

FemSTEM Coaching Circles™

Executive summary

Partner Organisation: CESIE

Partner Country: Italy

Pilot: 1



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INDEX

INTRODUCTION	2
SUMMARY OF RESULTS	2
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	3

Introduction

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the first pilot of the FemSTEM Coaching Circles in Italy took place online, with the use of Zoom. Our Coaching Circles pilot started on September 2nd, 2021 and took place from 18:30 till 20:30.

The first session took place on September 2nd with 4 participants, as a few of the previously registered participants had unforeseen situations and couldn't be present. The second session was held on September 7th with 4 participants as well, as one of the participants of the first session had an urgent work commitment, but another participant who didn't manage to be present before, joined the session. The third and final session took place on September 14th – with 4 participants again. This happened due to a family loss in the family of one of the participants.

For the promotion of the FemSTEM Coaching Circles™¹ first pilot session, CESIE used its wide local and national network in order to contact, recruit and assure the participation of women in STEM-related fields. The invitations were sent via emails and private messages on platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

Among the participants there were two architects, one medical researcher, one chemist and one biologist.

The pilot was facilitated by Dr. Maryna Manchenko, project manager and researcher at CESIE.

Summary of Results

The first pilot round of Coaching Circles™ in Italy was attended by 5 participants (4 per session). All sessions took place via Zoom.

Each session and related materials were prepared by the facilitator in advance.

Before starting the programme, the participants were informed about the rules (learning agreement) and received general information about the FemSTEM project and the Coaching Circles™ methodology.

The first session was focused on introducing the participants and the facilitator, giving them a space to present their motivations and questions that inspired them to

participate in the pilot. Then the participants worked with “Start, Stop, Continue, Change” tool and SMART goals. **The second session** was dedicated to a reflection on SMART goals and overall impressions of the Coaching Circles™ experience, as well as an introduction to Mind Maps and “Circles of Influence tool”. **The third session** gave participants an opportunity to reflected on their experience with Mind Maps and other tools and summarise their experience with Coaching Circles.

Based on the analysis of the evaluation forms and testimonials, we can conclude that the first round of Coaching Circles in Italy received a very good feedback. The participants were very happy with the activities and the group dynamic. Many of them called the Circles therapeutic and compared them to “speaking with girlfriends”.

They all stated that they would’ve definitely recommend their friends to participate in Coaching Circles and would consider participating again after some time, when they will have other goals and aspirations to speak about.

As part of the training, participants self-assessed their soft skills in relation to their personal development in the STEM sector. Participants evaluated themselves at the beginning of the first and in the end of the last session of the first pilot of Coaching Circles™. The last evaluation showed improvement in networking, self-efficacy, assertiveness, leadership and problem-solving skills, stress management, goal setting, identifying future goals, understanding own values, communication skills, critical thinking and reasoning, creative thinking, teamwork and confidence for the majority of the participants.

However, enthusiasm is one factor that seems to have lower assessment value after the sessions. While speaking about their experiences, however, participants underlined that it was related to deeper self-reflection on their soft skills and figuring out which ones they want to develop in the future.

On a similar note, one participant out of 5 assessed her soft skills higher before Coaching Circles™ than after. In her reflection she was saying that it was a result of comparing on herself to other participants, however, she underlined that it was a positive and motivational comparison that showed her everything she wants to learn in the future. In a nutshell, lower evaluation in some cases are a sign of the process of re-evaluation and deeper inner work of participants, initiated by Coaching Circles.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The feedback from the participants of the first round of piloting of Coaching Circles™ was very positive.

They all spoke very highly of their experiences and the group dynamic, and gave positive evaluation to the impact this pilot had on their lives.

The main difficulty in the organisation of the piloting was conflicting schedules of the participants and unforeseen difficulties (personal, such as death of relatives or health issues, and work-related).

Due to these factors, even though the total of 5 participants took part in the pilots, we had 4 participants per session overall. Unfortunately, such issues are impossible to predict, hence one of our suggestions would be to set more flexible rules about the number of participants of each Circle. For example, due to a loss in the family of one of our participants, she had to miss two meetings and, at this point, we had to continue in order to respect the availability of other participants. However, another participant, who missed one session, received the description of all of the tools via email and presented her execution of these tasks in the next meeting.

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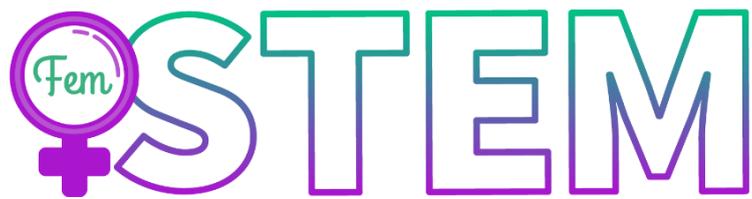
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FemSTEM

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