

DIGITS

Soft DIGITal Skills building for TCN women

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NATIONAL REPORT

AUSTRIA



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Executive summary

The research has shown a substantial difference based on the following factors:

- gender;
- age;
- country of origin.

Indeed, the situation of women, their access to labour market, educational background might vary according to the intersection of the above mentioned factors. For instance, it has been seen that TCN women enter the job market slower compared to men; but at the same time, depending on their country of origin, they are more likely to have titles that men do not have. The fluency in the language of the hosting country is usually better for men than for women, considering social norms and gender roles that might hinder their normal and ordinary access to resources, experiences and practice.

Generally, it seems that also the integration policies focus more on women as part of a familiar unit, rather than their vocational training and education. Integration Fund (AIF) has already mentioned how gender role and patriarchal norms preclude equal access to labour market and also the digital one. Additionally, often the TCN women might find themselves with scarce social support and network system that prevent them to leave the household for working. As often happens, if the woman is in charge of the childcare, the time to dedicate to jobs, education or training is lower.

The last two elements that emerged from this analysis are:

- the emotional side that consists in gaining confidence to try the chances in finding better opportunities;
- the adaptation to the digital-job market.



Strengthening women's confidence and motivation is a crucial aspect for their success in the society and at personal level. Lack of confidence leads to less interaction with the public and to give up a priori.

The access to the digital labour market is linked to skills that are developed also through exchange and experiences due to the fast-pacing environment with new skills and requirements. Thus, eventual trainings have to be up to date with the everyday needs, job-market and the pillars of digital literacy recognized at the EU level.



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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the enormous contributions migrants make to their communities across the world, as well as the need for cohesive integration support for the promotion of migrants' own health and well-being. In many societies, representing a significant portion of the 'frontline' workforce, migrants have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic – both physically and in terms of access to information and services. The adaptation of systems to allow for online service provision has been a key focus for service providers during this global health crisis, but for many migrants – and other vulnerable groups – accessing such online support can be difficult.

The European Commission's EU action plan on integration and inclusion 2021-2027 highlights particular concerns around lack of internet connection, language barriers, lack of e-ID and lack of digital skills on the part of third-country nationals (TCNs) across Europe. More specifically, many migrants that are internet non-users are at particular risk of social isolation, due to their digital exclusion. It's true that migrants also face additional barriers to digital inclusion, due to a reliance on others to translate the websites of service providers and social media platforms to their native languages. While the pandemic has prompted more innovative approaches to service delivery, digital inclusion is of paramount importance.

Although the digital sector is rapidly growing, creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs every year, the share of women in this sector is decreasing. Women and especially Third-Country National (TCN) women are under-represented at all levels in the digital sector in Europe. Women in Poland, Romania and Greece are the least likely to be taking part in the digital economy, either through employment, use of the internet, or skills. TCN women have limited opportunities to access digital skills training and to access digital employment opportunities.



Therefore, migrants who lack access to online connectivity, digital devices and skills have been further isolated during the pandemic.

Consequently, the main objective of the **DIGITS** project is to improve the digital inclusion of TCN women in selected EU countries through practical tools and tailored educational interventions to ensure a better quality of life for them. More specifically, the DIGITS project aims to improve national and transnational understanding of the digital inclusion needs of TCN women in the EU. It is important to develop practical tools and gather useful resources in terms of digital inclusion and thus social justice for women with a migrant-refugee background.

To this end, the DIGITS consortium will prioritize increasing participation rates among people with fewer opportunities, specifically migrant and non-digitally literate women, in line with the principles of the 2020-25 Gender Equality Strategy as a vehicle for the promoted gender perspective in the proposed action. Our approach will be integrated to improve the capacity of professionals and stakeholders who have direct access to TCN women on how to develop their digital skills and ultimately empower them. Also, a specific objective is to raise awareness among professionals, relevant stakeholders and the public on the digital inclusion needs of TCN women.

Each country involved in PR1 entitled “**Developing a common understanding regarding the modern digital inclusion needs of TCN women in Europe**” (Poland, Greece, Austria, Germany) will produce its own brief national report presenting the main findings and conclusions of the tasks assigned under PR1. In parallel, the output leader (Symplexis) will produce a brief transnational report, consolidating the findings of all national reports. The key aim of these reports is to identify the policy needs and define key principles regarding the digital inclusion of TCN women. Undoubtedly, this task will provide a solid base so that research institutions can extend this analysis and design relevant research at wide scale.

More in detail, the present **national report** will present:



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- 1) Summary of the desk research exercise identifying the prior learning background and existing digital skillset of TCN women in Austria.
- 2) Key findings reached through the online survey.
- 3) Key findings reached through the organized focus group(s)/interviews in Austria with professionals working with TCN women.
- 1) Key findings reached through the organized focus group(s)/interviews in Austria with TCN women.
- 2) Key findings reached through the targeted consultation with selected key stakeholders in Austria.
- 3) Presentation of selected good practices that focus on initiatives, capacity building programmes, trainings etc. targeted to TCN women, especially those who are digital field oriented and initiatives, projects, trainings etc. addressing educators and/or professionals or volunteers, aimed at advancing TCN women-related teaching practices.
- 4) National level conclusions and recommendations that should be linked with the digital capacity building programme for TCN women.

2. Desk research

The findings from the desk research can be illustrated as follows:

- ❖ Female refugees' labor market integration outcomes tend to be less favorable than those of labor migrants and male refugees.
- ❖ The labor market integration of female refugees takes longer than that of men.
- ❖ The unemployment rate of female refugees in the EU is significantly higher than that of native women.
- ❖ Refugee women often work part-time.



- ❖ Even though women with higher qualifications show a higher increase in employment over time compared to the low-skilled than is the case for men, they are often affected by de-skilling.
- ❖ The language level of refugee women is lower than that of men in the first two to three years after arrival - often an effect of a strongly household- and family-oriented everyday life. Even if the difference reduces over time, their language level remains lower.
- ❖ Traditional gender roles significantly contribute to female TCN's unemployment.
- ❖ Women are considered a key actor in Austria's migration policies.
- ❖ Social as well as gender stereotypes leave TCN females out of the digital realm. This is worsened by a lack of access to computers.

Key areas of investigation in Austria

- COVID-19 digital transformation and impact, especially to vulnerable groups such as migrant women
- Key figures and statistics regarding the socio-economic characteristics of TCN women living in the partner countries including: TCNs' population statistics, age, countries of origin, educational level, employment & unemployment rates, occupations of TCNs etc.
- Problems and obstacles faced by TCN women regarding their integration and their access to the digital life, their access to soft digital skills training and digital employment opportunities.
- Employment or other policies affecting TCN women and their integration in the digital labour market.
- Sociocultural norms that further widen the digital divide for migrant women.
- Soft skills and digital labour market training needs.



2.1 Key figures and statistics regarding TCN women in Austria

TCN make up for **35% of the overall immigrant population**, with refugee migration from Syria accounting for a quarter of this figure. (Bundeskanzleramt, 2022). While the rate of migrant women among these decreased, their share of the overall female population increased by 0.7% from 2016, amounting to 7.5%. Following the figures provided by Eurostat, the paramount reasons for migration given are „Other“ (e.g. refugee status) and family reasons. (Heilemann, 2021)

In order to paint a better picture of the social integration of TCN women in the Austrian labour market, we will take into account the parameters „language and education“ and „work and employment“, as deployed by the Austrian government.

Language and Education

In **2020**, the most common level of education completed among female third-country nationals in Austria **aged 18 to 64** was **compulsory schooling or lower**, at 43 per cent.

Although women who are granted asylum or who are beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status are more likely than men to have low educational attainment levels (10% vs 5%), they are also more likely to have university degrees. **Considerable differences exist depending on the country of origin**. Lower educational attainment levels are found more frequently among women from Afghanistan and Somalia and **university degrees** among many women from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic



Work and Employment

Labour market participation in Austria for **women** from third countries aged 20 to 64 is significantly **below that of men** ((2020: 56% vs 80%), but followed a **positive trend** until the COVID-19 pandemic. The activity rate among TCN women soared from 55 per cent in 2016 (men: 77%) to 60 per cent in 2019 (men: 81%). Since 2020, which marks the onset of the pandemic, **the rate has plunged**, particularly among female TCNs.

The **country of origin** plays a crucial role in defining the female activity rate. Even if the rate might be considered high, for instance, the average activity rate among women from Turkey in 2019 (51%) and women from other third countries (56%) is similar. However **65%** of the women from **Eastern Europe** (outside the EU) are active in the labour market. The **lowest rates** are registered among Afghan, Iraqi and Syrian women (13%)

There are also significant differences between the two genders in the amount of **time required to find employment**; men granted asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status need *two years and eight months*, whereas women take *four years and three months*.

It is also worth noting that among women who are granted asylum or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are employed in professional occupations rather than skilled trades. This mirrors their qualifications prior to migrating to Austria. Nevertheless, women's careers tend to plunge faster compared to men.

Lastly, part-time rates were lower among TCN women aged 25-49 with children aged below 15.



2.2 Migration policy in Austria

This paragraph addresses what is considered the most relevant aspect in the overlapping of migration policies and employment, which is integration.

In Austria, responsibility for integration policy lies with the Federal Chancellery and is discharged there by the Federal Minister for Women, Family, Youth and Integration. Nevertheless the whole process must -by law- be supported on a cross-institutional level, involving *local departments* as well.

The principle that underpins integration policies ranging from 2020-2024 in Austria is „support and challenge“ (Fördern und Fordern). Integration is understood as mutual process that puts on immigrants the personal responsibility of partaking in the process, while offering systemic frameworks established by the government. Additionally, immigrants are supposed to use the instruments provided by the policy measures and to perform beyond their requirements. Specifically, integration policies regard women as a crucial multiplier of the process, as they play a significant role in shaping education and values for the whole family. Thus, Austrian policies tackle integration as a gender-specific and gender-mainstreaming, encompassing the existing differences between the needs of the two genders.

The paramount aspects promoted are civic integration, language training, health and protection from violence, to foster the equality and empowerment of women, for example adding childcare options to the courses offered. Integration policies, therefore, focus more on women as part of a familiar unit, rather than their vocational training and education, which are mentioned in few of the policies analysed.

2.3 COVID-19 digital transformation and impact in Austria

COVID-19 had a significant impact on the levels of activity of TCN women, with the corresponding **activity rates dropping by 4 percentage points** for females and only 1% for males in 2020.



Furthermore, **the pandemic** has **worsened** the already existing **integration challenges** for TCN women by reinforcing traditional gender roles. Indeed, the Federal Chancellery, Austrian Integration Fund (AIF) and non-governmental organizations already regarded patriarchal structures and the gender-specific distribution of roles as a paramount obstacle in the integration of women in the labour and digital market. However, the government has not issued any COVID-19 policies that specifically targeted TCN women. Instead, the AIF, has prompted up some of the courses offered digitally, tackling issues that ranged from gender equality to labour market integration. The process of digital transformation, therefore was not developed on a parallel path with integration and labour policies.

2.4 Obstacles and challenges for TCN women inclusion in Austria.

From a social perspective, traditional gender roles and patriarchal constitute a major challenge for the integration of TCN women in the Austrian labour market. This is worsened not only by the pandemic, but by the **lack of a support circle** of friends and family that could support women in family-related tasks like childcare, which otherwise burden TCN women disproportionately. In this sense, offering training for digital skills that pair with a flexible job would be crucial.

Socially speaking, stereotypes related to TCN women and their language skills as well as labour skills result harmful, preventing them from accessing well-paid jobs and instead funneling their workforce in stereotypical, „unskilled“ jobs with lower wages that bear bad social stigmas. These aspects leave them outside of the digital realm.

Moreover, experts agreed that clarifying the preconditions for the involvement in the labor market - such as **childcare**, the impact of taking up work on everyday family life and ensuring that family members support women's employment, as well as clarifying mobility requirements - were the basic prerequisites for successful participation of women with refugee experience in a labor market integration project or program.



Furthermore, **strengthening women's confidence and motivation** is another crucial aspect according to researchers. This is all the more true when it comes to women without formal education nor prior work experience, who reported experiencing higher levels of self-doubt and fear than other TCN women.

Lastly, TCN women reported having mobile phones but no access to computers, which further hinders access to the digital labour market.

2.5 Employment and other relevant policies affecting TCN women in Austria

The employment of third-country nationals in Austria is regulated by the Employment of Foreign Nationals Act. They require a combined work and residence permit that allows employment with a specific employer (e.g. Red-White-Red Card), or free access to the labor market (e.g. Red-White-Red Card plus, Permanent Residence - EU), or a labor market authority authorization (employment permit) in addition to their residence permit (e.g. students) or visa (e.g. seasonal workers).

Additionally, before an employment permit can be issued, the AMS (the national labour market service) checks in each individual case whether nationals, EEA citizens or advanced integrated foreigners are registered who are willing and qualified to take up the job in question (labor market test).

These policies contribute to making the hiring process particularly lengthy, difficult and expensive. Furthermore, they significantly hinder the integration process in the labour market for TCN.

2.6 Soft skills and digital labour market training needs for TCN women in Austria

As it emerges from the policies analysed, TCN women need **gender-specific support** that accompanies them throughout their entrance process in the labour market. To this aim, mentoring programmes seem to be a good practice, offering a positive kind of assistance. Said



programmes need to be **family-friendly** and provide initial and ongoing training opportunities, for instance by establishing some form of child-care and training that continuously adapt to an ever-changing, fast-paced market. Support in obtaining the qualifications is also needed, with **mother-tongue counseling services** and skills analysis tailored individually.

The needs analysis needs to intersect the specific needs and situations of TCN women with the specific features of the Austrian digital labour market.

The latter requires technology-oriented skills such as computer literacy (e.g. EDV introduction courses), website development, database management, paired with emotional intelligence and adaptability. Furthermore, given the fast pace of digital work environments, self-direction and increased autonomy need to be underscored as well. On top of that, the **labour market** mirrors the five digital skills areas identified by the Digital Competence Framework (DigComp) of the European Commission:

- i) information and data literacy,
- ii) communication and collaboration,
- iii) digital content creation,
- iv) safety,
- v) and problem-solving.



3. Field research

3.1 Online survey

The total number of responses amounts to 17.

The respondents between 18-24 are 6; the respondents between 25 to 34 are 6; the respondents between 35 and 44 are 5. Their nationalities are African, Albanian, Ukrainian, and Russian but especially Turkish. Most of them (47.1%) have obtained a Bachelor's degree and are currently employed. 15 of them have both a laptop and a smartphone. More than half of them have an Internet connection, both at home and on the phone, but, respectively, 5 and 6 respondents don't. Around 90% of the respondents use the internet every day and social media and all social media. 64.7% of the participants have never attended online training (and for the few that did, the courses were related to languages). Almost half of them have used online governmental digital services.

Considering the digital skills proposed in the survey, the respondents usually recognized their importance, but less importance has been attributed to purchasing goods online or producing graphic designs.

All the fields proposed which improve digital skills were highly appreciated, but 76.5% of them are not interested in participating in the training.

Conclusion: The survey was ambitious. *Reaching out* to potential women to empower them with soft digital skills to assess their understanding/access to digital tools *through an online survey is difficult*. It is clear also considering the title obtained by the respondents. They are all *highly educated/qualified* and they have a career or a job. This might also explain the lack of interest in the training (even if it is probably not the only reason).

On the other hand, the respondents are mainly in an *age range between 18-34*: this confirms that young women have quite *good digital literacy*.



Another factor that is important to point out is that, even if *90% of them use Internet every day*, 5 of them do not have access to the Internet at home; 6 of them do not have the Internet on their phone. Thus, this brings us to reflect on which *barriers* we might encounter in reaching out to women that do not have a constant and stable Internet connection.

3.2 Interviews and focus groups with educators/professionals

The interview was held online on the 2nd of February at 12:00 and involved 7 professionals.

The **participants** have different backgrounds: three of them have worked with **UNHCR, IOM and ILO**, but overall they shared the same experience in **NGOs**. They have worked as researchers and trainers in different projects and initiatives. We have also collected the experience of a Master's student with international experience and a background in gender studies.

Their experiences range from capacity building, migration, and education with youngsters, adults and seniors; and their experiences with women cover different backgrounds: young mothers, migrants, and women from rural areas. The women involved also presented different educational backgrounds.

The projects they have been involved in regarded capacity building, SDGs, upskilling and training in different fields (soft skills, digital skills, inclusion and social cohesion, educational approaches in schools, coaching; support to people with fewer opportunities, etc.). One of the participants has implemented a series of training to teach migrants how to record videos (storyboard, voiceovers, shooting, etc.).

Another project one of the participants worked on concerned financial skills for migrants and entrepreneurship in Austria.

The general overview is that TCN women face different barriers according to their age, experiences, purposes and where they are from. Their migration history can also affect the way they interact with the hosting community and then, their integration and life goals. TCN women at a **young age** have shown already a **quite good** understanding of ICT tools, with discrete agility



in using the main functions defined as “soft digital skills”. On the other hand, **at an older age**, the range of skills related to **ICT decreases**, as much as the willingness to engage in training or new learning paths. This is also related to a scarce hope to have the chance to find a better opportunity in a foreign country. There is first of all the **language barrier** to face; **the trauma of leaving** in the country of origin to overcome; the **cultural differences** and the **assessment of competencies** to address. Thus, the hope that new skills will improve their situation is low.

It has been pointed out that many of them are highly qualified but since the recognition of the titles is arduous, this affects their active involvement in society and their earning potential.

On the other hand, a good practice for Serbian women in Austria was mentioned: there is a governmental FB page that offers everyday service in Serbian and it is an interactive platform with real-time answers in the target group’s language. This example was mentioned to reflect on the importance of **networking** and building a safe space where to ask for information (which might constitute another important obstacle in inclusion and access to opportunities).

The professionals showed enthusiasm for our project. On the other hand, they expressed some concerns about the capacity of reaching out to the relevant target group and they pinpointed that many programmes and initiatives are not able to actively **involve women in rural areas** or outside Wien. Moreover, the **material** created has to be **suitable to the target group** (referring to language, pertinence and relevance, accessibility, the vocabulary used, etc.) adapting the material to the resources available on our side (to ensure we have appropriate technological equipment according to the goals set), but also recipients’ side.

Lastly, a training course should take into account the different backgrounds. TCN women from African countries will have different needs than Ukrainian and or/Middle Eastern. The journey is different and what they are looking for might vary.

It is recommended to include:

- online safety (to learn how to avoid digital fishing, fake news and scam);
- tools and skills relevant to their jobs, such as communication (email, video calls in different platforms);



- Excel and
- cloud-based platforms.

3.3 One-to-one interviews/ focus group(s) with TCN women

The one-to-one interview involved women from Ukraine and Turkey, living in Austria for less than 1 year. Their professional background is different: there are students, professionals and currently employed participants, but also women looking for an opportunity in Austria. The 8 women are not fluent in German, but with a good level of English. Thus, we carried out the interview in English, supported by a translator.

Their age varies between 18 to 45.

The interview has not been registered as personal decision and to ease the process, and create a friendlier environment and safe space.

The participants have a different background and experiences. The ones that accepted the interview have a very different story. Especially, the reasons for living are different.

We first introduce the project, explaining why we needed their support and to “brainstorm” with them over some concepts. Then we explained the aim the project and we started introducing the concept of digital skills and soft digital skills. To create an interaction, we asked what are the activities they carry out with the computer at work, university or everyday life. But discussing soft digital skills meant to check different skills together. Once clarified the concept, they confirmed to have a good understanding of the skills mentioned, such as **online digital services** (in their country of origin but not in Austria); **Word**; preparation of **CV**, **searching information online**; **buying online**; **communication online** through emails; **social media**; **managing files and basic actions** with the laptop. But related to the job market, they **do not use** for instance **Canva** to create their CV or for preparing presentation and so on, but the majority of them ask instead for help to external sources such as friends and offices. 3 of them did not know Canva at all. The main services used are linked to **online banking, emails and communication** (Whatsapp, social media).



The first two obstacle identified when it comes to learning digital skills is that first, they don't know where to find the opportunities; second, they do not know which are the most relevant ones to learn. The women interviewed showed willingness in learning **new skills** if it is required at the **workplace**, but not outside of it or if it is not something essential for the everyday life. They recognize the role played nowadays by digitalization and the upside of interconnection, when far from home, to be in contact with displaced family members and friends was mentioned. On the other hand, they expressed their discomfort in adapting to a new system, where everything goes through **different apps**, and sometimes it is not totally digitalized. The first barrier comes from the language: so even if they are prone to install an app for different services, at the same time the fluency in German might be eventually required, to ask for help, become familiar with the system; and so on. Especially the women from Ukraine complained about having different apps for different things and presented a real life example from Ukraine. They used to have an app that collect every relevant information concerning to health; documents; services; schools; payments. Everything was collected in one platform. Indeed, one of the participants said "you can go out only with your phone, with zero papers with you".

In Austria they **struggle in finding themselves in various apps and offices**.

Another fact that has been pointed out is that, even if Austria tried to react promptly to the new influx, a lot of website or public personnel do not share an understandable language for the newly arrived women. Indeed, 4 of them stated that generally, they are more prone to use digital platforms that avoid social contact because they do not speak German or English fluently. This allows them to avoid uncomfortable situations. The Turkish participants did not encountered the same problems because of the big Turkish community in Austria, to such an extent that many of the services are automatically translated into Turkish.

Lastly, we asked which skills they consider essential in a digital world, and they included:

- navigate the different apps and be informed of the functionalities offered;
- online communication (videocall);
- online work-platforms (where to find a job, how to apply, etc.);
- online services (health system, online banking, access to school platforms, etc.);



- Excel.

3.4 Targeted consultation with selected key stakeholders

The stakeholders participated in the interview in different sessions and online due to their working schedule. Once again, the meetings were held online and without recording to guarantee to the participants an high level of honesty and friendlier approach.

Their background, in terms of age and experiences, vary consistently, but they have generally leading roles. They are coordinator or managers, working with:

- african community and dispora;
- social inclusion projects that involve people with fewer opportunities;
- Erasmus+ funding;
- exchange of non-EU citizens to provide them support in Austria.

After the latest news of Ukraine, they have all implemented activities of support, networking and job hunting for Ukrainians, but especially women (considering the mandatory military services for the men). The stakeholders are working with young and older women that often arrived in Austria with their mothers and/or sons-daughters.

The general consideration is that age matters in terms of ICT skills. So far, they considered that younger women, between 18-35 years old, are more likely to know well their way around digital skills and functions; but more obstacles are noticed around 40+. The same can be noticed regarding where they come from. there are communities more secluded than others and in which the revenue is prioritize over “knowledge”.

Older ages correspond with changes in the adaptability, flexibility, the fast-learning process and the interest. It has been clearly stated that often, the resources available are not sufficient to encourage and boost the learning process.



Among the barriers that the stakeholders have recognized in promoting digital literacy, there are:

- *language barriers;*
- long and difficult process in having their *titles recognized* and this leads to a vicious circle of accepting every job that provides a basic salary but with zero stimuli in upgrading their knowledge and position;
- *lack of support system* that can direct the individuals in the right path to follow;
- *intersectionality* (one factor of exclusion brings with it another one and a general stigma - even self-perceived - that restricts their agency).

To enter the digital market, it has been mentioned once again the obstacle met with the *language and lack of recognition of their titles*. Additionally, for the same role, the tasks and needs to meet might vary compared to the country of origin, making harder a process of adaptation. So, the different work habits and system might discourage from applying.

The stakeholders' staff has not been specifically trained for this target group or to teach digital skills. At the same time, a considerable part of their role is dedicated to training at workplace to respond to the companies' needs. But also, they have organized training events to provide better opportunities (and chances to networking) to the target group. It was not a professional training, but it comes from everyday experience.

On the other hand, they showed appreciation and interest for our project. They would be happy to participate in a capacity building training, considering that is a service that they can after deploy in their network and boost their target group's engagement and skills. On participant defined the aims behind the project as "concrete and durable".

Lastly, the project did not receive negative feedback, but its scope has been appreciated and especially the variety of language we intend to provide.

The stakeholders recognized the languages as main barrier in implementing successful trainings,



but also the ability to draft a programme that is relevant, interactive and interesting for the target group, which needs to be clearly defined to guarantee the project's success.

Among the topics to be included, they have mentioned:

- data protection;
- online safety;
- communication (via email, videocall, instant messaging, etc.);
- creation of online resources, for online purposes but also for social media;
- job-related skills such as preparation of CV.

4. Selection of 3 - 5 good practices

Presentation of the collection on local and national practices regarding the digital inclusion of TCN women in selected EU countries. This task involves all practices referring to policies related to TCN women integration in the digital society and to effective digital capacity building programmes and initiatives.

Good Practice	
Title of the good practice:	Kompetenzcheck für Frauen
URL of the practice:	https://www.abzaustria.at/en
Location /geographical coverage:	Austria
Brief description of the practice (exact nature of problem it addressed):	This practice aims at recording and assessing women's competences , knowledge and providing, accordingly, individual mother-tongue counselling, workshops to improve digital, other employment-relevant skills as well as self-confidence.



Institution/ Service Implementing agency Organization/ provider/	ABZ* Austria and Vienna Public Employment Service
Target Beneficiaries Group(s)/	TCN women
Assessed effectiveness of/ Contribution that the practice has made to the digital inclusion of TCN women, along with tangible and not tangible results that reached:	During the implementation period (2016 -2020), the annual average of women in certificated training or employment amounted to 48%, the initial target being 30%. The project was also awarded with the United Nation Public Service prize (UNPSA).
What are the conditions (institutional, economic, social, and cultural) that need to be in place for the good practice to be successfully replicated for TCN women in the context of the DIGITS project?	What seemed to be fundamental in overcoming the implementational challenges seemed to be a close-knit relationship between the counsellors and the women involved, particularly to tackle the worries related to the fear of missing the language skills necessary, lack of self-trust and lower qualifications. To this purpose, funding and mother-tongue services are required.
What are the elements of this practice which could be used in the DIGITS capacity	The individual counselling approach as well as the digital information exchange are some of the crucial elements of this practice that seem transferrable. Moreover, providing an assessment of initial competences can equip women with an initial compass to guide them throughout their choice of classes.



building programme (PR2&PR3)?	
What are the possibilities of extending the good practice more widely?	To extend the practice more widely, counselling can be provided to small groups instead of an individual basis. Courses also need to be compatible with a family-life.

Good Practice

Title of the good practice:	FiT Zentrum
URL of the practice:	https://www.abzaustria.at/en/node/40
Location /geographical coverage:	Austria
Brief description of the practice (exact nature of problem it addressed):	The practice provides participants with job counselling, digital competence portfolio, individual counselling, creation of an individual study plan and goals. Moreover, it equips women with basic qualifications in their field of choice. The goal is to support women in male-dominated jobs that are usually better paid.



Institution/ Organization/ Service provider/ Implementing agency	ABZ*Austria
Target Group(s)/ Beneficiaries	Women interested in technical and digital jobs
Assessed effectiveness of/ Contribution that the practice has made to the digital inclusion of TCN women, along with tangible and not tangible results that reached:	Since the project kick-off in 2019, 2.500 residents in the implementation area have partaken to this project. More than 85% of the participants have completed the course.
What are the conditions (institutional, economic, social, and cultural) that need to be in place for the good practice to be successfully replicated for TCN women in the context of the DIGITS project?	A crucial insitutional component that contributed to kindling the interest of big companies in taking up this project and new female hirings is the elimination of the costs for the trainees compensation for companies. This was covered by the local Job Market Service instead. This way, companies had the chance to educate their trainees to their needs and without additional costs, a significative incentive.
What are the elements of this practice which could be used in the DIGITS capacity	Providing a complete skills portfolio that includes digital skills seems to be a good take-away from this practice.Tailoring the workshops to the digital needs of companies is also a good element worth replicating.



building programme (PR2&PR3)?	
What are the possibilities of extending the good practice more widely?	Providing women with a portfolio and a page dedicated to their skills and capabilities could be a key factor to extend the project and its success, especially if it's in a digital format. Courses also need to be compatible with a family-life.

Good Practice

Title of the good practice:	Digital Pioneers
URL of the practice:	https://digitalpioneers.at/aktuelles/digital-pioneers-das-freiwillige-digitale-jahr-fuer-frauen/
Location /geographical coverage:	Austria
Brief description of the practice (exact nature of problem it addressed):	The project addresses the issue of women often being underrepresented in digital jobs or lacking the necessary skills to go down this career path. Throughout the course, participants develop digital skills, innovative skills, entrepreneurship skills and personal development skills. These are then implemented in a traineeship with partner companies.



Institution/ Service Implementing agency Organization/ provider/ Agency	The "Digital Pioneers" project was launched by Plattform Industrie 4.0 Österreich together with the Federal Chamber of Labour and Digital Campus Vorarlberg
Target Beneficiaries	Young women (17-27 years old) willing to develop their digital skills
Assessed effectiveness of/ Contribution that the practice has made to the digital inclusion of TCN women, along with tangible and not tangible results that reached:	Although not specifically targeting TCN women, a lot of the participants registered fell into that group. There are no specific figures reporting the impact of the project. However, the companies that partnered with the initiators of the project are important names in their respective fields, which hints at the succesful outcome of the project. Therefore, the project supposedly gives TCN women access to digital skills as well as jobs in the relevant area.
What are the conditions (institutional, economic, social, and cultural) that need to be in place for the good practice to be successfully replicated for TCN women in the context of the DIGITS project?	Being funded by three different insitutions, the project has a significant initial budge, although there are no precise figures to this regard. Another crucial aspect that seems fundamental for the good practice is networking. Indeed, the succesful partnerships enabling a quick transfer from education into hands-on practices are at the core of this project.
What are the elements of this practice which could be used in the DIGITS capacity	Finding relevant strategic partnerships seems to be a paramount element that could be developed in the DIGITS project.



building programme (PR2&PR3)?	
What are the possibilities of extending the good practice more widely?	As for all the projects, it is important that the programme is compatible with family duties.



5. Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis here presented pointed out the need to address the target group with tailor-made approaches.

The digital skills vary according to the country of origin, age and educational background. In the group interviewed and according to professionals, the range of knowledge and needs changed across these factors.

Generally, women between 18 and 35 years old have a good level of digital literacy and in their previous work or current work, they were familiar with carrying out some tasks related to soft digital skills. But, the recognition of their qualifications is a very difficult process; while the downgrading of their roles is a common scenario too.

Women that are more than 35 years old usually present a lower level of digital skills, but adaptability and flexibility to learn if the job requires it.

It is also important to point out that the association with country of origin refers also to the cultural diversity that define habits and inclinations. If this factor intersects with the presence of other family members, it is likely that women will take care of the household or childcare reducing their chances of engagement in educational paths.

One of the main obstacles that emerged in the research is the language barrier. Even if Austria is renowned to be a multicultural city, the previous migration influx contributed to shape the languages scenario in the public services. On the other hand, if Austria responded very well integration Arabic and Turkish in their public services, at the same time, difficulties for Ukrainians and other TCN women have been pointed out. This constitutes an obstacle: not only the service might not be available, but it can discourage any interest. Indeed, some interviewers and professionals suggested that many prefer the online services to avoid the contact with the foreign language and uncomfortable situations.



On the other hand, it is worth to mention that the newly arrived women might feel lost in navigating the system; overcoming social barriers and personal limits. This is why it is important to build a strong network or support system.

Thus, when we think of a training on soft digital skills we should take into account different factors, such as:

- different ages entail different needs and skills;
- the lack of support system prevents women to know which opportunities are available;
- the skills we want to boost should be relevant and transverse;
- the family commitment might require or immediate earnings or not enough time available to spend on training;
- lack of faith on a training usefulness;
- lack of confidence in being able to upskill.

The content that has been recommended to include is:

- online safety (catfishing, fraud, etc.);
- Microsoft Office tools;
- online communication (instant messaging, video-call, emails, etc.);
- cloud-based system;
- creating CV and establishing online presence (personal branding).



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