



FemSTEM Coaching Circles™

National Report

National Report of Greece
University of Thessaly

INTRODUCTION	0
RECRUITMENT	0
OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS.....	0
THE FORMAT AND PROCESS OF THE COACHING CIRCLES™ IN GREECE	0
FINAL EVALUATION FORM.....	5
TESTIMONIALS.	6
FACILITATOR’S COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT	7
CONCLUSIONS.....	8

INTRODUCTION

The consortium of the project FemSTEM has organized a series of sessions in the framework of Coaching Circles under the coordination and guidelines of the organization Inova Consultancy Ltd. Each partner was assigned to recruit women that belong to the main target group of the project and implement 3 sessions of Coaching Circles at the national level, using the framework and guidelines that were established within the Intellectual Output 3 of the project. For this reason, representatives of each organization have undergone a specific training under the guidelines of the coordinator, in order to be able to implement the Coaching Circles with their own groups of participants.

University of Thessaly, within the dissemination strategy of the project, has informed and outreached many potential participants and organized a recruitment process for this scope. We have used our network of contacts, VET organizations and other stakeholders at national level and we have released a public call through our social media network to recruit women that are active in the fields of STEM and would be interested to experience the Coaching Circles in order to receive support in their self-development.

Due to the general restrictions for gatherings and events across Europe the consortium has decided to implement the sessions of the Coaching Circles online and UTH was aligned to this decision. As a result, after our first piloting session, where UTH had successfully organized 3 online sessions with the recruitment of 10 participants in total, we decided to run the second round of piloting sessions in online mode.

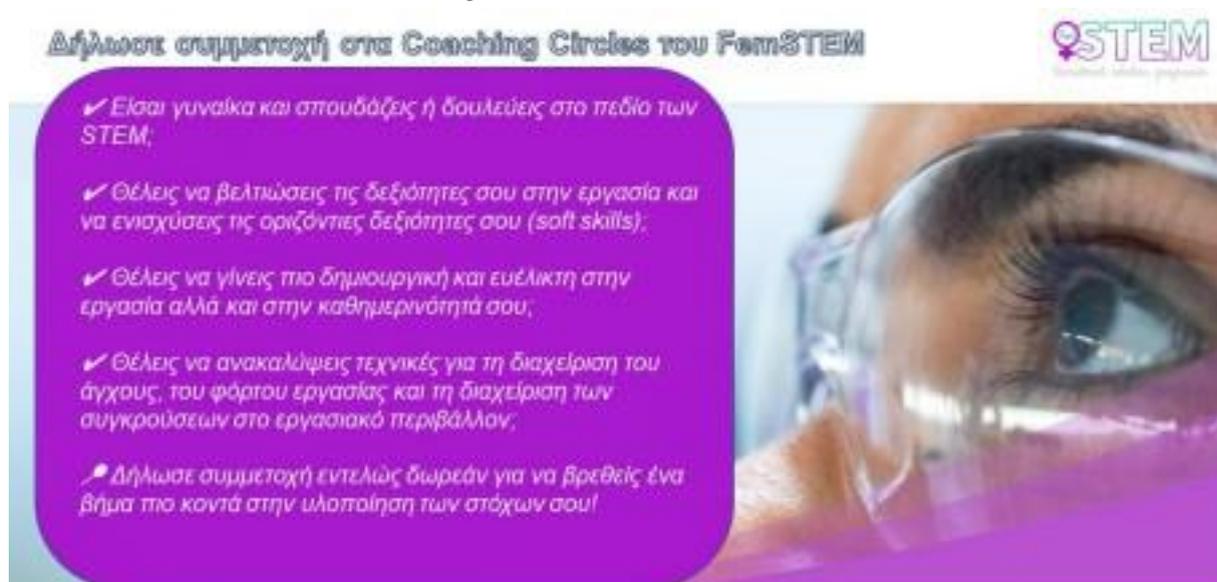
The Coaching Circles of the University of Thessaly were implemented by Ira Alevra, who had attended the training provided by Inova Consultancy and Emma Humphrey. Anna Boubouzioti has assisted the procedure providing her experience in relevant training of the organization.

The following report presents the implementation of the second piloting of the Coaching Circles in Greece for the project FemSTEM, including evaluations, facilitator comments and recommendations for adaptations of the general Coaching circles methodology and content.

Recruitment

The first and very important step for the implementation of the piloting of the Coaching Circles was the outreach of suitable participants that represents the target group addressed by the project.

UTH has started the dissemination of the Coaching Circles from an early stage, through the social media of the Center for International Education of UTH. Our page usually hosts the activities we implement in the framework of EU projects and the followers are expecting to learn about new learning and training opportunities. We had many requests for information about the Coaching circles and the project in general and we are confident that many people have visited the website after talking with us.



Δήλωσε συμμετοχή στα Coaching Circles του FemSTEM

- ✓ Είσαι γυναίκα και σπουδάζεις ή δουλεύεις στο πεδίο των STEM;
- ✓ Θέλεις να βελτιώσεις τις δεξιότητές σου στην εργασία και να ενισχύσεις τις οριζόντιες δεξιότητές σου (soft skills).
- ✓ Θέλεις να γίνεις πιο δημιουργική και ευέλικτη στην εργασία αλλά και στην καθημερινότητά σου;
- ✓ Θέλεις να ανακαλύψεις τεχνικές για τη διαχείριση του άγχους, του φόρτου εργασίας και τη διαχείριση των συγκρούσεων στο εργασιακό περιβάλλον;
- Δήλωσε συμμετοχή εντελώς δωρεάν για να βρεθείς ένα βήμα πιο κοντά στην υλοποίηση των στόχων σου!

Recruitment, retention, progression

Also we have contacted many stakeholders and organisations from our national network in order to inform them about the piloting and we have asked them to inform their own staff and their network as well. This procedure was implemented both by written and oral communication. Also, we have communicated the event to the university community, informing teachers and students from departments that belong to the STEM spectrum.

Many people have expressed their interest for the Coaching circles and after organising the first round of sessions with the participation of 10 women, with the organisation of morning and afternoon sessions in some cases, we tried to contact the rest of the women that expressed their interest to involve them in the 2nd round of sessions. This procedure was successful as we managed to recruit 6 participants that remained committed and attended actively the 3 sessions organised.

We believe that the recruitment strategy we followed has served the scope to inform and engage as many people as possible to the second piloting phase. Also, we have managed to inform our network once again about this project and to demonstrate regular activity and results within the project.

Overview of Participants

Participant	Background information
Participant 1	Studied Natural sciences and holds MSc in “Didactics in Natural Sciences, Informatics and Computer Science, Mathematics and Engineering Science (S.T.E.M. in Education -S.T.E.M. in Education). She is a STEM Advisor & ICT instructor and currently the main instructor/trainer of the programme "Annual training-specialization program for trainers in the STEM".
Participant 2	Studied Agriculture, holds an MBA in Economics and currently works as a researcher in CERTH (Centre for Research and Technology Hellas).
Participant 3	Physicist, holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Medical Physics, a Doctorate in Informatics, a Postgraduate Diploma in Informatics in Education and a Certificate of Postgraduate Training in Open and Distance Education. Since October 2017 she is a Researcher and Laboratory Teaching Staff at the Department of Education and Social Work of the University of Patras (at the Laboratory of Computers and Educational Technology).
Participant 4	Dentist, holds an MSc in Endodontics. She has a Dental office and works in parallel as a research associate in National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.
Participant 5	Studied Physics and holds a PhD in “Theoretical Physics” from the Imperial College of London. She is a member of the “Hellenic Education Society of S.T.E.M.” (E3STEM). During the last 5 years she has been devoted to the raise of her children and the care of her elderly mother.

Participant 6

Studies Medicine and is a volunteer in Hellenic Red Cross.

The Format and Process of the Coaching Circles™ in Greece

Session	Date	Number of Participants	Tools Used/Comments
1 st	20/10/2021	6	Soft skills assessment – start Supporting PPT Discussion rounds
2 nd	5/11/2021	6	Supporting PPT Discussion rounds
3 rd	1/12/2021	6	Supporting PPT Flow Theory Discussions rounds

Additional Information

As mentioned in the introduction of the report, the sessions of the 2nd piloting phase of the Coaching Circles were implemented online. We have used Doodle polls for the arrangement of our 3 sessions and the participants were very devoted and punctual to our meetings.

Regarding the division of the material to the 3 sessions, we have followed the instructions of the Facilitator Guide and made some adjustments to the structure and time allocation to each topic, that were decided on the basis of our experience from the 1st round of piloting.

1st session:

In the first session the participants were familiarized with the project and its objectives. The trainer has presented the project roadmap and made reference to the activities and outputs that have been achieved so far.

Next the trainer has made a brief presentation of the Coaching Circles™ methodology and the steps for achieving the completion of the 2nd piloting phase, introducing the participants to the next steps of this and the consequent sessions. With reference to the importance of the soft skills development, the participants have filled the soft skills evaluation form. In correlation to the project presentation, the trainer has presented the E Coaching programme and the participants had to reflect on their own needs and the usability for them, as well as to ask any question regarding the content, usability ect. Then the trainer took some time to present some general rules for the sessions and communication between the participants, focusing on how we should provide feedback to the other participants, what to avoid ect. as well as made reference to the confidentiality rules.

During the middle of the session, the participants took some time to introduce themselves to the group and provide some reasons why they were interested to participate in the Coaching circles, their expectations ect.

The trainer made a short introduction to the tools provided, starting with the NLP and the Questioning technique.

At the end of the session we had a short Q&A with the participants and they were asked to fill in the evaluation form.

2nd session:

In the second session, the trainer focused on the presentation of the rest of the seven tools, while after the presentation of each tool the participants were requested to contribute by taking different roles in a Circle discussion. The participants were asked to present their thoughts, or share a relevant experience with the group, and also they were asked to provide feedback to the interventions made by other group members in order to enhance interaction and communication. Also, the participants were asked to practice and thoroughly examine the tools on their own time after the session and write their queries and thoughts to be discussed in the final session.

Also, in this session we decided to provide some additional information about the NLP and the Questioning technique and to practise more with the participants on our remaining time. This technique has raised the interest of the participants in the 1st piloting and we have received many questions and requests from them to elaborate more and practise within the group. Participants from the second piloting have also expressed a great interest about the technique and were willing to practise more within the group.

At the end of the session we had a short Q&A with the participants and they were asked to fill in the evaluation form.

3rd session:

At the third session the trainer started by presenting further development tools and techniques, the Start, Stop, Continue, Change model, the Smart Technique ect. Also, we took the initiative to present some valuable links and resources where the participants could search for more information and practice on their own the soft skills development. The rationale beyond that was to show them that their own development is a continuous procedure that requires time, persistence, practice and repetitiveness.

During the second part, following from the previous session, the participants were asked about the tools or techniques that they wanted to be more analyzed by the trainer in order to have a round discussion on that.

In the Q&A of the last session each participant took some time to express their own thoughts about the Coaching circles and how they experienced their participation in the sessions. Afterwards the trainer had some closing remarks and asked the participants to fill in the evaluation form for the session as well as the soft skills evaluation form after the completion of the Coaching Circles.

Impact of the Coaching Circles

Session Evaluation Forms

A Session Evaluation Form was completed by participants at the end of each of the Circle sessions. This included asking the participants about their expectations, the methodology and what they found most useful about the session. An overview of responses can be found below:

Session 1 – 20th October 2021

Expectations for the session?

- Meet other women with similar interest and share thoughts, exchange opinions
- I do not know what to expect I have participated to gain a new experience
- To learn more about the FEMSTEM project as I am a STEM instructor, and I would like to get some fresh ideas
- What is the FEMSTEM programme, the Coaching circles methodology and how they can help women in their professional career
- I would like to understand more about today's situation for women as professionals and to see if further development has been achieved
- I expect to learn some new things that will help me with my professional career

3 main things to take away from the session:

- Each woman has a story to tell, no matter how successful she is, Women empower women, Women can be as successful as men
- Soft skills evaluation really put me into thoughts, I want to learn more about the stories of the other participants, I liked FEMSTEM programme
- Coaching circles methodology, the rules on how to give advice to others, the questioning technique (although I did not understand much)
- NLP, soft skills, the programme was nice in general
- The questioning technique was very interesting. Can't wait to see more of the training.
- At the moment it is vague to me how those relate to STEM. I think the information provided would be useful for women in any sector

Session 2 – 5th November 2021

Expectations for the session?

- To come closer to the other participants and discuss more. This connection is more interesting to me than theory
- I would like to receive more information about the questioning technique because I really enjoyed observing how a conversation can really change if you ask some questions that can clarify the purposes of the interlocutor
- Learn more about the story of the other participants
- More information about leadership skills and managing conflicts within the working environment
- To practice more the questioning technique

-To develop more the soft skills

3 main things to take away from the session:

- How to cooperate within a group and how to give advice without being direct.*
- Stories from the participants. It is wonderful to reflect with others and it makes you feel more confident to know that your problems are not so rare or complex.*
- Questioning technique was my favourite part. Other tools and models were nice too and it was fun to practise them with other people.*
- For sure I have understood how different perspectives can determine relationships, cause conflicts ect. It is important to remember that every day and try to be in others' shoes in order to avoid taking this personally or overreact.*
- Group activities and discussions. Also, I keep thinking about the soft skills evaluation. I have never considered to assess my own capacity in the different skills and how important is to develop some aspects of yourself more.*
- All the tools. They were nice and I enjoyed the practice.*

Session 3 – 1st December 2021

Expectations for the session?

- I would like to see how coaching circles can be implemented within the employees of our company*
- To summarize all the tools and understand how those can be adopted in everyday routine*
- I am interested to see the modules that were mentioned. I am more used to learn by reading and training is too fast for me*
- I liked the communication we had as a group and I would like to have more discussion in the last session*
- To share thoughts and exchange opinions with the other women. With many of them we are in the same age and have similar concerns. I felt like talking to a friend.*
- I would like to receive info about the possibility to have sessions within enterprises.*

3 main things to take away from the session:

- Enjoyed discussions, took some interesting ideas that can apply within my group and in personal relationships*
- The FEMSTEM programme for sure. I will talk to other women about that as I believe it is very useful. I have read some of the modules and now I can understand more about the tools and techniques that were shared within the training.*
- Many things: questioning technique, how to organize your thoughts and leave behind what does not matter, SMART model.*
- I will remember for sure the stories of the other women. I felt very released to hear that other women in my age have similar thoughts and concerns. I had some really bad experiences in my professional life and now I feel more encouraged.*
- I enjoyed all the group activities and I would like to have more*
- Exchange of advice and experiences. To be honest the way we give advice to each other in our lives is usually very direct and instructive. The sessions were quite different and I liked seeing other ways of thinking.*

Conclusions

The participants seem to be satisfied and enjoyed the Coaching circles session. A lot of them have shown a great interest about the FemSTEM project in general, the Coaching Circles methodology and the potentiality to apply the training within their group, enterprise ect. Also, they have expressed their interest on the E- Coaching programme after we presented them

the main contents and asked them to explore it at their own pace.

Regarding the participants expectations from the sessions, it seems that nearly all of them came to the sessions ready to share their stories and to learn about and from the other group members. Discussions were very interactive and in some cases it was hard for the trainers to manage time and moderate as the participants were really seem to enjoy it. The questioning technique was one of the favourite tools for many of the participants and we believe it was helpful that we devoted some additional time.

This group of participants had a higher average age that the one of the 1st piloting, and the experiences shared were more representative of the imbalance between women and men in the STEM sectors. We are very satisfied with the fact that participants felt comfortable and interacted within the group and also that they found common ground with each other.

In the overall, the sessions have given to the participants very important stimuli that will help them to create their own pathway for self-development.

Final Evaluation Form

A Final Evaluation Form was completed by participants at the end of the final Circle session. This included asking the participants the usefulness of the session and how the sessions have helped them in thinking about the next steps to developing in the STEM sector.

Please insert the collated results from the final evaluation forms in the table below:

				
Were the Coaching Circles™ useful for your soft skills development and goal setting?			4	2
Do you have a clear idea on your next steps after these sessions?			1	5
How useful was the peer support, and small group environment, to help you with self exploration?				6
Would you recommend the FemSTEM Coaching Circles™ to a friend?				6

How have the Coaching Circles™ helped you to think about moving forward with your career in STEM and/or your soft skills development and you next steps to achieve this?

-I was the youngest in the group and I was very inspired by the other participants and the stories the shared. I want to follow a career in STEM and I believe nowadays this is more achievable that it was in the past.

-The soft skills evaluation really made me think of the things I need to develop more about myself.

-I think I need to develop more some of my soft skills as I feel that this makes you more eligible at work. But this is an everyday process and cannot be achieved within 3 sessions.

-I already have a career in STEM and I would like things to be easier for the young women. I went over several difficulties in my first steps and I hope that the attitude towards women has changed nowadays.

-The first step of the plan I could think of is to read the modules from the E-Coaching programme and learn more about the tools that were presented in the sessions.

-I will try to see the different perspectives in every situation with the hope that this will help me develop more healthy and balanced relationships in my life.

Any further comments or notes regarding the Circles?

-I will recommend this programme to colleagues and friends

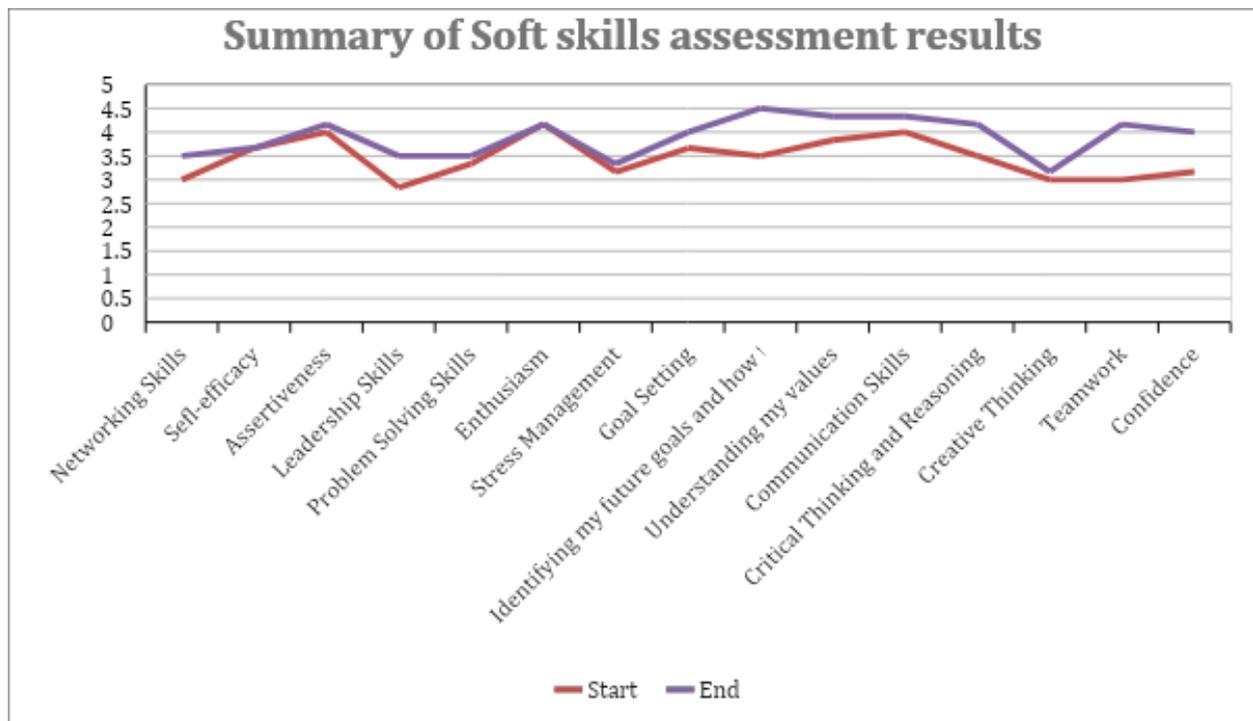
-It was a nice experience, but 3 sessions are very limited time to see any changes

-I would suggest creating groups within the working environment of enterprises or organisations and apply this method

-I keep thinking that the context and methodology are useful for any sector, not only STEM

Before and after the sessions of Coaching Circles the participants were asked to fill in a self-evaluation about the soft skills. The aim was to discover which aspects were needed to be addressed by the training and also to see whether we have achieved to develop any of the soft skills or their general confidence after the 3 sessions.

The results from the participants of the first piloting in Greece are depicted in the following graph:



From the graph it is obvious that the participants have evaluated the majority of their soft skills higher after the completion of the 3 sessions of Coaching circles. This is also related to the improvement of their confidence, which is a major aspect for evaluating themselves higher regarding the other skills.

TESTIMONIALS

During the final session evaluation, participants were asked to leave testimonials, anonymous or accredited, about the sessions they had taken part in. Their answers are depicted below:

Name: Anonymous

Took part in:

Piloting of the Coaching circles in Greece.

How did you find the sessions?

I had a really good time. My purpose was to discuss and exchange ideas and experiences with other women in the field, to be supported to achieve interpersonal skills in the field of STEM, to be provided with tools and techniques to develop her self-confidence and qualifications and to be aware with the RRP-based tools (Recruitment, Retention-Retention, Progression-Promotion) .

What did you enjoy most from these sessions?

Coaching circles methodology matches learning with interaction and practise within the group very successfully. I enjoyed group activities a lot!

What will you take away and implement after these sessions?

I think that my purpose for taking part in the sessions was fulfilled, I learned so many interesting information and met people with whom I enjoyed discussing.

Any further comments?

Congratulations about this wonderful initiative!

Name: Anonymous

Took part in:

Piloting of the Coaching circles in Greece.

How did you find the sessions?

I am very satisfied by the sessions and the trainer were really trying to fulfil everyone's' expectations. Time is limited and I would like to attend more sessions with the same group as we have developed nice connection.

What did you enjoy most from these sessions?

I feel very encouraged by the fact that many women have the same concerns as me about work life balance, especially family life and motherhood.

What will you take away and implement after these sessions?

I will try to practice with the tools and I hope to see some results.

Any further comments?

It would be nice if more women had the chance to experience Coaching circles. I think it is suitable for all sectors, not only STEM.

Facilitator's Comments and Recommendations for improvement

Overall, the 2nd piloting of the Coaching Circles was very different than the 1st. The second group had a higher average rate and the participants had some similar characteristics and experiences (family status, professional status) that helped them develop interaction more easily. The discussions were the participants' most favourite part and sometimes we had deviations from the initial time plan. Although the sessions themselves took a lot of their time and needed their exclusive attention, they have examined all the material and additional resources in their own time after sessions, and provided feedback as requested. What was mentioned by the majority of them was that the Coaching Circles were an opportunity for them to have some personal well spent time, to interact with other women and share opinions and experiences.

The topic that was very interesting to the participants was NLP Questioning Technique, to which we have devoted some additional time after the interest shown in the first round of sessions. The participants were thoughtful about the advice giving do's and don'ts as they are more familiar with direct advising in their everyday life. Most of them tried to apply this different model that we have presented within the group. They have acknowledged that when avoiding direct advising, different and more positive results can occur and that it requires a lot of effort to withdraw from this advising model. Also, they were very impressed with the several paradigms of the questioning technique and most of them had reflected on several incidents that have happened in their everyday life that could have a very different result if they had handled it otherwise.

For us as trainers, the material provided by the Facilitator Guide was very helpful and explanatory and could easily be applied by trainers with less experience. The templates provided made our work easier and the only process within the Coaching Circles that required individualization and creation of a strategy was the recruitment process. The changes that were applied after the first round based on the participants' feedback were that we devoted more time on the Questioning technique, trying to provide more paradigms and to practise on different discussion models with different interlocutors. It seems that this decision was appreciated by the participants and worked also as an ice breaking activity. Also, more time was devote to discussions, the group was smaller that the one on the 1st piloting, and participants had more time to speak about each topic.

Conclusions

The second piloting of the Coaching Circles in Greece was very interesting for the participants and the trainers too. The recruitment process has really boosted the dissemination strategy of the project in the case of Greece, already from the 1st piloting and we have managed to involve and engage an adequate number of participants to the procedure.

The tools, practices and group activities were presented and applied easily to the group, which had very good connection due to similar characteristics of the participants (age, family status, professional status). The most interesting and useful tool, to which we have devoted some extra time, was the NLP Questioning technique. The participants asked several questions and for this reason we have provided many different paradigms and called them to practice as interlocutors in hypothetical discussions within the group

In the overall, the participants have evaluated very positively the whole methodology of the Coaching Circles and the implementation of the sessions. Regarding the enhancement of the soft skills of the participants we cannot claim that they have developed them within the 3 sessions. But the interaction within the group, the processing of new and useful information with full applicability in their personal and professional life has had a valuable impact on them and they have uplifted their confidence. As a result, the participants have assessed better their own skills at the end of the 3 sessions.

Annexes

List of evidence needed from each partner to be sent with the national report

- Signed attendance list from each Circle session – or declaration of attendance signed by the legal representative.
- Signed Programme Agreement from each participant – or completed via google form.
- Soft Skills Evaluation (at the start of their journey) - or completed via google form.
- Soft Skills Evaluation (at the end of their journey) - or completed via google form.
- Session Evaluation Forms (from each session) - or completed via google form.
- Final Evaluation Form (from the final session) - or completed via google form.
- Photos from each Circle sessions – or screenshots.
- Evidence of recruitment activities (e.g. screenshots on online advertising, social media, press releases etc)

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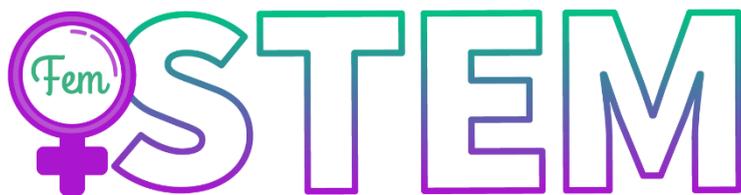
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