emphasis on smaller firms and the specific sectors of services and health and wellness suggests a focus on delivering personalized customer experiences, specialized expertise, and the potential to make a positive impact on people's lives. These preferences offer important guidance for policymakers, support organizations, and aspiring entrepreneurs seeking to cultivate an ecosystem that nurtures and empowers ventures in these sectors. Understanding the preferences and aspirations of respondents allows stakeholders to develop targeted programs, initiatives, and resources that cater to the specific needs of entrepreneurs entering these fields, fostering growth, innovation, and overall success.

One of the crucial survey questions centers around the respondents' familiarity with digital culture. The findings indicate that 60% of the respondents are highly familiar with digital culture, which is an encouraging statistic. Conversely, the remaining 40% have some level of familiarity with digital culture. This balanced distribution underscores the significance of digital literacy and highlights the need for further education and awareness in this domain.



Pie 5: How familiar are you with digital culture?

The survey findings from questions 11-15 provide valuable insights into the main challenges faced by respondents, essential characteristics required for fostering a digital culture, problem-solving approaches in the digital context, and their overall evaluation of the digital culture.

The most significant challenge identified by respondents is the lack of funding to acquire digital skills and actively participate in the digital culture. This aligns with the financial requirements of training courses, obtaining necessary devices, and accessing software. The second major challenge identified is the absence of adequate training, knowledge, and experience, which are interconnected factors that can be addressed through targeted training programs, knowledge-sharing initiatives, and networking among relevant professionals in the field. Addressing these challenges requires strategic planning and appropriate allocation of resources.

Regarding the anticipated impact of digital culture over the next five years, respondents expect a primary focus on increased utilization of virtual and augmented reality, followed by the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation. This projection highlights the growing significance of these technological advancements and their potential to shape various industries and sectors. Concerning problem-solving approaches within the digital culture, respondents exhibited diverse perspectives. The most commonly selected approaches were "consulting with experts in the field" and "analyzing past successes and failures.

" These choices underscore the importance of seeking guidance from experienced professionals and learning from previous experiences. In contrast, a smaller percentage of respondents preferred the approach of "brainstorming and generating new ideas" to solve digital problems. This finding suggests that the majority of respondents see the need for expert guidance in addressing digital challenges, while a smaller portion emphasizes creative thinking and innovative problem-solving methods.

Analyzing these insights makes it evident that fostering digital literacy, addressing funding challenges, providing targeted training opportunities, and facilitating collaboration among experts are crucial for developing a strong digital culture. The survey findings are a valuable resource for policymakers, organizations, and stakeholders aiming to enhance the digital capabilities and problem-solving abilities of individuals within the digital landscape.

Moreover, an impressive 70% of respondents indicated that they have received support and/or mentorship to enhance their digital business skills. The forms of digital support mentioned by respondents include a range of resources such as YouTube videos, Google courses, and e-learning platforms. Notably, 60% of participants have already participated in at least one digital course or training program, with topics mainly covering digital marketing, digital literacy, and online coding. However, several obstacles were identified that hinder individuals from pursuing digital skills courses.

The primary challenges cited include "lack of time" and "lack of access to training programs." Additionally, the most prominent obstacle reported by respondents was the "lack of awareness of available training programs." This finding suggests the need for improved promotion, communication, and networking opportunities to enhance awareness and accessibility of digital skills training.

Pie 6: If you have yet to take any digital skills courses or training programs, what are the reasons why?

The survey results reveal positive sentiment among 80% of respondents, who express confidence in the abundance of resources available to improve their digital skills. This optimistic outlook indicates that the majority of participants perceive the digital skills landscape as well-endowed with valuable resources and supportive systems. However, the remaining 20% of respondents emphasize the need for additional resources, particularly in the domains of cybersecurity and coding. This finding underscores the importance of addressing specific gaps and enhancing support in these areas to ensure comprehensive and effective digital skills development for all individuals.

Pie 7: Do you think enough resources are available to help individuals improve their digital skills?
The findings emphasize the importance of promoting awareness, expanding the accessibility of training programs, and fostering networking opportunities in the realm of digital skills. By addressing the challenges identified, including time limitations and lack of awareness, individuals can strengthen their digital capabilities and thrive in the digital era. Moreover, the feedback regarding resource availability provides valuable insights to stakeholders, pinpointing areas that require additional support and resources to meet the evolving needs of the digital landscape. Taking proactive measures based on these insights can lead to a more empowered and skilled workforce in the digital age.

Reflections

In conclusion, the collaborative efforts of the OMEGA project's survey and research by YEU have yielded valuable insights into the digital landscape for women in Romania. The findings reveal significant underrepresentation of women in various aspects, including their participation in the digital sphere, employability, salaries, and the benefits of digitalization. To address these disparities, it is essential to implement focused and strategic actions.

The survey results present encouraging figures, showcasing women's strong motivation to establish their startups and enhance their digital skills. Building on these positive aspects, a multifaceted approach is necessary to overcome the existing obstacles. The first key aspect of the solution involves increasing funding to provide more comprehensive training opportunities for women. Adequate financial resources will ensure that women can access high-quality programs and effectively enhance their digital competencies.

The second important aspect emphasizes the establishment of a comprehensive network that centralizes information and updates. This network could be in the form of a website or a networking group, serving as a unified platform that brings together various digital training initiatives. By creating such a cohesive platform, women will have easy access to relevant information and resources, facilitating their continuous growth in the digital domain.

The third critical aspect of the solution revolves around designing and implementing well- planned courses and training programs. These initiatives should not only impart knowledge but also provide practical opportunities for women to apply what they have learned. Additionally, it is crucial to equip women learners with effective methodologies and a problem-solving mindset, enabling them to find solutions independently, without always relying on external support.

In summary, the OMEGA survey has shed valuable light on the challenges and opportunities faced by women in developing their digital skills in Romania. By addressing the identified barriers through increased funding, a centralized network, and well- designed training programs, Romania can empower women to bridge the digital gender gap and fully harness the potential of the digital age. With concerted efforts and a supportive ecosystem, women entrepreneurs in Romania can thrive, making significant contributions to the country's digital advancement and fostering inclusive economic growth.

TURKEY

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era characterised by swift advancements, the digital culture has assumed a fundamental role in our day-to-day existence. Digital technology and tools have revolutionised all aspects of human life, including communication, entertainment, business, and creativity. These advancements have significantly altered the manner in which individuals connect, acquire knowledge, and engage in professional activities. The rapid advancement of technology has necessitated a heightened emphasis on digital skills and literacy.

This report examines the findings derived from an extensive survey aimed at comprehending the viewpoints and encounters of persons within the digital culture. The primary objective of the survey was to ascertain the difficulties, inclinations, and educational requirements of the target demographic in effectively navigating the ever-changing digital environment.

In the subsequent sections, an examination will be conducted on the outcomes of the survey, revealing the prominent patterns, inclinations, and proficiencies that individuals aspire to improve inside the digital domain. Through the process of identifying the training requirements of the target demographic, we can acquire significant knowledge regarding the specific domains in which individuals desire to develop and achieve excellence within the digital milieu. Furthermore, this report will offer recommendations derived from the survey findings in order to effectively fulfil the training requirements. In this study, we will examine various tactics and approaches that can be employed to enhance the digital competences of the target population, enabling them to excel in both their personal and professional pursuits.

The primary objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive analysis based on facts, with the intention of elucidating the significance of ongoing learning and the cultivation of skills in the context of the digital age. Organisations and institutions may play a crucial role in promoting inclusivity, innovation, and resilience within the digital society by comprehending the various difficulties and opportunities that arise inside the digital culture.

Legislation

Numerous legislative measures and initiatives have been implemented with the objective of providing support to female entrepreneurs and advancing gender parity in the realm of entrepreneurship. The legislative aspects of women entrepreneurs in Turkey are of significant importance and warrant attention.

The Turkish Commercial Code underwent a revision in 2012 to foster gender equality and promote women's involvement in business and entrepreneurship. The introduced code incorporated measures to ease the creation and functioning of women-owned businesses, such as streamlined registration protocols and decreased financial prerequisites.

The Turkish Labor Law mandates gender equality in employment and entrepreneurship by prohibiting discriminatory practices based on gender. Female entrepreneurs are entitled to the same legal rights and protections as their male counterparts, encompassing equitable access to business opportunities, employment, and career progression.

The State of Art in The Labor

Between east Europe and Asia, Turkey is a transcontinental nation with a significant economic and political impact on both continents (Argüden, 2007). This nation is the 37th largest in the world, yet it is ranked 13th globally for GDP (PPP) in the International Monetary Fund's 2018 report (IMF, 2018). Despite the ongoing geopolitical issues, the OECD reports that Turkey's GDP (766.428 billion dollars) has continued to catch up with that of other, more developed OECD nations in 2018. The nation, however, experienced a 20.30% inflation rate in 2018 (OECD, 2018). Turkey currently has a population of about 80 million people. Like Iran, it can be distinguished by its large young population since half of its citizens are under 31, and one-third, or about 24 million people, are under 18. 2016 Population Association The unemployment rate in Turkey is 10.9%, significantly higher than the OECD average. When broken down by gender, women's unemployment is 13.9%, while men's unemployment is 9.5% (OECD, [19.03.2019]).

70% of Turkish entrepreneurs are men, according to GEM's 2010 Turkey report, the latest report from Turkey to be issued. They noticed that, despite improvements in both genders' TEA indices since 2008, the ratio of male to female entrepreneurs is more beneficial for males in nations that place a premium on efficiency, making the female participation rate the lowest among their counterparts (Karadeniz, 2010). This low level of women participating in entrepreneurship shows the need to pay more attention to their problems and identify the best ways to motivate them, despite the government's modified policies in favour of women and the advent of NGOs like KOSGEB and KAGIDER aiming to fund women entrepreneurs (Keskin, 2014).

According to 2017 statistics from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), while the labor force participation rate of women increased in cities from 17,1% to 19,3% between 1995 and 2005, it declined in rural areas from 49,3% to 33,7% (TÜK, 2017, p. 12–13). Although the phrase "entrepreneurship" is often thought of as a career for men in society, according to Calisir (2016, p. 93), there are many examples that demonstrate how ready and motivated women are for this reason.

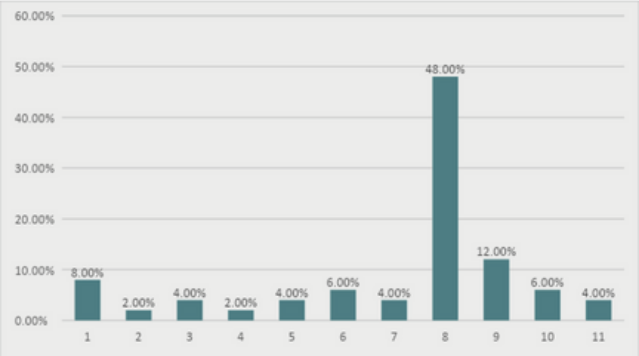
Survey Implementation

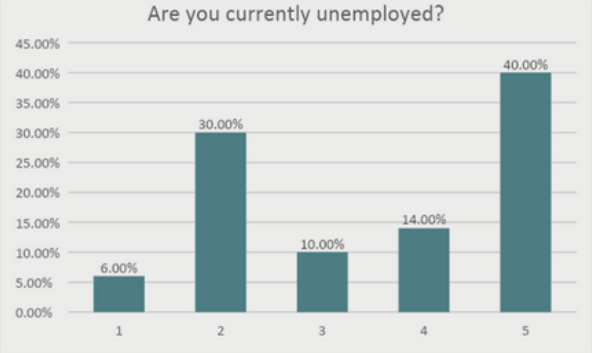
Implementing the distribution of questionnaires during a seminar hosted by K-Gem for women and disseminating them among extensive networks of women entrepreneurs in Ankara and Istanbul represents a commendable strategy for acquiring valuable feedback and ideas from various participants. This approach enables the inclusion of viewpoints from seminar participants and a wider demographic of female entrepreneurs who may not have been present at the event but may still contribute helpful insight.

Reminder emails are sent to the communities as part of the online survey to stimulate increased response rates and reinforce the significance of the survey to the receivers.

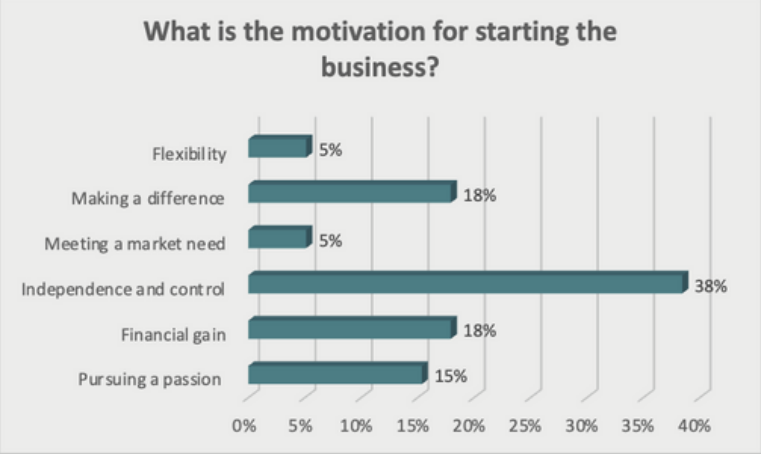
Questionnaire analysis

The poll included a sample size of 51 female participants. The demographic characteristics of the individuals involved in the study are presented in the following section. The majority of the participants in the study either a university degree or have completed their undergraduate education, with their ages predominantly falling within the range of 18 to 24 years.



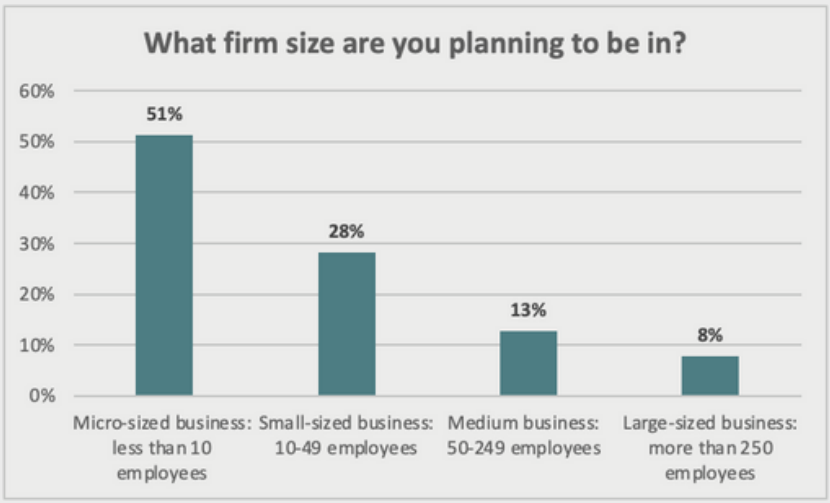


The survey findings indicate that a significant proportion of the respondents are employed, however it is noteworthy that the unemployed individuals in the sample had university degrees.



Based on the available statistics, it is apparent that a notable proportion of individuals (38%) are driven to pursue their passions due to their aspiration for autonomy and authority. It implies that a significant number of persons are motivated by the desire to establish their own ventures and assume control over their own fate. In addition, it is noteworthy that both money gain (18%) and the desire to make a positive impact (18%) significantly contribute to individuals' motivational factors. Certain individuals are driven by the prospect of achieving financial success, while others are driven by the aspiration to have a constructive contribution on society.

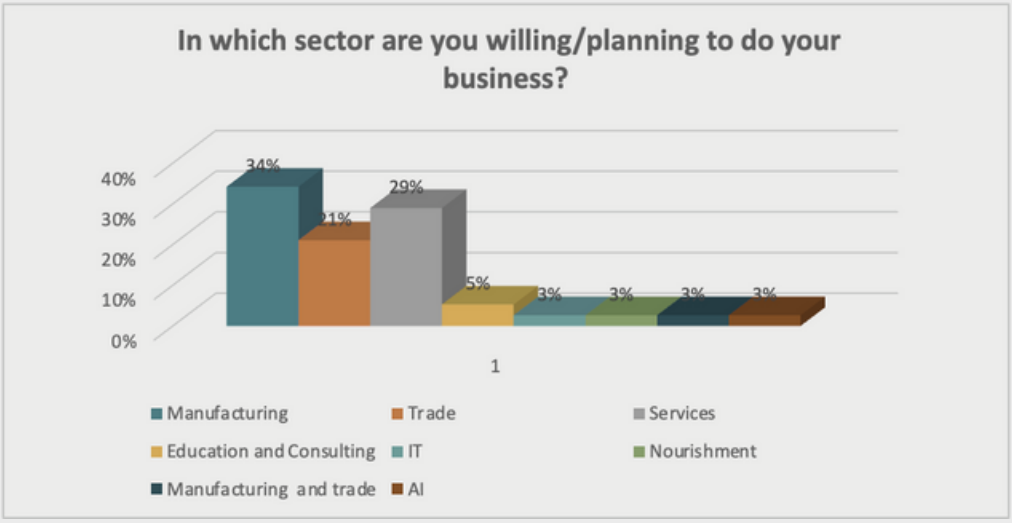
Notably, a relatively lesser proportion of individuals (15%) are primarily motivated by the exclusive pursuit of their passion. This observation suggests that although passion holds significance, it does not serve as the primary driving force for most people.The data additionally indicates that the elements of meeting a market need (5%) and flexibility (5%) exhibit relatively lower levels of significance in influencing individuals' motives, particularly when compared to the aforementioned components. In conclusion, individuals' pursuit of goals and ambitions is primarily motivated by factors such as the desire for autonomy and influence, financial benefits, and the opportunity to effect meaningful change.



Based on the available data, it appears that the prevailing inclination for the firm's size is towards a micro-sized business model, as indicated by 51% of respondents expressing their intention to employ less than 10 individuals. It implies that a considerable proportion of individuals or entrepreneurs are contemplating the initiation or management of small-scale, closely-knit enterprises characterised by a restricted number of team members.

In close succession, a notable proportion of respondents, specifically 28%, express their contemplation towards engaging in the establishment of a small-scale enterprise encompassing a workforce ranging from 10 to 49 individuals. This suggests that a significant proportion of individuals are receptive to moderately larger undertakings, presumably motivated by a desire for increased development and expansion.The research additionally indicates that a lesser proportion of persons are intending to develop firms of medium size, as 13% of them are aiming for a workforce size ranging from 50 to 249 personnel. This finding suggests that a reduced number of participants are considering mid-sized organisations, potentially attributable to the intricacy and difficulties linked to overseeing a larger employee base.

Finally, it is worth noting that a mere 8% of the participants expressed intentions to establish enterprises of considerable scale, with a workforce exceeding 250 individuals. This implies that a small proportion of individuals are pursuing endeavours on a huge scale, which often entail greater levels of intricacy and necessitate more resources.In general, the prevailing inclination among respondents is to initiate or participate in smaller-scale enterprises, possibly due to a preference for the agility, personalised approach, and manageable nature associated with micro or small-sized organisations.

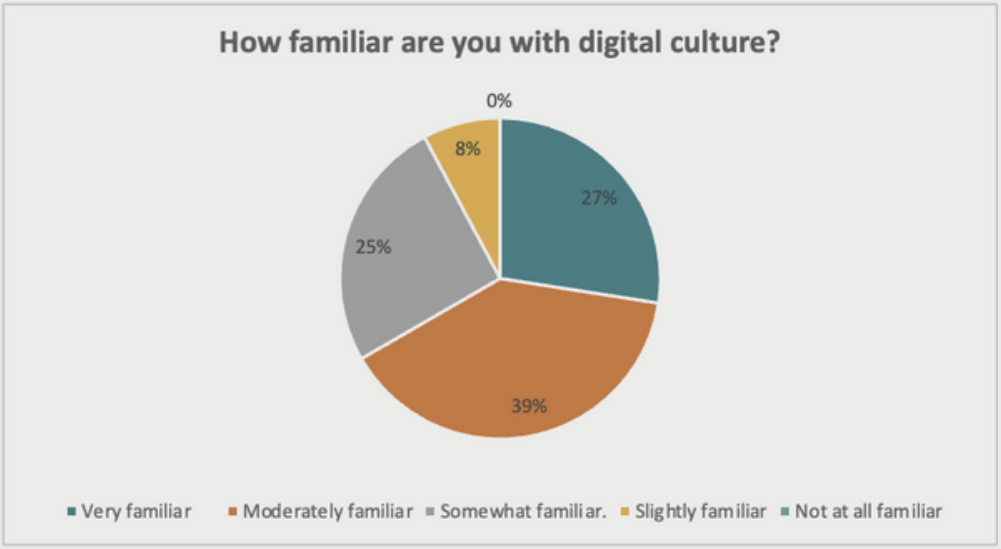


Based on the data presented, it is evident that a significant proportion of the respondents (34%) express a willingness or intention to initiate a firm within the manufacturing industry. This observation indicates a notable level of enthusiasm towards the creation of physical commodities, which may encompass a wide spectrum of items such as electrical devices and consumer products. Subsequently, a significant proportion of participants, up to 29%, express a contemplation towards engaging in entrepreneurial endeavours within the services sector. This trend signifies a notable predisposition towards providing diverse service-oriented solutions, encompassing areas such as consulting, marketing, and professional services.

The trade sector exhibits potential, as indicated by the interest of 21% of the respondents in engaging in trade-related enterprises. This may encompass many commercial activities, including wholesale, retail, and import-export operations.A much lower proportion of participants (5%) are contemplating ventures within the education and consulting industry, encompassing providing educational services, training initiatives, or specialised guidance.

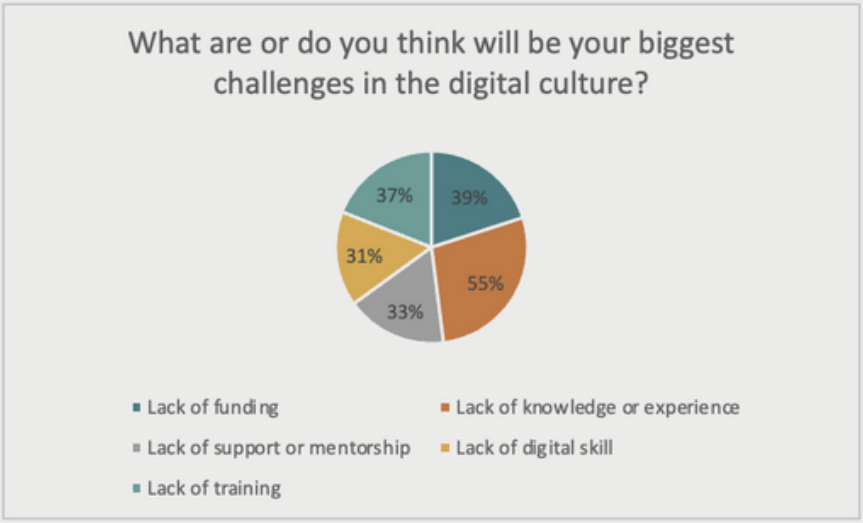
The data additionally indicates a 3% interest in the IT industry, implying that sure participants are considering ventures related to technology, such as software development, IT consultancy, or tech startups. Likewise, the nourishment sector, comprising approximately 3% of the market, is garnering considerable interest, potentially encompassing enterprises associated with producing and distributing food and beverages, including restaurants, catering services, and specialised food product establishments. Furthermore, a small percentage of participants (3%) express interest in the convergence of manufacturing and trade, suggesting a potential intersection between these two sectors.

Finally, a minority of participants (3%) expressed interest in AI-related enterprises, corresponding to the increasing fascination with artificial intelligence and its many implementations. The data presented demonstrates a wide array of interests and prospective opportunities for business initiatives, thus emphasising the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial endeavours across multiple sectors. The selection of a sector is contingent upon an individual's unique competencies, prevailing market conditions, and the inclination to cater to distinct requirements and preferences within the commercial environment.



Based on the available data, it is apparent that a significant proportion of participants (39%) possess a moderate degree of acquaintance with digital culture. It also means that the individual possesses a certain level of familiarity and expertise in the realm of digital technologies, social media platforms, online communication, and internet-related endeavours. Furthermore, a notable proportion of participants (27%) self-identify as highly knowledgeable in digital culture. It is probable that these individuals possess a comprehensive understanding of diverse digital platforms, emerging trends, and online behaviours. In addition, a quarter of the participants indicate a moderate level of familiarity with digital culture. This particular group may possess a certain level of familiarity with digital elements, albeit potentially lacking the same degree of comfort or expertise observed in the aforementioned categories.

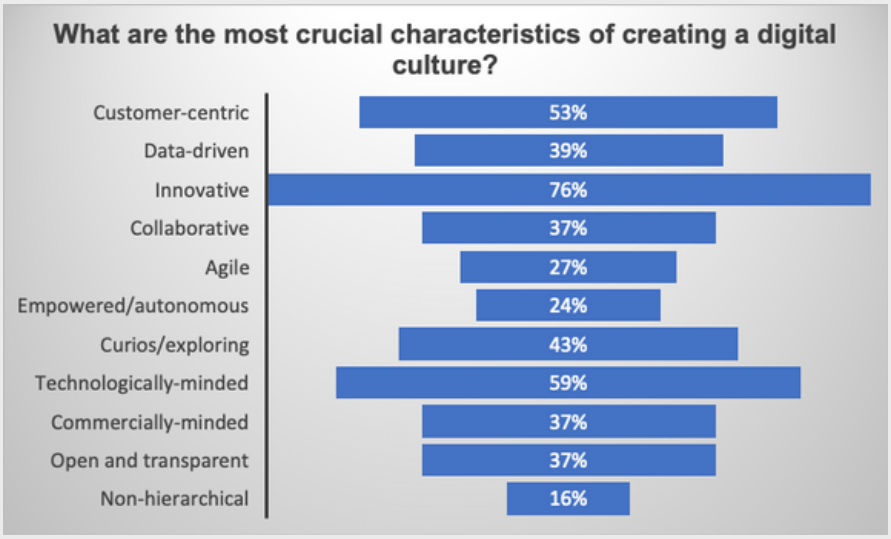
A lesser proportion of participants (8%) self-identify as possessing a modest level of familiarity with digital culture, suggesting that they possess rudimentary comprehension but lack comprehensive expertise. Remarkably, none of the participants in the study assert a complete lack of familiarity with digital culture. This observation suggests that the surveyed individuals possess a certain level of familiarity and comprehension regarding digital technologies and the culture associated with online platforms. In general, the data indicates that the majority of participants exhibit diverse degrees of acquaintance with digital culture, with a substantial proportion demonstrating a moderate level of comprehension. The acquisition of knowledge and understanding in the realm of digital culture has become progressively crucial in contemporary society, characterised by its heavy reliance on technology. Given the substantial impact of digital contacts and online activities on personal and professional spheres, the significance of such familiarity cannot be overstated.



Based on the available data, it is apparent that the respondents anticipate encountering numerous noteworthy problems when navigating the digital culture. The predominant challenge frequently acknowledged by participants is the "Lack of knowledge or experience," with a notable 55% of respondents expressing apprehension regarding this matter. This implies that a significant number of persons perceive potential difficulties in comprehending and proficiently employing digital technology and online platforms.Following closely is the difficulty commonly referred to as "Lack of funding," which was cited by 39% of the participants. This suggests that the presence of financial limitations could impede the complete adoption and use of digital prospects.

The issue of "insufficient training" was identified as a worry by 37% of the participants. This underscores the need of having access to pertinent and current training materials in order to maintain competitiveness within the digital realm.Furthermore, a significant proportion of the participants, specifically 33%, have expressed apprehensions regarding the perceived absence of adequate support or mentorship. This observation highlights the necessity of seeking direction and mentorship from seasoned individuals or reputable organisations in order to effectively navigate the intricate aspects of the digital realm. Additionally, a significant proportion of the participants, specifically 31% of them, saw the "Lack of digital skill" as a noteworthy obstacle.

This implies that the acquisition of essential skills for proficiently utilising digital tools and technology is a significant concern for numerous persons. In summary, the research suggests that the primary obstacles within the digital culture pertain to factors such as knowledge, expertise, training, money, and support. The resolution of these difficulties will be of utmost importance for individuals and enterprises to flourish in the era of digitalization, when technology and online presence assume a central role in achieving prosperity and expansion. It is imperative for organisations and institutions to prioritise the provision of training opportunities, mentorship programmes, and support systems in order to assist individuals in overcoming these obstacles and effectively adjusting to the constantly changing digital environment.

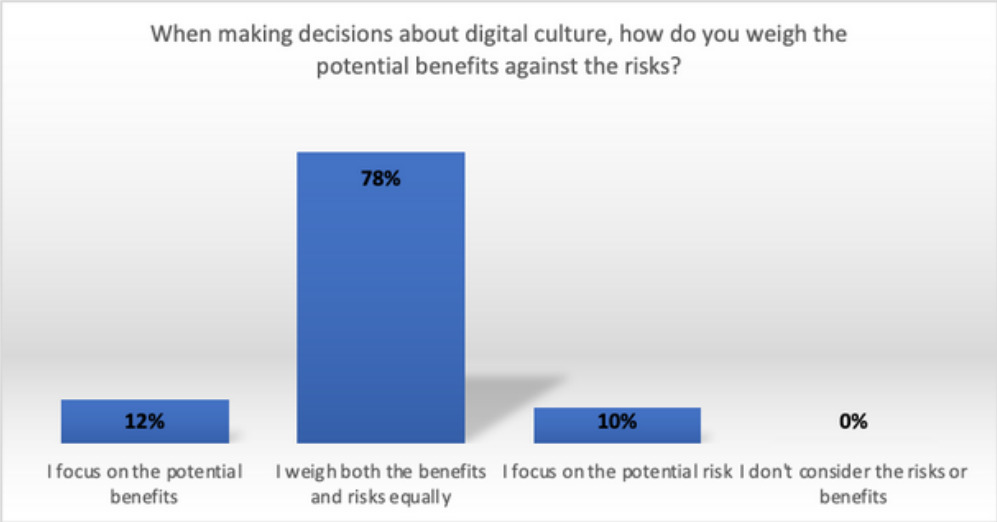


Based on the available data, it is apparent that the respondents hold a strong appreciation for innovation, as a notable 76% perceive their respective organisations to possess innovative qualities. This suggests a significant emphasis on fostering creativity, embracing novel concepts, and remaining at the vanguard of industry progress. The prioritisation of client-centricity is also a significant focus, as indicated by 53% of participants who underscored the significance of placing the consumer at the core of their organisational initiatives.

This implies a dedication to comprehending the requirements of customers and delivering customised solutions that align with their preferences. The survey findings reveal that a substantial proportion of respondents, specifically 39%, consider being data-driven as a crucial element. This suggests that data holds substantial importance in the context of decision-making and enhancing operational efficiencies inside businesses. This underscores the increasing significance of utilising data and analytics to acquire valuable insights and make well-informed decisions.The survey findings indicate that a majority of respondents, namely 59%, acknowledge the significance of possessing a technological mindset.

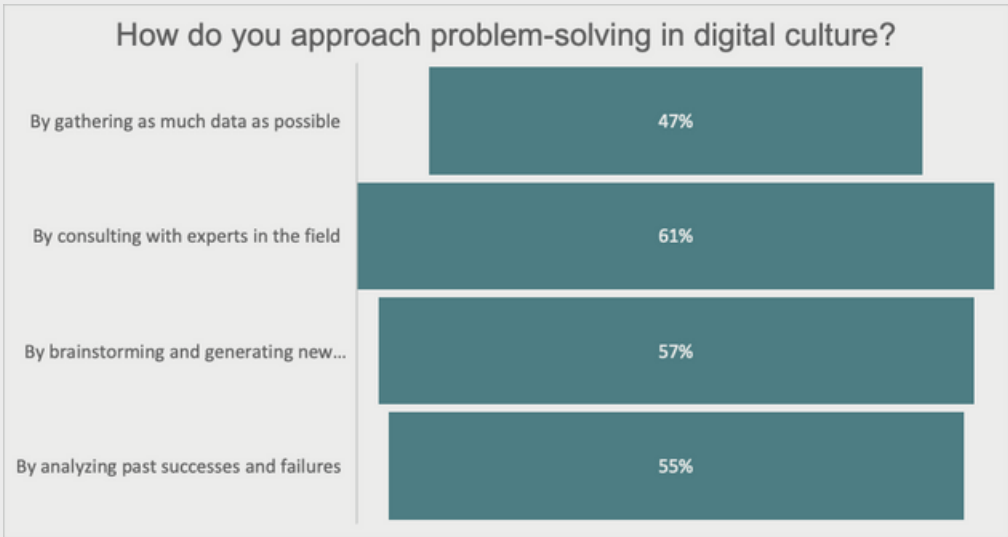
This highlights a strong emphasis on the adoption and effective utilisation of technology as a means to enhance corporate performance and maintain a competitive edge.In addition, a significant proportion of respondents, namely 43%, self-identify as possessing the attributes of curiosity and a propensity for investigating novel alternatives. This implies a disposition to acquire knowledge and adjust to evolving market dynamics and trends.The significance of collaboration is acknowledged by 37% of the participants, highlighting the understanding of the efficacy of collective efforts and alliances in attaining shared objectives and promoting innovative practises.The prioritisation of agility, which enables swift adaptability to changes and market needs, is reported by 27% of the respondents.The survey results reveal that a significant proportion of respondents, specifically 24%, place importance on empowerment and autonomy. This suggests a strong inclination towards granting employees the ability to exercise independent judgement and actively participate in driving the organization's achievements.The significance of company strategy and financial concerns is demonstrated by 37% of the participants, indicating their recognition of commercial acumen.A notable proportion of respondents, namely 37%, expressed a recognition and appreciation for the importance of openness and transparency in their business operations, which signifies their dedication to upholding principles of honesty and integrity.

Finally, a lesser proportion (16%) of participants indicated a non-hierarchical inclination, indicating a predilection for organisational frameworks that are more egalitarian in nature, fostering cooperation and information exchange across various tiers.In conclusion, the data underscores a significant focus on innovation, customer-centricity, and technology adoption among the participants. The individuals acknowledge the importance of using data-driven methodologies and a business-oriented mindset, while also placing emphasis on traits like as curiosity, collaboration, agility, and transparency in their organisational strategy. These characteristics collectively embody a progressive and forward-looking perspective, which is essential for success in the ever-changing business environment of today.



According to the data provided, a significant proportion of participants (78%) use a well-rounded perspective while making judgements pertaining to digital culture. They assign equal weight to both the prospective rewards and risks. It signifies a judicious and deliberate decision-making process, when individuals and enterprises meticulously evaluate the possible benefits of embracing digital technologies in light of the corresponding hazards. A comparatively lower proportion of participants (12%) tend to prioritise the potential advantages while deliberating on matters related to digital culture. This cohort may exhibit a higher degree of optimism on the favourable consequences associated with adopting digital innovations and may accord greater importance to the prospective benefits as opposed to the associated hazards. In contrast, a notable proportion of participants, namely 10%, prioritise assessing potential hazards when deliberating on matters about digital culture.

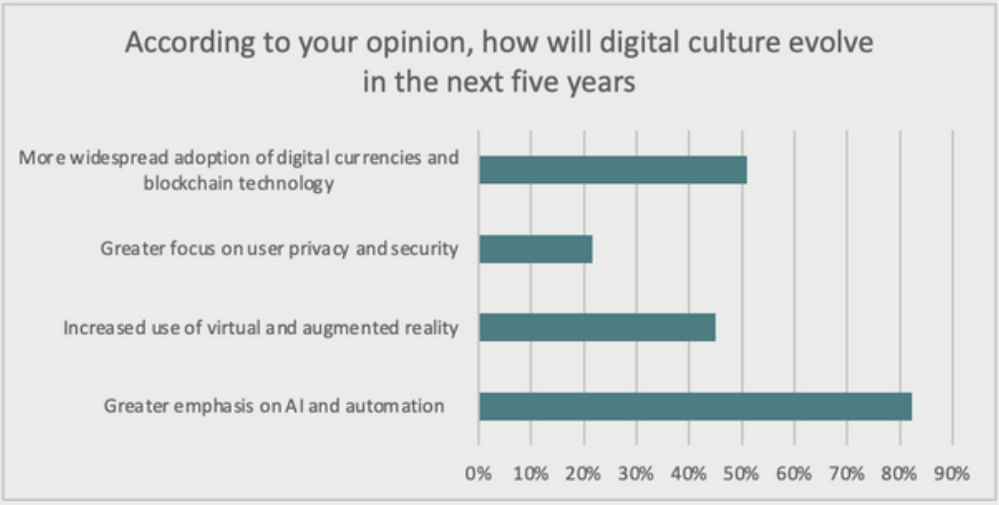
This implies a more prudent strategy, wherein individuals and businesses may exhibit more aversion to risk and a heightened inclination to avoid potential drawbacks. Notably, all study participants indicated that they consider the potential risks and benefits associated with digital culture when making decisions. This suggests that the participants in the survey exhibit a level of awareness regarding the potential outcomes and effects of their decisions, recognising the importance of taking into account multiple perspectives. In conclusion, the data indicate that most participants place importance on adopting a well-rounded perspective, meticulously assessing digital culture choices' possible advantages and drawbacks. The meticulous deliberation enables individuals to make knowledgeable and comprehensive decisions that align with their objectives and degrees of risk tolerance, contributing to the success and longevity of digital initiatives.



The research suggests that participants employ a diverse range of strategies when addressing problems within the realm of digital culture. According to the findings, a significant proportion of participants (61%) prefer seeking guidance and expertise from professionals who possess specialised knowledge in the digital realm. Consultations with professionals can offer significant insights and optimal strategies for efficiently tackling difficulties. According to the findings, a notable majority of participants (57%) prefer participating in brainstorming sessions to create novel ideas and solutions. This methodology promotes the development of innovative ideas and stimulates unconventional problem-solving strategies tailored to the digital environment. By examining previous achievements and setbacks, it is evident that a significant proportion of the respondents, precisely 55%, place considerable emphasis on the value of acquiring knowledge from earlier encounters.

The comprehensive examination of achievements and shortcomings facilitates a more profound comprehension of effective and ineffective aspects within digital culture, hence informing decision-making processes and problem-solving endeavours. By extensively collecting a substantial amount of data: Approximately 47% of the participants in the study depend on data-driven insights as a means of problem-solving. The process of data analysis has the potential to yield significant insights into customer behaviour, market trends, and performance measures, hence facilitating the ability to make educated decisions.

The research suggests that a prevalent approach in tackling difficulties within digital culture involves utilising various tactics in combination. Individuals and organisations can adopt a holistic and well-informed problem-solving approach within the ever-evolving digital culture by engaging in consultations with experts, engaging in brainstorming sessions to generate novel ideas, conducting analyses of prior experiences, and leveraging data-driven insights. The adoption of a holistic strategy has the potential to result in enhanced efficacy and improved outcomes for digital initiatives and endeavours.

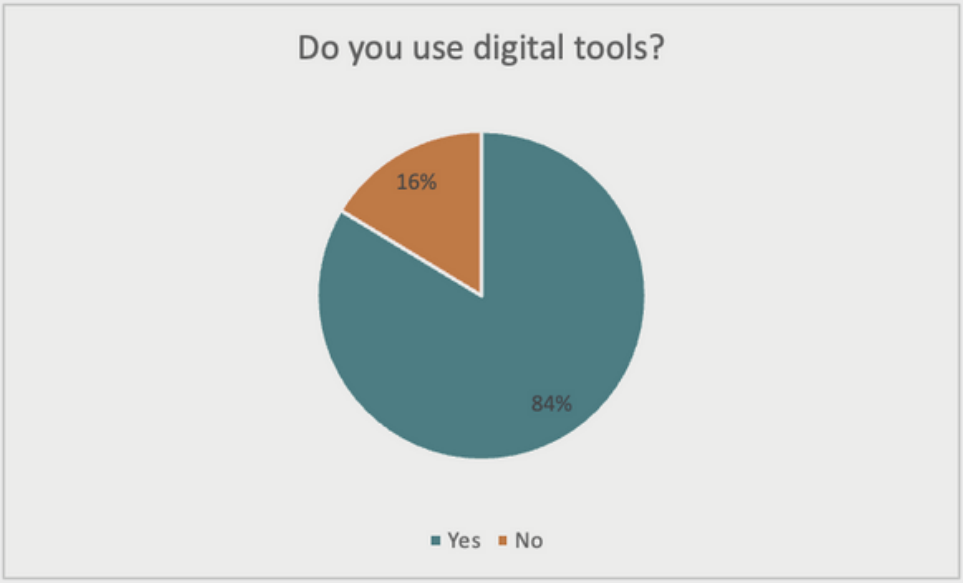


Based on the available data, it is apparent that there exist several significant trends that are expected to influence the development of digital culture during the course of the next five years. A substantial proportion of participants (82%) hold the belief that artificial intelligence (AI) and automation will assume a prominent role in shaping the trajectory of digital culture in the future. It is anticipated that artificial intelligence (AI) technologies would undergo further advancements and widespread integration, significantly influencing diverse sectors and operational procedures. The potential impact of AI on our interactions with digital technology is expected to be transformative, encompassing personalised customer experiences and enhanced efficiency in commercial operations.The utilisation of virtual and augmented reality has witnessed a notable surge, with a substantial 45% of participants acknowledging its status as an emerging trend within digital culture. These technologies has the capacity to revolutionise our interaction with digital information, encompassing activities such as immersive gaming encounters, virtual meetings, and training simulations.

With the continuous advancement and increasing accessibility of technology, it is anticipated that virtual and augmented reality applications will be more prevalent across diverse sectors. The increased prevalence of digital currency and blockchain technology: Approximately 51% of the participants in the survey express their expectation that digital currencies and blockchain technology will experience increased popularity and acceptance in the foreseeable future. The advent of cryptocurrencies and decentralised finance (DeFi) is anticipated to bring about substantial transformations in the realm of financial transactions and asset management. The transparent and secure characteristics of blockchain technology are anticipated to significantly influence a range of businesses beyond finance, including supply chain management and digital identity verification.

A notable but somewhat lesser proportion of participants (22%) recognised the significance of emphasising user privacy and security in the context of the progressing digital landscape. As technology integration becomes increasingly pervasive in our daily lives, there is a corresponding rise in concerns over preserving data privacy and safeguarding cybersecurity. It is imperative for both individuals and organisations to prioritise the protection of sensitive information and the implementation of strong security measures to establish and maintain trust with users.In general, the evidence indicates that there will be a notable transformation in the digital environment over the course of the next five years. Artificial intelligence (AI) and automation are poised to significantly influence numerous facets of our everyday lives and commercial activities, while virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) technologies are anticipated to transform digital encounters fundamentally.

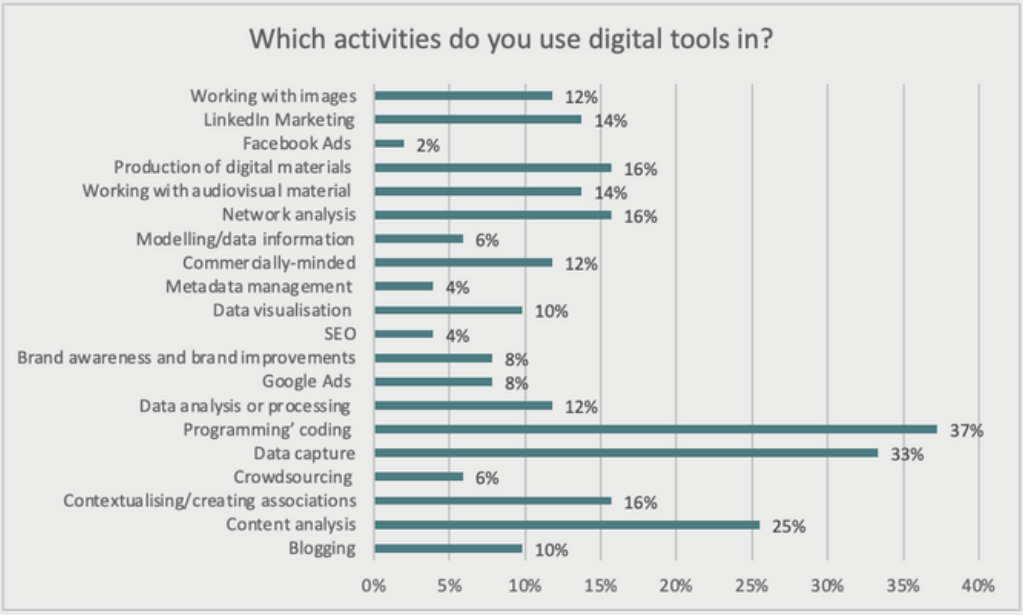
Furthermore, there is a growing trend towards greater acceptance and use of digital currencies and blockchain technology, poised to revolutionise financial transactions and other aspects of our lives. During this evolutionary process, it will be imperative to prioritise preserving user privacy and security to establish a reliable and secure digital milieu.



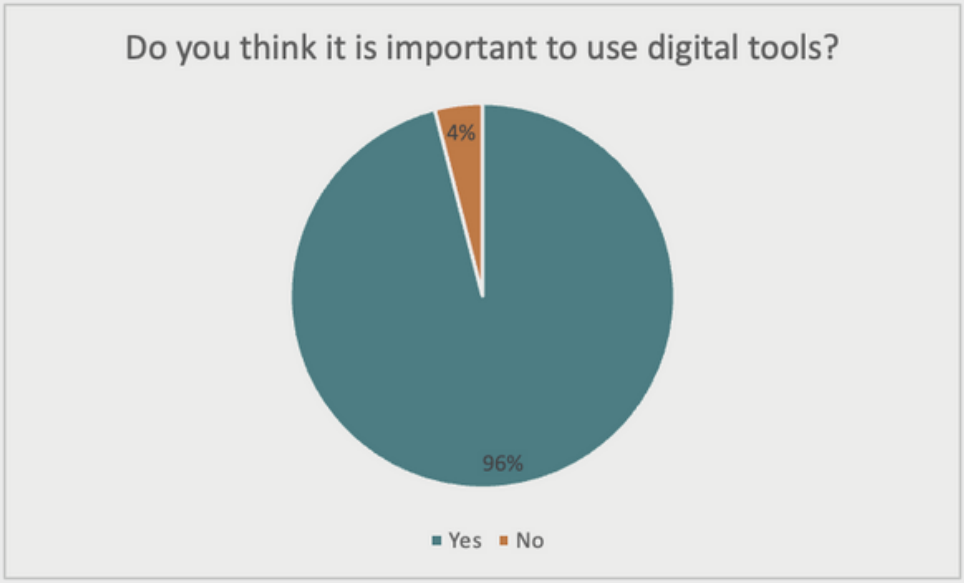
Based on the available data, it is evident that a significant majority of respondents (84%) demonstrate an awareness and acceptance of utilising digital tools. This implies that many persons possess comfort and proficiency in utilising diverse digital technologies to augment their everyday activities and professional endeavours. The substantial proportion of participants utilising digital technologies highlights the pervasiveness and omnipresence of technology in contemporary culture. Digital tools have become an indispensable component of our personal and professional spheres, providing us with convenience, enhanced productivity, and unrestricted access to extensive repositories of knowledge and resources. The study further suggests that a minority of participants (16%) abstain from utilising digital tools.

Although the aforementioned proportion is relatively small, it implies the presence of a subset of individuals who may possess a lower level of familiarity or involvement with digital technology. As indicated by most respondents, the prevalence of individuals who embrace digital technologies highlights the increasing reliance on technology across diverse domains of human existence. Digital tools are paramount in establishing our digital culture and influencing our interactions, entertainment, productivity, and problem-solving capabilities.

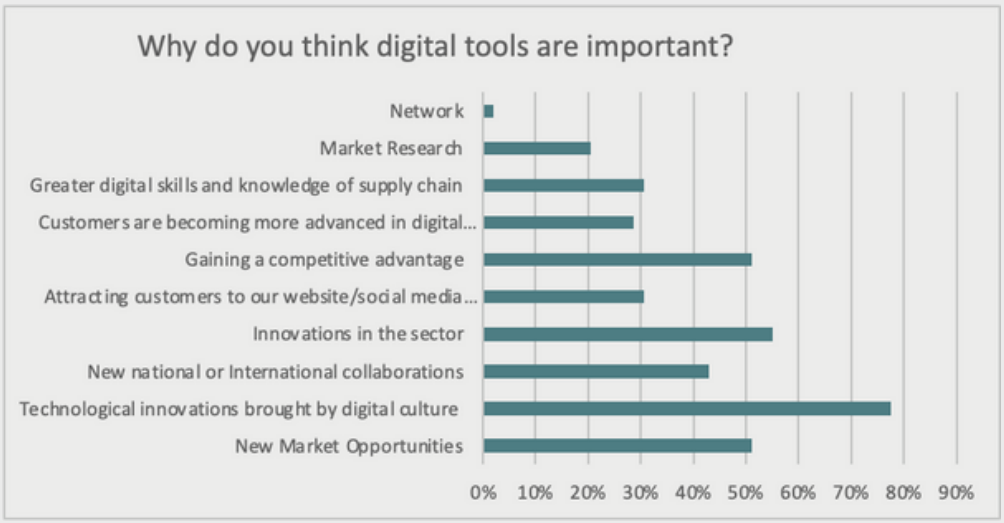
These tools significantly impact how we navigate and engage with the world. With the continuous advancement of technology, digital tools would experience more significant expansion, thereby influencing various aspects of our lives, professional endeavours, and social interactions.



According to the data presented, programming code emerges as the most extensively utilised digital tool among the survey participants, accounting for 37% of the responses. This observation suggests a significant dependence on programming abilities for the creation and execution of diverse software applications, websites, and digital solutions. Data capture is the subsequent prominent factor, accounting for 33% of the respondents' responses. This finding indicates that the participants attach considerable significance to the collection and analysis of data in order to inform their decision-making procedures and acquire valuable insights into many facets of their digital endeavours. Content analysis, which accounts for 25% of digital tools usage, is widely adopted by individuals and organisations alike. This tool enables active engagement in the study of digital content, including social media posts, customer feedback, and online interactions.



Based on the available data, it is apparent that a significant majority of participants (96%) hold the belief that the use of digital tools holds importance. The prevailing agreement among scholars underscores the importance of digital tools in contemporary society and their beneficial effects on diverse domains of life and professional endeavours. The research indicates a significant recognition of the benefits that digital tools provide to both consumers and enterprises. These technologies provide users with convenience, efficiency, and the ability to access a wide range of information and resources, which can contribute to increased productivity, improved communication, and enhanced problem-solving capabilities. The data presented in the study supports the prevailing consensus that digital tools have become indispensable in effectively navigating the intricacies of contemporary digital culture, with a mere 4% of respondents expressing a dissenting perspective. In general, the data illustrates a prevalent acknowledgement of the significance of employing digital tools, underscoring their instrumental function in influencing our interactions, acquisition of knowledge, and completion of tasks in the contemporary digital world. The ongoing progression of technology is anticipated to amplify the importance of digital tools, thereby shaping our ability to adjust and flourish inside a progressively digital-oriented society.

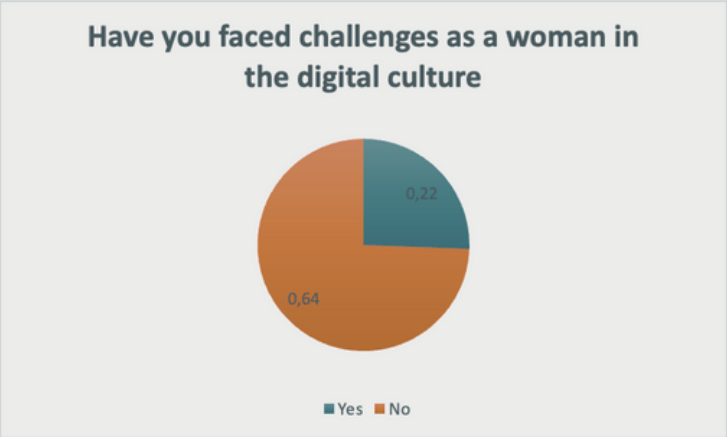


Based on the replies supplied, it is apparent that technical advancements are widely seen as a substantial consequence of digital culture, as indicated by 78% of the participants acknowledging its significance. The result suggests that the progression of technology plays a crucial role in the development of digital culture, influencing the manner in which individuals and corporations engage, generate novel ideas, and establish worth inside the digital realm.Moreover, the user asserts that the advent of digital culture would result in a significant upsurge in inventions within the industry, with a confidence level of 55%. The aforementioned statement implies a firm conviction in the influential capacity of digital culture in fostering innovation, novel concepts, and revolutionary resolutions. Moreover, the findings of the survey indicate that digital culture is anticipated to create novel market prospects, as expressed by 51% of the participants. The findings suggest that both individuals and businesses are acknowledging the prospects for advancement and enlargement within the digital realm, and are actively endeavouring to exploit rising possibilities.The significance of digital culture lies in its ability to foster new national or worldwide collaborations, as acknowledged by 43% of the participants. It highlights the collaborative aspect of digital culture, wherein partnerships and cross-border cooperation significantly contribute to fostering innovation and extending market penetration.One of the key goals is to leverage the website and social media channels in order to enhance consumer interaction and generate advertising revenue.

The idea implies the adoption of a strategic methodology in leveraging digital platforms as potent instruments for effectively reaching and actively engaging the intended audience. The objective of obtaining a competitive advantage is a priority for 51% of the participants, underscoring the significance of maintaining a leading position in the digital marketplace. This claim is in line with the notion that digital culture offers the potential for firms to distinguish themselves and acquire a competitive advantage.The data, moreover suggests that a considerable percentage of customers, precisely 29%, are demonstrating a rising competence in digital skills. The finding implies an increasing client base proficient in digital technologies, underscoring the importance for businesses to align with the expectations and preferences of technologically adept consumers.

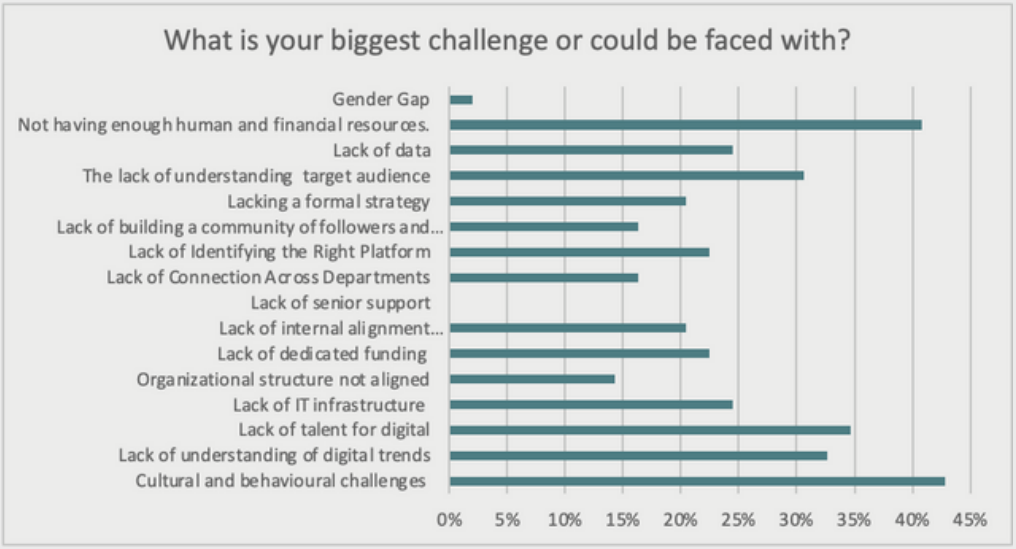
Furthermore, it is worth noting that 31% of the participants exhibit advanced digital skills and show a full comprehension of supply chain management. It denotes a significant competency in utilising digital technologies to enhance the efficiency of supply chain procedures and operations.The market research component, which accounts for 20% of the project, underscores its significance in acquiring useful insights and data to inform decision-making and digital strategies. In digital culture, networking plays a crucial role, accounting for a modest 2% of the effort.

The following underscores the importance of establishing relationships and fostering cooperation.In general, the results demonstrate digital culture's complex and ever-changing characteristics, in which advancements in technology, innovation, market potential, customer interaction, competitive edge, and diverse digital competencies intersect to influence the digital environment. Both businesses and individuals acknowledge the potential and significance of digital culture in facilitating growth, productivity, and achievement in the contemporary digital era.

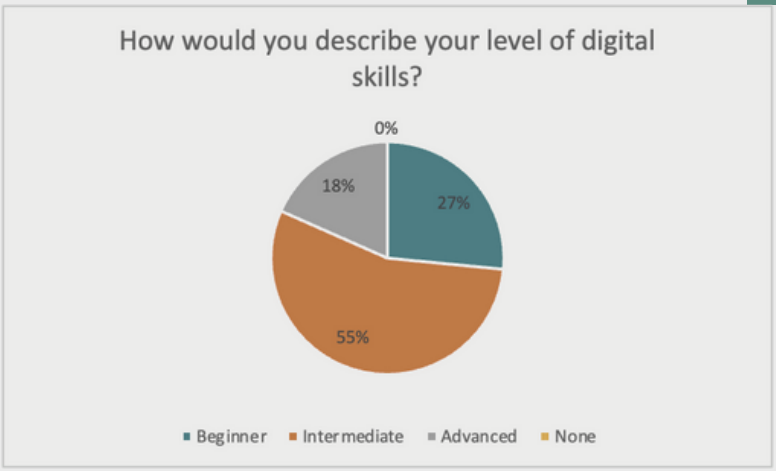


Based on the available data, it is evident that a minority of participants (22%) have reported experiencing difficulties associated with their gender within the digital culture, although a substantial majority (64%) have not encountered comparable obstacles.The available data indicates that a significant proportion of women inside the digital culture have not encountered discernible barriers or instances of discrimination directly linked to their gender.

This observation suggests a promising trend in the digital economy, wherein there is an increasing emphasis on inclusivity and support for women's involvement and contributions.Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that the presence of even a marginal proportion of women encountering obstacles is significant and underscores the significance of ongoing endeavours to foster a digital culture that is more inclusive and fair. It is imperative for organisations and communities to actively cultivate an inclusive atmosphere that promotes and enables the success of women in the digital domain The statistic further emphasises the importance of continuous efforts to promote diversity and gender equality within the IT sector. By acknowledging and tackling the obstacles encountered by certain women, the digital culture has the potential to enhance inclusivity and leverage the varied skills and viewpoints of women in order to foster creativity and facilitate beneficial transformations.



Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that the primary obstacles encountered by the target demographic are cultural and behavioural issues, which accounted for 43% of the responses, followed closely by the insufficiency of human and financial resources, which constituted 41% of the reported difficulties. The subsequent challenges they faced included a deficiency in digital talent (35%), a lack of comprehension regarding digital trends (33%), and an inadequate understanding of the target audience (31%). The challenges identified based on the provided responses are enumerated as follows. The absence of information technology (IT) infrastructure is reported to account for 24% of the observed cases.The alignment of the organisational structure is not at a satisfactory level, as it deviates by 14%.The absence of allocated financial resources constitutes a significant factor, accounting for 22% of the issue at hand.The absence of internal coordination between digital and traditional company operations accounts for a 20% discrepancy.The absence of senior assistance is non-existent.The observed percentage of 16% indicates a deficiency in interdepartmental connectivity.The absence of proper identification of the appropriate platform accounts for 22% of the issue.The absence of establishing a community comprising of followers and influencers accounts for 16% of the issue.The absence of a formal strategy accounts for a 20% deficit.The deficiency in comprehending the target audience is at a rate of 31%.The absence of sufficient data accounts for a proportion of 24%.The gender disparity stands at a marginal 2%. The findings of this study indicate that the specific population under investigation faces a diverse array of difficulties within the digital culture. These obstacles span various dimensions, including cultural factors, available resources, individual talents, and strategic considerations. The resolution of these difficulties will be of utmost importance in facilitating the target demographic to effectively use the whole capabilities of digital technology and prosper in the era of digitalization.



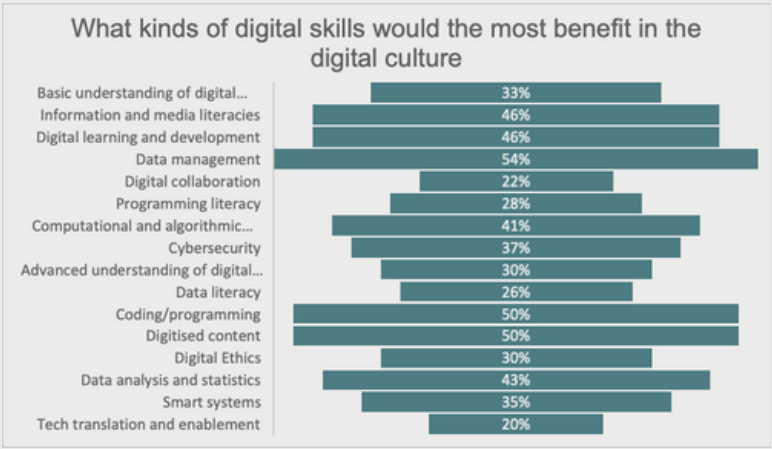
Based on the available data, the digital abilities possessed by the respondents can be characterised as follows:

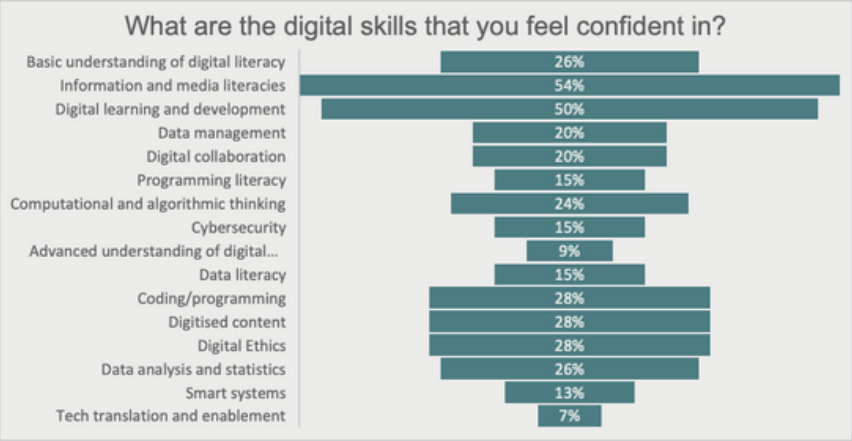
According to the survey data, a notable proportion of the participants, specifically 27%, self-identify as individuals with little proficiency in digital abilities. The findings suggest that a significant proportion of the respondents possess a restricted level of expertise and familiarity in the utilisation of digital tools and technology.

A significant proportion of participants, including 55% of the total, self-identify as possessing intermediate levels of digital proficiency. The findings indicate that a considerable proportion of individuals exhibit a reasonable degree of competence in utilising digital technology and demonstrate ease in navigating diverse digital platforms.

According to the survey data, it was found that 18% of the participants expressed confidence in possessing advanced digital skills. This suggests a subset of persons that possess a notable level of expertise and proficiency in effectively utilising sophisticated digital tools and technology.

Significantly, it is noteworthy that none of the participants reported a complete lack of digital abilities, indicating a good indication that the individuals surveyed possess a certain degree of experience with digital technologies. In general, the data indicates a broad spectrum of digital proficiency levels among the participants. Although the majority of persons fall within the intermediate level, there exist individuals who occupy positions at both the beginning and advanced ends of the proficiency spectrum

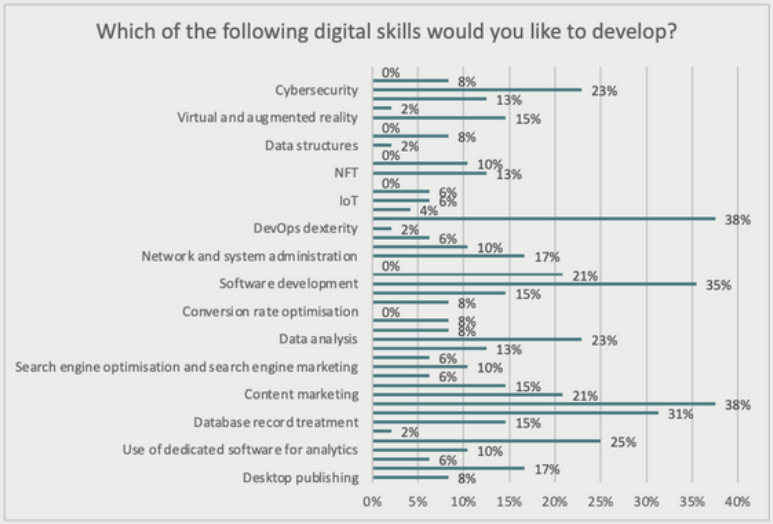




"Upon analysing the submitted data, distinct patterns emerge in the responses pertaining to digital competencies and capabilities.

- Digital literacy: A sizable minority of respondents (33%) have only a basic understanding of digital literacy, while a much lower percentage (9) have a thorough understanding. This finding suggests that the surveyed respondents exhibit varying levels of digital literacy.
- Information and media literacy: As one of the most common skills among respondents, 46% of those polled say they have learned and used information and media literacy.
- Digital Learning and Development: A sizable portion of respondents (46%) expressed interest in the field of digital learning and development, underscoring its importance in the digital culture.
- Data Management: According to 54% of respondents, handling and organising digital data efficiently is important, thus it's clear that this procedure is important.
- Digital Collaboration: The data do not include the respondents' proficiency rate in this area.
- Programming literacy is exhibited by 28% of respondents, indicating a strong aptitude for and interest in coding and programming.
- Algorithmic and Computational Thinking: 41% of respondents demonstrated an understanding of these concepts, demonstrating their capacity to approach problem-solving through the use of computational tools and methods.
- Cybersecurity: 37% of respondents have knowledge and abilities in this area, highlighting the significance of protecting digital data and systems.
- Technology Translation and Enablement: According to the survey, 20% of respondents are engaged in this activity, demonstrating its importance in successfully integrating and utilising technology.

The subsequent segment of the data appears to present comparable information, albeit with some discrepancies in the percentages pertaining to certain talents. However, the second section of the study lacks particular information regarding the percentage of respondents who possess proficiency in digital collaboration and data analysis.When comparing the two components of the data, it becomes evident that abilities such as information and media literacies, data management, and programming literacy are consistently prominent. Both elements of the curriculum also place emphasis on computational and algorithmic thinking, as well as digital ethics. In general, the data indicates a wide spectrum of digital abilities among the participants, with notable emphasis on competencies such as information and media literacies, data management, and programming literacy within the digital landscape. Given the increasing prominence of technology in many domains of existence and professional endeavours, the significance of acquiring and honing relevant proficiencies is poised to escalate. Consequently, a perpetual commitment to ongoing education and advancement within the digital realm becomes imperative.



The responses to the inquiry "Which of the subsequent digital proficiencies would you prefer to enhance?" are provided hereunder.

The percentage of individuals engaged in desktop publishing is 8%, whereas the percentage of individuals involved in web publishing is 17%. The utilisation of multimedia presentations constitutes a 6% portion of the whole content. The utilisation of specialised software for the purpose of analytics constitutes a mere 10% of the overall analysis process.The utilisation of social media analytics is a significant portion, specifically 25%, of the whole analysis conducted in the field of social media research.The utilisation of spreadsheets and digital graphicsThe percentage of database record treatment is 2%, while the percentage of database record treatment is 15%.The field of digital project management comprises around 31% of the overall project management landscape.The percentage of digital marketing is 38%.According to recent data, the utilisation of content marketing has experienced a notable increase, reaching a growth rate of 21%.The field of user experience design constitutes 15% of the whole topic being discussed.The utilisation of email and social media marketing constitutes a 6% portion of the overall marketing strategy.The topic of discussion pertains to the concepts of search engine optimisation (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM), with a focus on their respective contributions, accounting for 10% of the whole discussion.The utilisation of mobile marketing has shown a growth rate of 6%.The task of copywriting and editing constitutes 13% of the whole workload.he data analysis reveals a proportion of 23%. The utilisation of web analytics constitutes 8% of the whole analysis conducted in the field.The field of video production comprises around 8% of the overall media industry.The conversion rate optimisation is now at 0%.The customer relationship management (CRM) strategy accounts for 8% of the overall business focus.

The acquisition and use of fundamental design abilities account for a 15% component of the overall skill set.The field of software development constitutes 35% of the overall focus, while programming, web design, and app development collectively account for 21% of the emphasis.The topic of discussion is the design of enterprise architecture, which currently has no progress or completion.The field of network and system management constitutes around 17% of the whole domain.The topic of discussion pertains to the field of information system and network security.10%The topic of discussion pertains to the automation of databases and data pipelines, constituting a 6% portion of the overall discourse.The level of proficiency in DevOps practises is only 2%.Artificial intelligence accounts for 38% of the whole distribution, while machine learning comprises 4% and the Internet of Things (IoT) is not further specified.

The utilisation of big data analytics constitutes a mere 6% of the whole analysis conducted. Blockchain The utilisation of smart contracts in various industries has been observed to have a minimal impact, accounting for just 10% of overall implementation. Similarly, the incorporation of data structures in different systems has not been widely adopted, with a negligible contribution of 0% in terms of usage.The percentage of blockchain architecture is 2%, while the percentage of distributed ledger expertise is 8%. However, there is no percentage mentioned for virtual and augmented reality. Quantum computing is a field of study that focuses on the development and use of quantum mechanical phenomena to perform computational tasks. Cloud computing refers to the delivery of computer services, such as storage, processing power, and software applications, through the internet. This technology allows users to access and utilise these. The percentage distribution of the mentioned topics is as follows: 13% for cybersecurity, 23% for mobile applications, 8% for practical delivery drones, and 0% for any further topics.

In general, the data suggests a wide array of digital skills that participants express a desire to improve. The preferences encompass a range of dimensions including technology, data management, marketing, design, and development. In order to maintain competitiveness and foster innovation within the ever-changing digital landscape, individuals and organisations may direct their attention towards the aforementioned areas.

Reflections

Based on the information presented, many training needs can be determined for the target groups in the domain of digital culture. The aforementioned needs encompass:

Digital Literacy: A considerable portion of participants indicated a novice or basic level of digital literacy. Implementing training programmes that prioritise fundamental digital skills, including computer proficiency, internet navigation, and comprehension of digital tools, is advantageous for this particular demographic.

Data Management and Analysis: In today's digital culture, it is crucial to know about data management, analysis, and how to use specialised analytics tools. The acquisition of skills in data handling, data visualisation, and analytics technologies can augment the target demographic's capacity to make informed decisions based on data.

Social media and digital marketing: Many respondents are interested in social media analytics, content marketing, and digital marketing. Acquiring expertise in these specific areas can empower the intended demographic to proficiently advocate for items, interact with clientele, and evaluate the efficacy of marketing endeavours.

Web development and design: The answers mentioned multimedia presentations, web publishing, and web design. Acquiring proficiency in web development languages, design principles, and multimedia technologies has the potential to enable individuals to produce compelling and user-centric digital content.

Project Management in the Digital Age: A sizable portion of respondents expressed interest in project management in the digital age. Acquiring knowledge and skills in project management processes, tools, and best practises can significantly enhance the target group's ability to effectively carry out digital initiatives.

Cybersecurity: To protect digital assets and guarantee data privacy, you must have cybersecurity expertise. The acquisition of knowledge and skills pertaining to cybersecurity best practises, threat identification, and incident response has the potential to augment the security preparedness of the target demographic.

Programming and Software Development: Topics of interest included programming, software development, and app development. Acquiring proficiency in programming languages and software development processes can empower individuals to design and construct bespoke solutions and software applications.

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (AI/ML): Participants expressed a strong interest in AI/ML. Acquiring knowledge and skills in AI algorithms, machine learning models, and AI applications can effectively equip the target group with advanced digital competencies.

Suggestions for the specified demographic:

Conduct skill assessments: Organisations and organisations dealing with the target group should do so to determine individual proficiency levels and design training programmes for them.

Offer a Variety of Training alternatives: To accommodate different learning styles and time constraints, it's crucial to provide a variety of training alternatives, such as online courses, workshops, and hands-on projects.

Emphasis on Practical Application: The training programmes should prioritise practical application and the inclusion of real-world projects. This approach will enable participants to apply their acquired abilities professionally effectively.

Promote the Cultivation of Lifelong Learning: It is imperative to cultivate a culture that prioritises ongoing learning and the acquisition of new skills in order to remain abreast of the ever-changing landscape of digital technologies and trends.

Offer Personalised Training Plans: To maximise engagement and motivation, it is crucial to offer individualised training plans based on each individual's interests and professional aspirations.

Consequently, The survey results reveal the varied range of digital skills and interests exhibited by the target demographic within the realm of digital culture. The identification of training needs, based on the provided information, can assist organisations and institutions in developing successful training programmes that cater to the specific needs of the target demographic. By providing a complete curriculum that covers digital literacy, data management, digital marketing, web development, cybersecurity, software development, artificial intelligence, and other pertinent subjects, the intended audience can be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in the ever-evolving digital environment. The target group must prioritise continuous learning and upskilling to maintain competitiveness and adaptability within the dynamic digital landscape. Promoting the cultivation of a growth mindset and a supportive learning environment can effectively equip individuals with the necessary skills and attributes to flourish in the era of digitalisation. In general, implementing targeted training and development programmes will be crucial in cultivating a proficient and competent workforce that can propel innovation, enhance efficiency, and achieve success within the digital landscape.

CONCLUSION

The study of the digital world for women in Belgium, Greece, North Macedonia, Romania, and Turkey has highlighted potential issues that demand attention from all parties. The foundation of this discourse is the recurring issue of women's underrepresentation in many digital elements, which is contrasted with their driving urge to start their own businesses and advance their digital literacy.

It is clear that aggressive and targeted efforts are needed to close the gender gap in the digital sphere. These governments have recommended a common strategy that includes increasing financing for training initiatives. Access to high-quality programmes that give women the skills to navigate the digital world is ensured by adequate financial support. In addition, the development of centralised networks, which serve as repositories for data and resources, provides a framework for ongoing development.

The establishment of relevant training programmes is key to the answer. The effectiveness of women's skill development is increased by these programmes' function as a link between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The development of a problem-solving mindset, which enables women to look for solutions on their own and reduces reliance on outside experts, is also crucial.

This narrative is improved by nation-specific considerations that take into account societal norms, unfair procedures, and various demands. In Greece and Belgium, the emphasis is on enhancing women's capacity for digital entrepreneurship, but in North Macedonia, the focus is on economic independence and equality. The focus is on customised tactics in Romania, and covering a range of training needs in Turkey, from fundamental digital literacy to sophisticated AI competencies.

Together, the suggested training domains represent a thorough strategy:

- Basic Skills and Digital Literacy: Promoting the development of fundamental digital literacy.
- Data Management and Analysis: Giving women the tools they need to handle and analyse data.
- Fostering competence in digital outreach and engagement through social media and digital marketing.
- empowering women to create online experiences through web development and design.
- Cybersecurity: Educating people to be vigilant in protecting digital assets.
- Programming and Software Development: Enabling the creation of digital solutions.
- Advanced digital frontiers: artificial intelligence and machine learning.
- Project management in the digital era: Improving the capacity to carry out digital activities.
- Building start-ups and digital entrepreneurship: fostering an innovative mindset.

Nations can advance women's empowerment in the digital age by providing varied training interventions correlated with these fields. Such initiatives not only close the gender gap but also promote social, economic, and innovative advancement. The collaborative commitment to moving towards inclusive digital transformation has the potential to restructure industries, economies, and society for a more equal and prosperous future.

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