

FemSTEM Coaching Circles™

National Report

Partner Organisation: Women in Digital Initiatives Luxembourg Asbl (WIDE)

Partner Country: Luxembourg

Pilot: 2



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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Introduction

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, we organised our first pilot of the FemSTEM Coaching Circles online in English. We were planning to organise our second pilot session in a face-to-face format but unfortunately, taking into account the increase in covid cases in the period and the subsequent low registration for an in-person format, we decided to organise this 2nd pilot online again, this time in French. Our 2nd round of Coaching Circles started on the 8th of November from 1 pm to 3:30 pm with 3 participants despite having 6 women registered. One participant never came back after the first session, despite her positive evaluation, and we were never able to reach her again. The second session was held on the 29th of November within the same timeframe with 2 participants. The last session held on the 16th of December welcomed 2 participants. The participants were also in touch throughout the programme and until the Christmas holidays on the Slack group that WIDE had created for the occasion.

As we have seen many times during this health crisis, involving people in an online programme over several weeks can quickly turn into a cat and mouse game. This second pilot session of the Coaching circles was unfortunately no exception with only 50% of participation (3 participants out of 6 registrations) and one participant did not come back after the first session despite having signed her learning agreement. However, with regards to 2 other participants, they were committed and remained very active and motivated between the 3 sessions.

This second pilot, although it did not gather the number of participants hoped for, proved to be a great success in Luxembourg. The 2 participating ladies were very eager to learn from each other, and it was interesting to see their progress and development over the course of the 3 weeks. In the end, thanks to this small group, the discussions were more in-depth and the women had more time to express themselves. The discussions were rich, full of kindness and listening and the participants discovered new things about themselves thanks also to the different exercises used.

Recruitment

Before starting the promotion of the FemSTEM coaching circles' first pilot session, we contacted and invited women from our WIDE network individually by email, via LinkedIn or in-person to share with them the opportunity to participate in our pilot programme. We also contacted the women who participated in the first phase of the project (IO1) and who said they were interested in the future test of the platform and programme, as well as the women who have been interviewed for the testimonials on the platform (IO2). We also contacted the French-speaking registrants of the first pilot who had not been able to participate in the end to invite them to our second pilot.

In order to recruit participants, WIDE put out a call on all its social networks on 15 June 2021, including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. A visual was also created specifically to promote the FEMSTEM Coaching Circles. Attached are screenshots and links to the posts made on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CQJHdHoBcx3/>



<https://www.instagram.com/p/CQ8kaz6og78/>



wide_ju · Abonné(e)

wide_ju Last Monday, we started our online Coaching Circles programme!

Set up in the framework of our FemSTEM , Erasmus+ project, this pilot session aims to improve soft skills through personal development training methodology.

#softskills #onlinetraining #womenintech #STEM #selfreflexion #selfdevelopment

28 sem

4 J'aime

5 JUILLET 2021

Ajouter un commentaire... Publier

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CVK8FVsiUci/>



wide_ju · Abonné(e)

wide_ju Get ready for our second FemSTEM Coaching Circles pilot session! 📢

Join us on Monday, November 8th, 15th and 22nd, in the afternoon from 13:00 to 16:30, in Luxembourg (location will be communicated soon) 📍

During these 3 sessions in French, you will be able to join the Coaching Circles programme to improve your soft skills, build your confidence and self-efficacy through self-reflection exercises 🧘

👉 Check out our link in bio to register!

#coaching #womenempowerment #womenentrepreneurship #softskills #training

13 sem

4 J'aime

18 OCTOBRE 2021

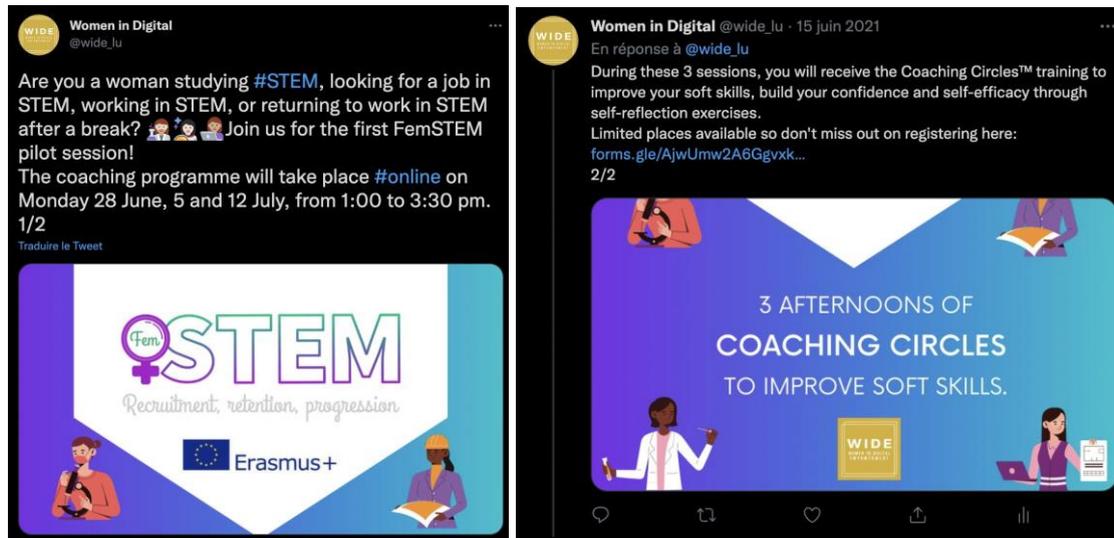
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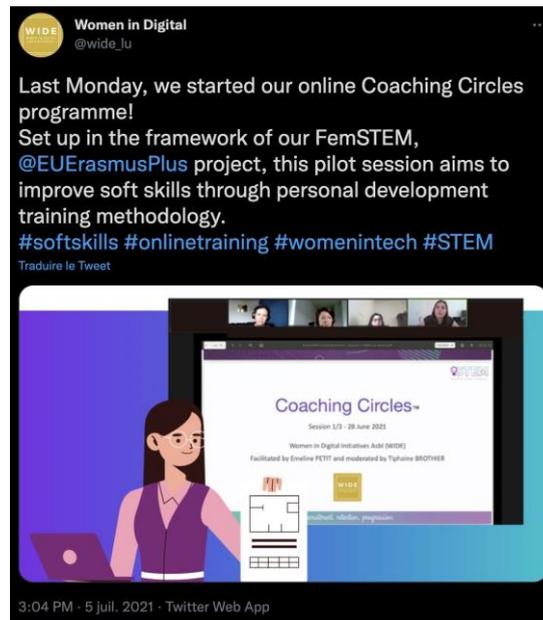


Twitter:

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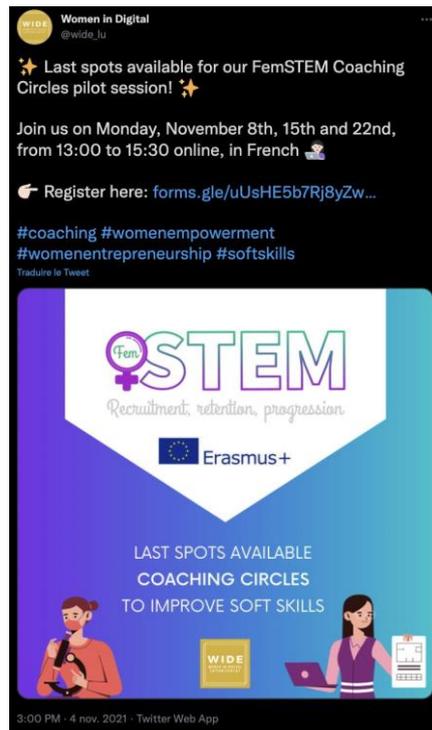
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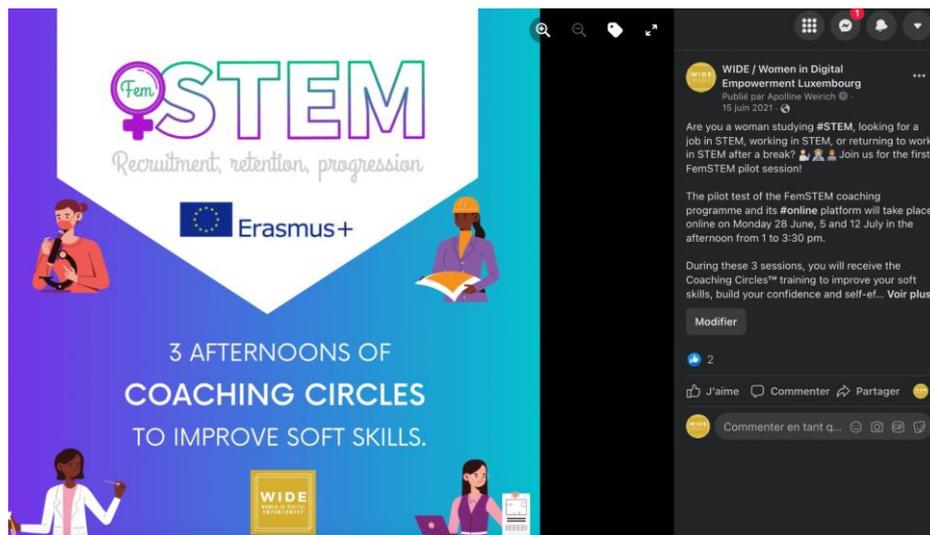


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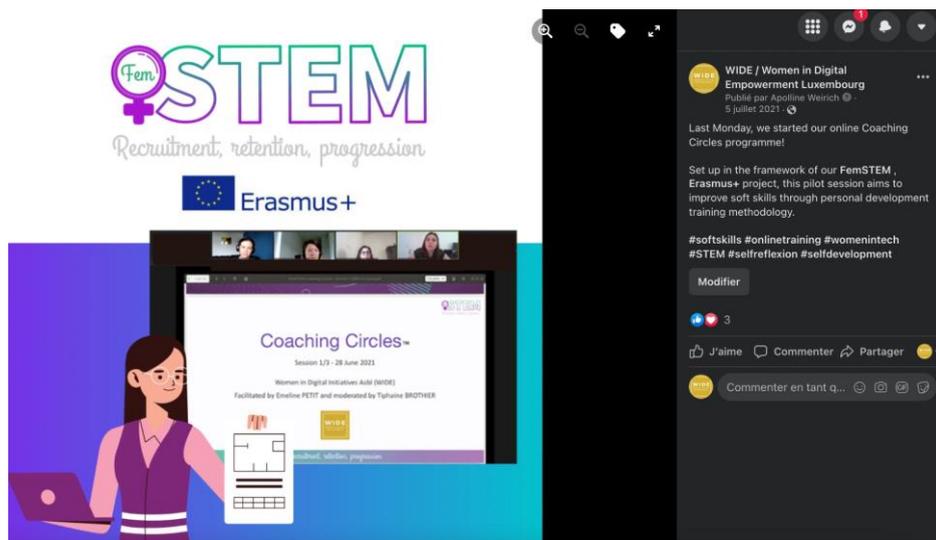


Facebook:

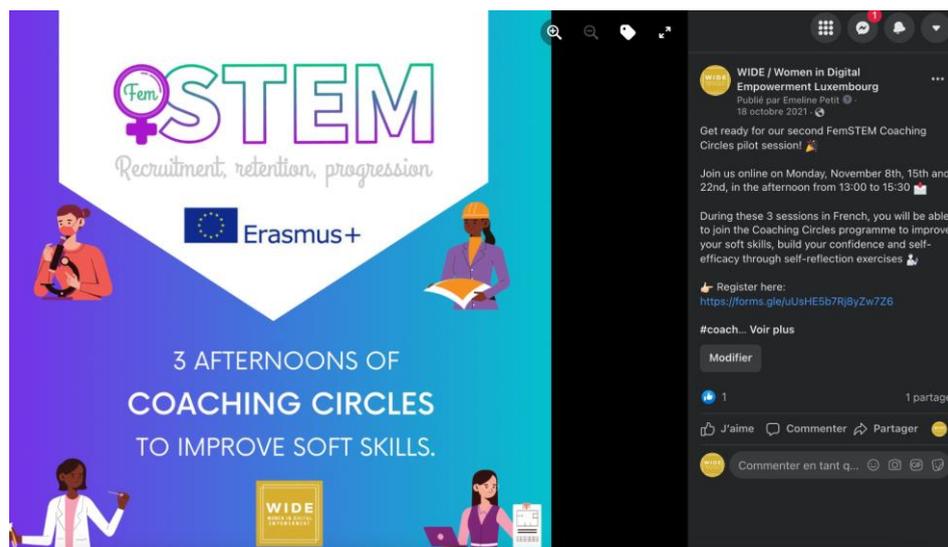
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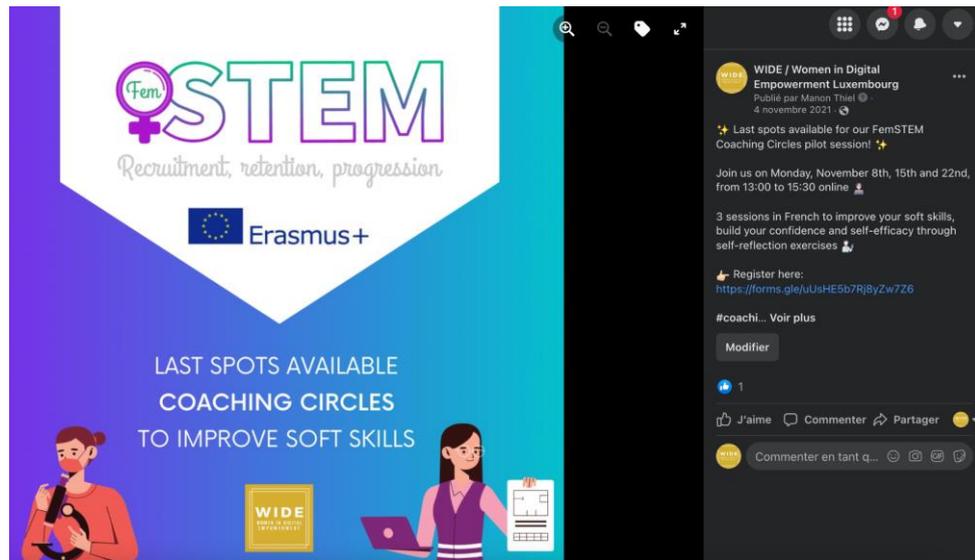
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LinkedIn:

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<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6817800596024766464>

Women in Digital Empowerment (WIDE)
1 558 abonnés
7 mois ·

Last Monday, we started our online Coaching Circles programme!

Set up in the framework of our FemSTEM, Erasmus+ project, this pilot session aims to improve soft skills through personal development training methodology.

#softskills #onlinetraining #womenintech #STEM #selfreflexion #selfdevelopment

Voir la traduction





Athena Vassilopoulos et 8 autres personnes

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6855851220393893888>

Women in Digital Empowerment (WIDE)
1 558 abonnés
3 mois · Modifié ·

Get ready for our second FemSTEM Coaching Circles pilot session! 🎉

Join us online on Monday, November 8th, 15th and 22nd, in the afternoon from 13:00 to 15:30 🕒

During these 3 sessions in French, you will be able to join the Coaching Circles programme to improve your soft skills, build your confidence and self-efficacy through self-reflection exercises 🧘

Register here: https://lnkd.in/e_biTxKa

#coaching #womenempowerment #womenentrepreneurship #softskills #training

Voir la traduction

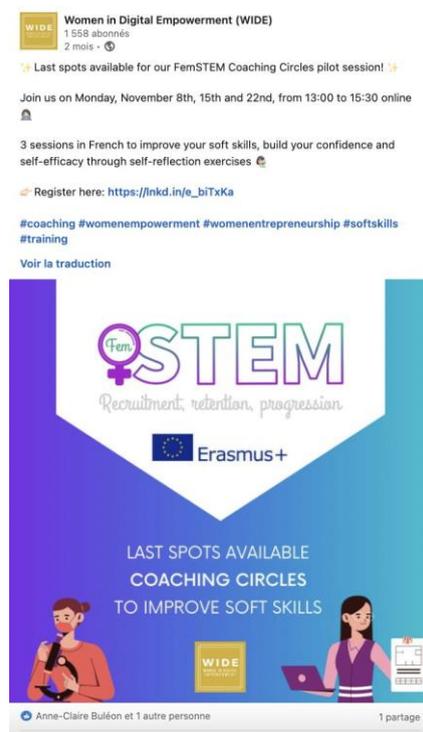




Vous et 14 autres personnes

3 partages

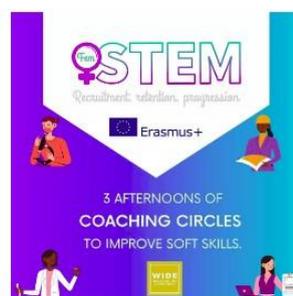
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6862025392371376128>



In order to mobilise its network, the call for participation was also made in the WIDE Autumn Newsletter. Indeed, the presentation of FemSTEM Coaching Circles has been added in the Erasmus+ projects section. Below is a screenshot and the link to the project section in the WIDE Autumn newsletter.

<https://mailchi.mp/7b4c9eeafd92/upcoming-online-activities-coaching-gender4stem-women-founders-5387434>

FemSTEM Coaching Circles



It's already time for our **second pilot testing!** Join us on Monday, 8th, 15th and 22nd of November from 13:00 to 16:30 in Luxembourg.

During these 3 sessions in French, all participating women in STEM will receive the **Coaching Circles™ training** to improve their soft skills.

[Register here](#)

If you are not available to attend the 3 sessions of our Coaching Circles, we invite you to [complete this form](#) to give your feedback regarding our **platform!**

Overview of Participants

Below is an overview of the participants involved in the pilot which took place in Luxembourg.

Participant	Background Information
Participant 1	<p>Luxembourg based, aged between 36-46, Master Degree in Engineering, currently working as Engineer project Manager in Luxembourg with between 10 to 15 years of experience (studies & work experience) in STEM.</p> <p>Mother of 2 children, she was looking for coaching to enrich and develop her soft skills. She defined a need to value her skills, to better manage her limits and stop demanding too much of herself, and to learn to better control her emotions. She said she was looking for a circle, a community to feel surrounded and supported by peers. Finally, she wanted to find time by learning to prioritise her daily tasks</p>
Participant 2	<p>Luxembourg based, age between 25 & 35, Bachelor degree in IT, currently working as a Web Developer in Luxembourg with less than 2 years of experience in STEM. (dropped after the first session)</p> <p>Originally a biologist engineer, she switched to IT and wanted to learn how to better express her points of view, enhance her skills and gain respect. She would like to achieve her goal of having more responsibility in her work and why not become a web dev trainer. Finally, she wanted to gain more confidence in herself in order to be able to navigate in a male domain.</p>
Participant 3	<p>France based, aged between 36 & 46, Bachelor degree in Management, currently working as HR business partner, with between 10 and 15 years of experience (studies and work) in STEM.</p> <p>She chose this programme mainly to take time for herself and her goals. Looking for solidarity and support, she wanted to have tools and case studies/experiences to increase her self-confidence, self-esteem and time management skills.</p>

The Format and Process of the Coaching Circles in Luxembourg

The second pilot of the Circles, in Luxembourg, was attended by 2 participants (3 during the first session, 2 during the second and last session). All sessions took place online on Google Meets. The Luxembourg facilitator was Emeline PETIT, Project and Research Officer as well as a trainer for adults and kids at Women in Digital Initiatives Luxembourg Asbl (WIDE).

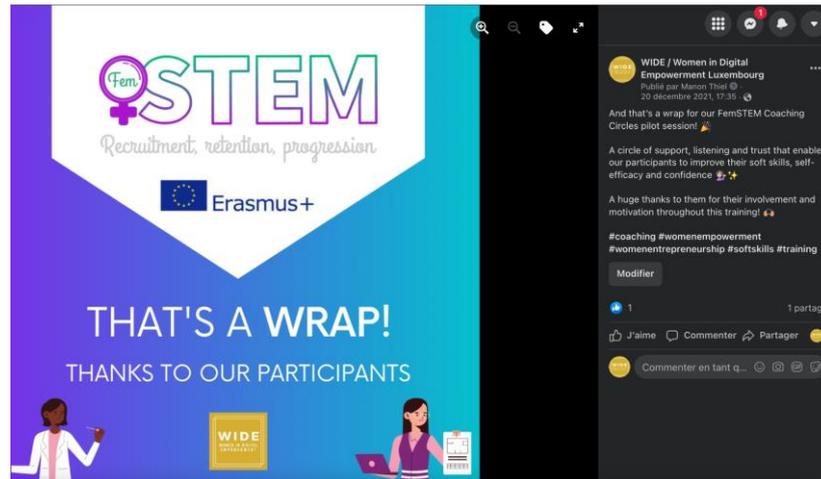
<u>Session Number</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>	<u>Tools Used/Comments</u>
1	8/11/2021	3	Ice breaker "Start, Stop, Continue Change" tool SMART goals
2	29/11/2021	2	Warm-up exercise Covey circle of influence SMART goals
3	16/12/2021	2	Mind maps SMART goals

Communication during the training:

Facebook:

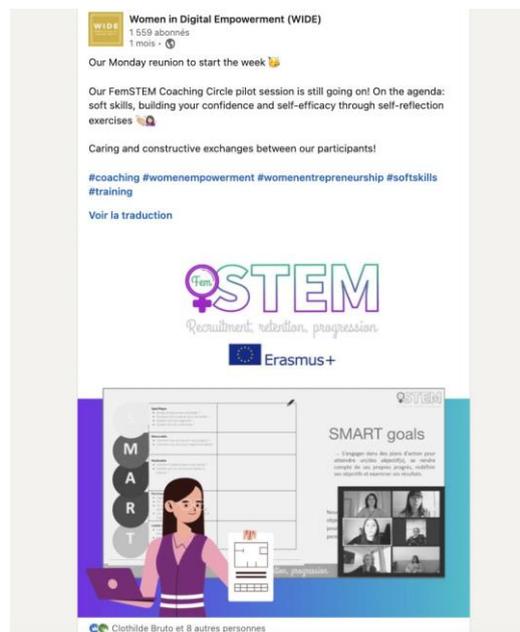
<https://www.facebook.com/Wideluxembourg/photos/4534982833244988>

<https://www.facebook.com/Wideluxembourg/photos/4611331678943436>



LinkedIn:

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<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6878734688442212352>

Twitter:

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https://twitter.com/wide_lu/status/1472968259427258375

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CW3MGy4ISXb/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CXtilQtllpK/>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Each session was prepared in advance by email or on the Slack group. Before starting the programme, the participants were informed about the rules (learning agreement) and received their learner pack, allowing them to familiarise themselves with all the exercises that could be proposed during the sessions.

In the first session, the focus was on introducing the participants, the facilitator and the moderator, as well as the FemSTEM project and Coaching circles with a precise explanation of the methodology used and questioning techniques. Ground rules were then agreed upon with the participants to ensure that they were comfortable with how the sessions were to be carried out. We organised an icebreaker exercise, the participants were asked to choose a GIF representing their mood. Then an activity was carried out with the use of the tool "Start, Stop, Continue, Change", which allowed each participant to express herself in turn. Then each participant had the opportunity to reflect on their smart goals with the support of other members of the group.

The second session was opened with an icebreaker exercise, participants were asked to choose a song with lyrics and a title that represented their current mood. While some of them chose songs that described their emotions about the Christmas period, other participants picked a song related to their current feeling at this specific day and time of the year. After discussing their current feelings and their doubts/hopes regarding their professional life, the facilitator focused on the SMART goals and first achievements of the participants. One by one, they described how they achieved it and then, guided by the questions of the facilitator and the group, they defined new steps that they wished to accomplish for the next session. Then the tool "convey of influence" was used to help the participants in the development of their journey. This specific tool was really appreciated by the participants, as they expressed during the whole training period that they use it very regularly.

Then, they once again presented the achievements of their SMART goals. The second part of the session was focused on participants' mind maps. The mind maps were to be created by the participants in between the 2nd and the 3rd session. The facilitator gave 20 minutes to the participants during the session to finish, and reflect on how they would present it to the rest of the group. To conclude this session, they were briefly introduced to the femstem.eu online platform and modules were created in IO2 by the consortium of FemSTEM so they could complete some modules by themselves after our sessions.

Each of the FemSTEM Coaching Circles sessions were 2.5 hours long from 1pm to 3.30pm. In order to create a favourable group dynamic and cohesion, an ice breaker/warm-up exercise was proposed at the beginning of each session. The facilitator used a PowerPoint presentation of the structure of the training, including the methodology, reminder of the ground rules etc. Tools and exercises were displayed on the screen throughout the session and the group was well managed in terms of timing and speaking time. The facilitator, moderator and all the participants had their cameras on the whole time of the sessions, to ensure a good dynamic and feel like having face to face discussions.

In order to encourage communication and exchange between participants, a Slack group was created for the entire period of the sessions. Slack was also used by the facilitator to contact participants between sessions and distribute information, documents and links to surveys. This was a tool to be used by participants to have direct and quick contact with any member of the circle as well as the facilitator and moderator. The participants were encouraged to work in between sessions, first on their smart goals but also on completing some exercise like a mind map or leadership styles quiz for the next session or do some research to get their own answers and help other participants to find theirs. Doing this coaching with a smaller group was also very interesting and very different from the first pilot test. The women had time to talk in more detail about their expectations, doubts and future challenges. The discussions were rich and very deep, however, we have to be careful to go deeper in the discussion not to fall into the area of therapy as we are not qualified and trained for that.

Finally, it was very interesting to do these sessions every two weeks rather than every week because when discussing the SMART goals, it felt like they had more time to develop them, implement them and see the first results.

Impact of the Coaching Circles

In order to ensure a thorough assessment of the impact of the Circles, three evaluation exercises were undertaken by the participants:

- **Session and final Evaluation Forms:** participants completed one form at the end of each Circle session and a final evaluation form at the end of the last session.
- **Soft Skills Development:** participants evaluated themselves at the beginning (Circle 1) and end (Circle 3) of the training.

These forms and feedback will provide the basis for the analysis of the impact of the training programme below.

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.

The following statements were taken from the evaluation form responses after each Circle session.

Circle 1

Expectations for the session.

- To exchange with others their experiences, their objectives
- Curiosity / see how a circle works

3 main things to take away from the session:

- Start, Stop, Continue, Change tool and Icebreaker tool with Gif, exchanges with different interlocutors
- In general, to have a positive speech/better definition of emotions
- the exercise starts/stops/continues/changes
- The human being at the centre/always asking questions rather than giving advice not asked
- Bias in relation to the changes that still exist today in society

The best part of the Coaching Circles™ so far?

- Putting the Start, Stop, Continue, Change tool into practice :-)
- Exchange of experiences

Other comments:

"Thank you for sending support in advance, it allowed me to better understand this meeting!"

Circle 2

Expectations for the session.

- curiosity, another way of looking at things
- To have tools and share experiences with participants

3 main things to take away from the session:

- Not stressing about things that are out of my control

- the choice of music at the start (icebreaker), Covey's Circle of Influence & the fact that in many ways we are similar

The best part of the Coaching Circles™ so far?

- The sharing, the moderation of the session, the participants
- The exchange part - questioning and sharing of experiences is great!

Other comments:

- Time well spent

Circle 3

Expectations for the session.

- Learning more and more new tools

3 main things to take away from the session:

- Mind map, the FemSTEM project as a whole
- Reminder on the Medicine Wheel - building the Mind Map and monitoring our objectives

The best part of the Coaching Circles™ so far?

- Sharing experiences, tools used
- definition of our personal objectives with status and follow-up

Other comments:

- Great initiative! Good use of resources, good facilitation
- Constructive exchanges

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.

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

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

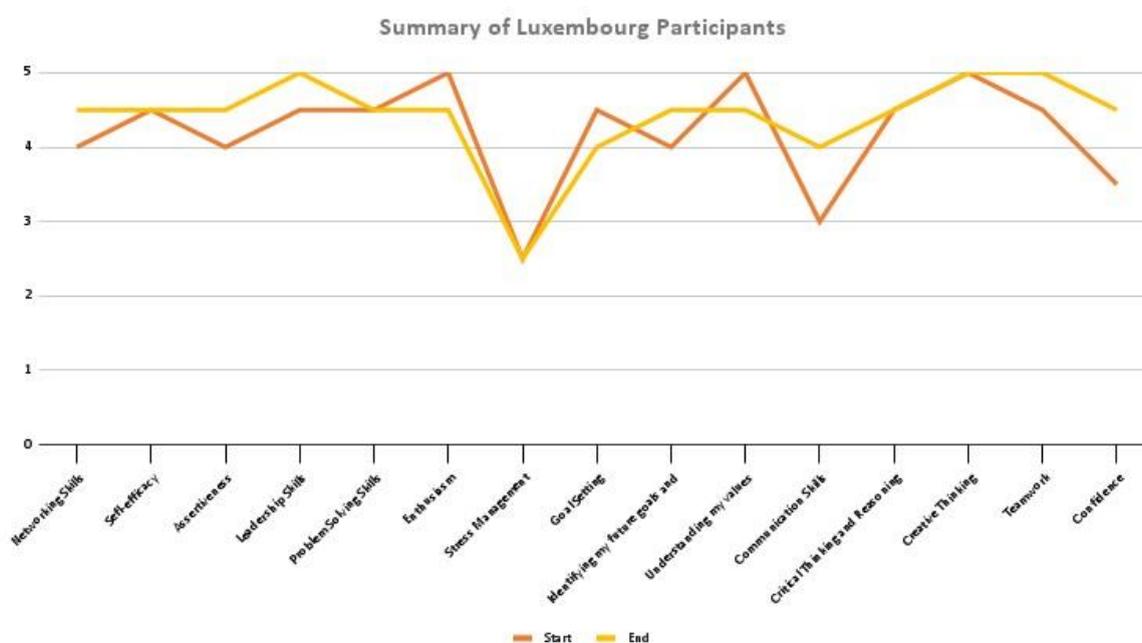
- Through the questioning and reflections envisaged with the proposed activities
- via the proposed tools and the method of questions rather than advice

Any further comments or notes regarding the Circles?

- Feedback: having ambassadors and testimonies put forward in this format is very enriching and allows you to step back and take time for yourself
- Great initiative! Tools are really easy, I have used them before, mainly for professional purposes, but hardly ever for personal dimensions, especially the ones of prioritization or the influence circles. It also adds to the circle the sharing with others and realising that many women have the same situations. I liked the fact that there was no advice given, asking good questions is really hard, but it is a good exercise. Emeline et Manon were great hosts!

SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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 and the end of the Circles period. A summary of the participants' results in Luxembourg are shown below.



We can see a great improvement in Networking skills, Assertiveness, Leadership Skills, identifying my future goals, Communication skills, Teamwork and Confidence for the majority of the participants.

Regarding Self-efficacy, Problem Solving Skills, Stress Management, Critical thinking and reasoning and creative thinking, the participants evaluated them in the same way at the beginning and the end of the programme, which partly translates into the fact that we did not focus on all the soft skills at the heart of the project or that they did not necessarily feel the need to work on these soft skills. Finally, we note that stress management remains the soft skill evaluated least positively by the participants, although this theme was addressed many times, the programme did not allow for a drastic change in this regard but rather helped the participants to plan actions in the future that would bring them more serenity.

Enthusiasm, Goal setting and understanding my value are soft skills that have been rated less favourably by some participants at the end than at the beginning. They mostly came to realise that they sometimes have trouble expressing their feelings/needs/thoughts, valuing

their skills and that they thought they could listen well but that the sessions made them realise that there are different techniques of listening to people.

In general, their soft skills were evaluated more positively at the end than at the beginning of the FemSTEM Coaching Circles sessions.

Facilitator's Comments and Recommendations for improvement

The facilitator guide was clear and well-written and structured. Some exercises were quite complicated to be put in place, especially the "NPL questioning" that we decided not to use as a specific exercise but more like an example of questions' structure to follow throughout the programme.

Longer training, maybe different steps or role play exercises for the training would have been better to master the questioning technique. The training for trainers of the FemSTEM Coaching Circles was organised online due to the Covid-19, and even though Inova Consultancy did a great job with relevant and interesting online presentation and training, the impact is still not the same as if we were in the same room working altogether. We appreciated the additional documents provided by the coordinator to help the partners mastering the questioning technique.

Using questioning techniques rather than advice worked to some extent. It turned out that participants had many questions about software/tools to use, books to read, resources to consult to enrich their knowledge, to enlarge their circle, to write CVs and cover letters... They were very keen to get advice and tips. In addition to using the questioning technique as much as possible so that they could find solutions by themselves, the participants were also asked to give advice, only when it was explicitly requested.

The three tools "covey circle of influence", "Start, Stop, Continue, Change" "mind maps" were very relevant to our sessions because they allowed the participants to work on self-confidence, letting go, knowing how to recognise oneself and highlighting one's skills. The Smart Goals used at the end and the beginning of each session in our case were very useful to the participants, it is a very concrete tool for goal planning that some of them decided to continue to use in other situations of their life.

At the beginning of each session, we have added a warm-up/ice-breaker exercise to motivate everyone and open the discussion. This was always related to their current feeling, their mood, or as a way to express a current issue.

Conclusion

We are very happy to have been able to offer this programme in Luxembourg and the feedback from our participants has been very positive about the relevance of the programme to their situation. We had hoped to be able to organise the pilot 2 phase in person but unfortunately we were unable to do so. Given the low number of registrations and the rebound of the health crisis at that time, we decided that it was wiser to organise these sessions online again.

We find that the tools and techniques used in this programme are relevant for the participants.

For this second pilot, we had the opportunity to experience the programme with a smaller group for the online format. This was a suggestion made at the end of our first pilot. The 2 participating women were very eager to learn from each other, and it was interesting to see their progress and development over the course of the 3 sessions. In the end, thanks to this small group, the discussions were more in-depth and the women had more time to express themselves. The discussions were rich, full of kindness and listening and the participants discovered new things about themselves thanks also to the different exercises used.

The Circles coaching programme tested in our FemSTEM project is very relevant to our organisation and we will definitely use it in our activities.

Annexes

List of evidence can be found in the associated Google Drive folder.

- 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 session – or screenshots.
- **Evidence of recruitment** activities (e.g. screenshots on online advertising, social media, press releases etc)

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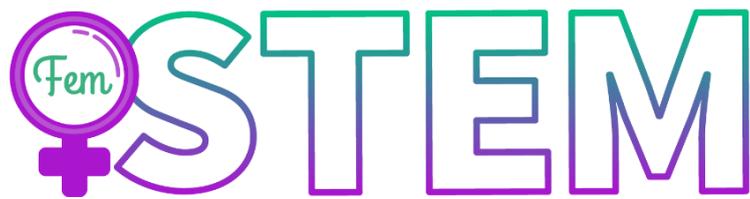
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FemSTEM

Recruitment, retention, progression



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