Global Country Report – Evaluation Feedback – Pilot testing 2 WP3

RE-FEM: Upskilling pathways for REsilience in the post-Covid era for FEMale entrepreneurs

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Content

1. Scope and purpose of the document.

This Global Country Report – Evaluation Feedback from pilot testing 2 is developed for analysing the feedback on the content and format of the testing of women entrepreneurs, provided by the participants. It also highlights some specific lessons learnt and recommendations identified by the participants in the testing process. The quotes in this report are extracted from the feedback forms that the participants were asked to fill out and submit to the organisers after completing the training.

The recommendations from the current report will be used for improvement of the quality of the content, format of the training materials, or approve the training modules developed within the RE-FEM project with no necessary changes.
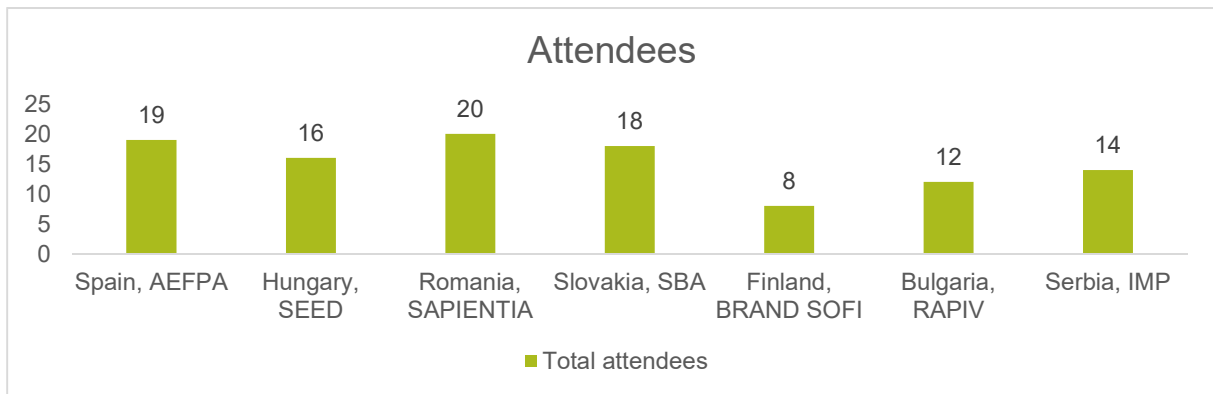
2. Methodology

The Report incorporates the results of feedback forms received from women who attended Pilot Training 2 in the seven member countries of the consortium, which took place between 17 April and 10 July 2024:

- April 17-18 in Belgrade (Serbia) with 14 participants.
- May 14 in Varna (Bulgaria) with 12 participants.
- June 4-6 in Finland with 8 participants.
- June 6 in Bratislava (Slovakia) with 18 participants
- June 13 in Transylvania (Romania) with 20 participants.
- June 25 in Budapest (Hungary) with 16 participants.
- July 10 in Andalusia (Spain) with 19 participants.

Participation can be considered appropriate to the aims of the project. Analysing the total numbers in all the pilots carried out with women entrepreneur, we highlight the following:

There were a total of **107 participants**, although 169 registrations were received from the seven countries.

Attendees

|	Total attendees
Spain, AEFPA	19
Hungary, SEED	16
Romania, SAPIENTIA	20
Slovakia, SBA	18
Finland, BRAND SOFI	8
Bulgaria, RAPIV	12
Serbia, IMP	14

The majority of respondents found out about the training through partners social media or institutional websites and direct communications. The participants were also contacted by e-mail or newsletter and a few respondents mentioned internet or friends as a source of information. Associated partners and some ambassadors were also involved in promotional activities and shared information about the event via their channels.

A total of 82 **comments** were collected from 107 attendees, which represents a total response rate of 77% and could be accepted as quite sufficient for the main purpose of this Report.

The **feedback questionnaires** were distributed to all attendees via Google Forms and/or printed versions in the language of each country except English in Finland and Hungarian in Romania. The templates used for pre- and post-trainings are mentioned as annexes in the country reports of Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Finland and Hungary and are included as a link to the Google Form in the country reports of Slovakia and Spain.

The collection of responses followed the same methodology in all countries. It began at the beginning of the trial training event, through the Pre-Training Questionnaires, and right after the end of the training course, through the Post-Training Questionnaire. In some cases, a few days were left to be able to provide recommendations on the contents of the different modules and fill out the Post-Training Questionnaire.

COMMENTS COLLECTED
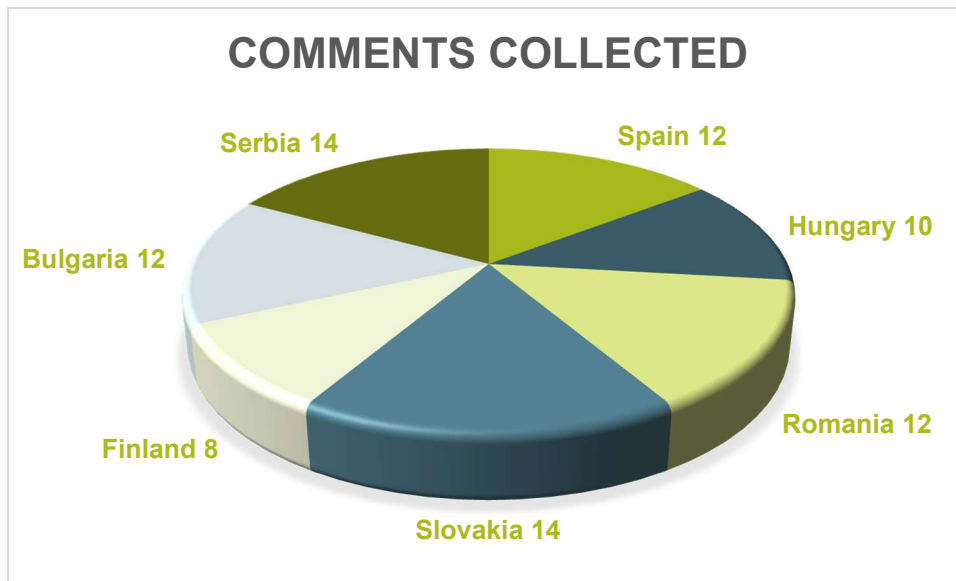
The **delivery format** has been hybrid in Finland, online in Spain and predominantly face-to-face in the other 5 countries, with a duration of 8 hours on average.
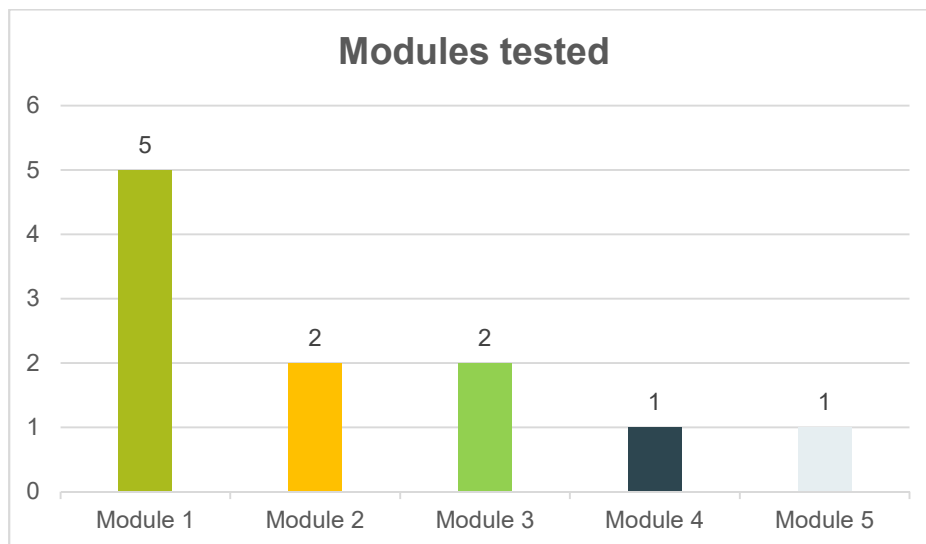

Pilot 2 Format
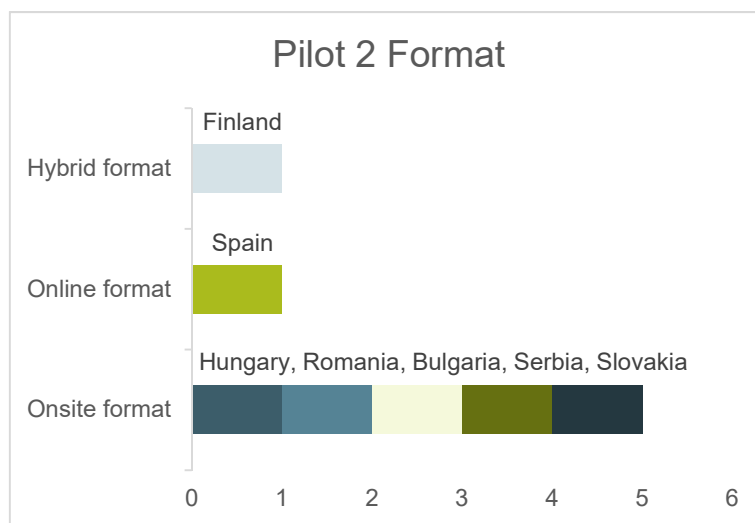
During the Pilot training for women entrepreneurs, 5 training **modules** were **tested**:

- Module 1 Digital transformation and digital preparation

- Module 2 Access to innovation, finance and markets

- Module 3 Servitization and innovation

- Module 4 Maintaining disability in times of crisis

- Module 5 Resilience, well-being and gender

The number of modules presented in each country was as follows:

Nº Modules tested

1 Serbia
1 Bulgaria
1 Finland
1 Slovakia
1 Romania
5 Hungary
1 Spain

And the Modules trained were:

Modules tested

Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4	Module 5
5	2	2	1	1

Module 1 has been the most tested, followed by modules 2 and 3, and finally 4 and 5. We conclude that Module 1" Digital transformation and digital preparation" has aroused by far the most interest among women entrepreneurs.

3. Feedback Results

3.1. General information

In this chapter is provided the general information about the participants and their overall impressions from the pilot testing and training module:

Geographical location:

In all 7 countries, we have put special emphasis on targeting rural women or women from less developed areas. The participants fulfilling these characteristics have been **38.32%** of the total number of attendees, therefore we have reached a group of women with **fewer opportunities**.
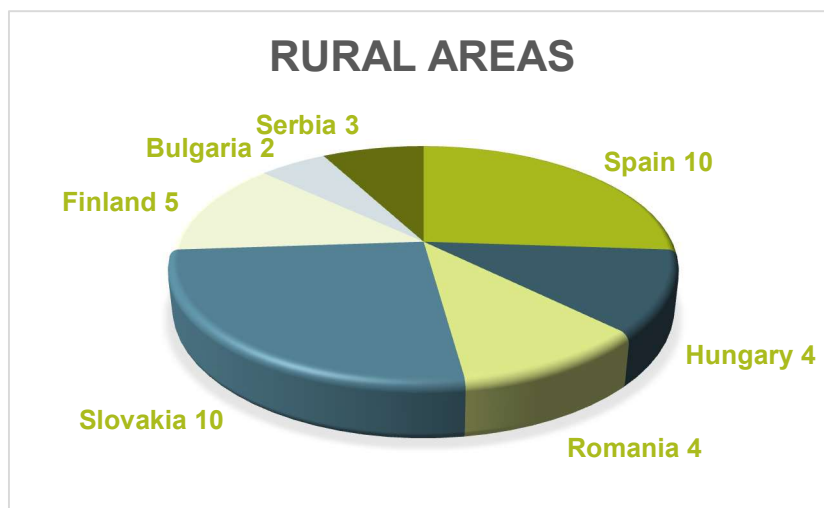

Age:

A clear majority of women of mature age were interested in the pilot, accounting for 75.96% of the total.
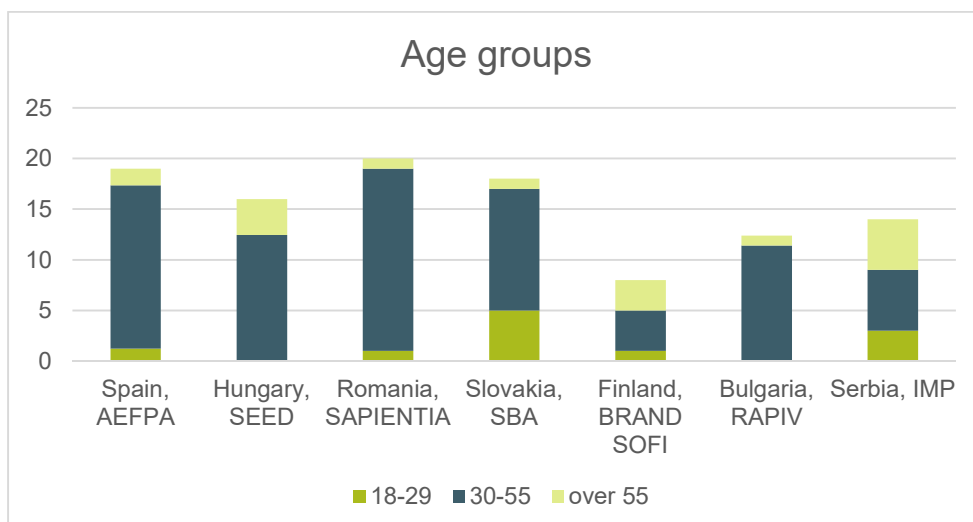
Business Experience and current status:

According to data provided by the partners, 44% of the participants had two years or less of business experience, 35% between 3 and 9 years and 22% had more than 10 years.

Regarding their entrepreneurial status, it is noteworthy that 64% of the registered women had prior experience as entrepreneurs, either as business owners or co-owners, **14% were unemployed women** with aspirations to become entrepreneurs,10% were employed but had plans to start their own business and 12% had another status (unspecified). It is noteworthy that this percentage of unemployed women also represents women with **fewer opportunities (In addition to the women from rural areas or less developed areas mentioned above)**.
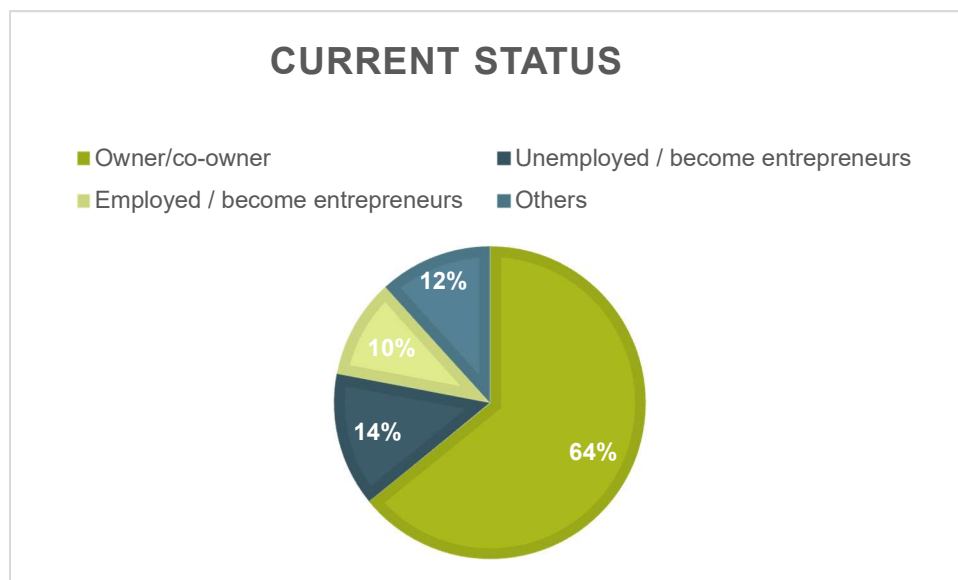
In Spain, a severely **disabled woman** has also participated, which has been another way of reaching out other group at risk of social exclusion.

Education level:

Educational levels of the participants varied significantly although the majority of participants are well-educated. We observe that 74% of them have a Master's degree or University education, 16% have vocational training, 8% have completed high school and only 1% have primary education.

Digital skills and experience in using digital tools:

Digital skill levels among the participants also varied. The pre-training questionnaires show that 25.93% of the participants have basic digital skills, 47.31% have medium skills and 17.76% reported they have advanced digital skills. Considering this data, we can conclude that there is space for improvement of digital skills representing 80% of respondents.

In terms of their experience in using digital tools, although these are frequently used in the company according to the questionnaire responses, 59% on average reported doing so, there is still ample room to increase their use.

Experience of the participants in similar trainings:

The data shows that 47% of the participants had not participated in training to improve their business or digital skills in the last 5 years, compared to 53% who had.

Relevance of the training to the needs of the participants:

The data in the post-training questionnaires reveals that for 70% of the participants the training was very relevant to their needs, 24% indicated that it was quite relevant and only 6% did not consider it very relevant.

Expectations vs Satisfaction and reaching learning objectives:

Analysing the participants' responses, we can highlight the following positive aspects:

    1. High Expectations and General Satisfaction: Most participants had high expectations for the training, and overall, they were satisfied. Many found the course useful for their businesses, gaining practical skills, new tools, and knowledge that could be applied directly to their work.

    2. Confidence Building: Several participants felt more confident about starting their own businesses after completing the training, which was one of the key goals.

    3. Networking Benefits: Some participants found the course helpful for expanding their professional network and making new contacts, though the satisfaction in this area was limited due to the online format, though it allowed for wider geographical coverage.

    4. Relevance to Needs: The content was perceived as relevant, with participants looking to improve their digital skills, business resilience, marketing strategies, and collaborations.

    5. Application of Knowledge: Many participants indicated that they were likely to apply what they learned in practice, and some expressed a desire for more exercises and tasks in the training. They found value in the AI applications covered by the course.

There are also some aspects that can be improved:

    1. Mismatch in Skill Levels: Two participants did not feel the training fully met their expectations. One participant with advanced skills found the content too basic, while another with a very low skill level and a disability felt she needed to go deeper into certain topics. They only represent a percentage of less than 3%.

    2. Desire for More Content: Some participants expressed a wish for the course to be longer and include more exercises to deepen the practical application of what they learned.

In summary, the pilot training was generally very well-received, with areas like networking and skill-building being positively highlighted, but there was feedback on improving the online interaction, adjusting content for different skill levels, and extending the course length for more practical exercises. Despite these challenges, most participants found the course useful and we could say that in general they achieved the learning objectives.

Recommending the training:

We are happy to note that 98% of participants are very likely or quite likely to recommend training, while only 2%) is unlikely to recommend the training to other women entrepreneurs.

RECOMMENDING THE TRAINING

- Very likely ■ Quite likely ■ Unlikely

2%

32%

66%
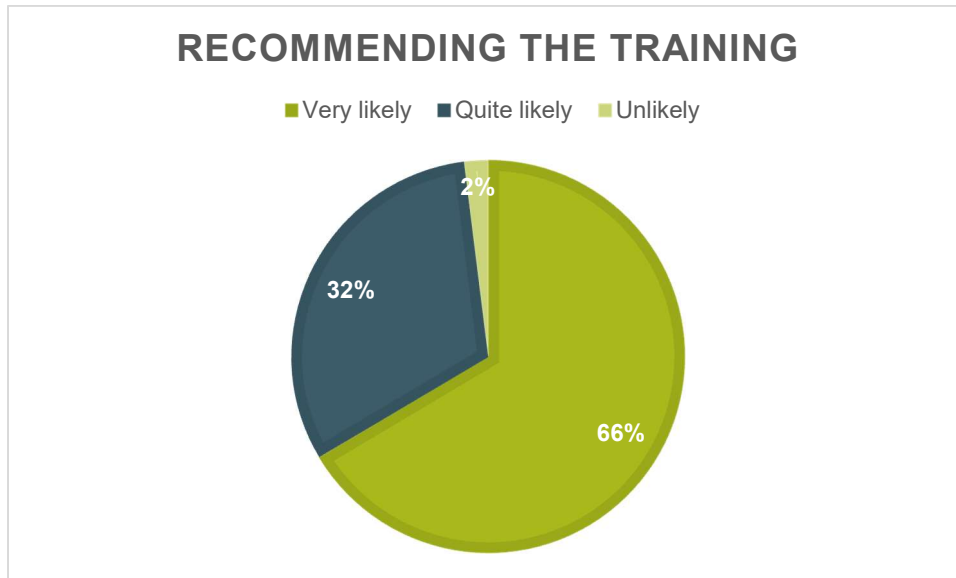
3.2 Feedback on the content

The post-training evaluation collected feedback from participants on various aspects of the pilot training in the 7 countries, including their organisation, structure, resources, usefulness, and the improvement of knowledge and skills. The overall response from the participants was varied, but generally positive, with notable strengths and a few areas highlighted for further improvement.

Organization and Structure

Participants evaluated several components of the course, such as the presentation of materials, demonstrations, discussions, timing, clarity of content, and overall organisation. Most participants expressed satisfaction with these elements. Specifically, 90% of participants agreed that the course structure, including the scheduling and clarity of content, was well organised. They found the training to be clear and logical in its progression, making it easier for them to follow along and absorb the information provided.

Quality and Usefulness of Resources

One of the course's strongest points was the quality and relevance of the materials provided. Around 70% of participants fully agreed that the resources were appropriate and directly applicable to their business needs. The materials on artificial intelligence (AI), Canva, and digital marketing were particularly well received. These topics

were not only seen as relevant but also instrumental in helping participants enhance their business operations. Many appreciated the list of AI tools and explanations on how to apply them practically.

Knowledge and Skills Improvement

The course content was designed to improve participants' knowledge and skills, particularly in relation to business maintenance and innovation. The majority of participants agreed that the training succeeded in this goal. Approximately 91.7% of participants found the content of Module 1, which focused on AI and digitalization for women entrepreneurs, to be useful or very useful for their business. Half of the participants reported that the module helped improve their business resilience. This positive feedback suggests that the training effectively met the needs of the participants, equipping them with practical tools and insights to navigate their business challenges.

Positive Aspects and Engagement

One of the most appreciated elements of the course was its focus on practical, real-world examples and interactive activities. Participants particularly enjoyed the in-person meetings and discussions, which fostered engagement and collaboration. These activities allowed them to apply the knowledge they were gaining in a practical setting, which many found valuable for reinforcing their learning.

Specific Areas of Interest: AI and Digital Marketing

AI emerged as a central topic of interest for most participants. They appreciated the thorough introduction to AI tools and their applications in business, which many found highly relevant to their own work. However, overall feedback about the AI module was highly positive, with participants indicating that it was one of the most useful aspects of the training. Another valuable aspect was the provided list of AI tools and the explanations on how to apply them.

In addition to AI, participants also highlighted digital marketing and social media presence as important topics that were well-covered during the training. Many felt that these skills were crucial for modern business success and appreciated that their questions were answered thoroughly.

Suggestions for Improvement

While the feedback was generally positive, there were some suggestions for improvement. A few participants expressed a desire for more in-depth content, particularly around AI. They felt that additional time could be devoted to this topic to allow for a more comprehensive exploration of its potential business applications. Another suggestion was to include more practical business examples and success stories in future training sessions. These would help participants better relate the theoretical content to real-world scenarios, making it easier to apply the concepts to their own businesses.

Additionally, some participants recommended extending the training duration to allow for more hands-on practice under the supervision of trainers. They believed that this would help them to better solidify their new skills. Others suggested that group tasks should be organised in a way that promotes more interaction among participants, allowing them to share experiences and learn from each other more effectively.

Satisfaction and Learning Outcomes

Overall, the 7 pilot trainings met or exceeded the expectations of most participants. The course content aligned well with their initial expectations, and they reported achieving their learning objectives. Nearly all participants found the training valuable, particularly in relation to AI and innovation, which they considered essential for their business growth and sustainability. The inclusion of practical exercises and workshops, combined with networking opportunities, made the training both engaging and effective.

In summary, the pilot trainings were very well-received, with AI being the standout topic. They were highly appreciated for their structure, content, and practical application. While there were a few suggestions for improvement, particularly around the depth of certain topics and the inclusion of more practical elements, the overall feedback was very positive. The participants left the training feeling more equipped to face business challenges and apply new tools and strategies in their work, particularly in the areas of AI and digital marketing.

3.3 Feedback on the organisation

In this section we analyse by country the satisfaction with the format part, based on the feedback from the post-training questionnaires. Feedback on the organisation of the training varied slightly by country but was generally positive.

Finland: Regarding the course structure, there were no major suggestions for changes. AI seems to interest participants, and real-life examples were appreciated. Since businesses are different and have varying needs, there is a challenge in adapting the training material so that as many entrepreneurs as possible find parts of the material applicable to their own business activities.

Bulgaria: Overall, the impressions of the training organisation are positive. The only suggestion for improvement is to organise a separate workshop dedicated to the application of AI tools, as the time allocated to this topic during the training was insufficient.

Romania: The feedback was unanimous that the training should have been longer and that they received knowledge that they would have been happy to pay for.

It was suggested that more practical business examples should be included in future lectures. From a content point of view, the most valuable aspect was the list of AI tools and the explanations of their application. In terms of digital marketing and social media presence, participants found the information very useful and appreciated the fact that all their questions were answered.

Slovakia: Participants liked the event organisation, its atmosphere and energy during the event, and the speakers, but also the interactive part, including workshops with exercises. According to the answers received via the post-training questionnaire, there are not many things participants would like to change about the organisation and content of the pilot testing event. They received suggestions about bringing hard data from the servitization process (something measurable) and more insights from experts and academics who deal with the topic of business.

Hungary: Based on the confirmation of the participants, the organisation of the training, including its duration, structure, and breaks, generated satisfaction among the participants. Although some found the room to be warm in the afternoon, they were also satisfied with the venue. They particularly appreciated that the organisation of the training provided an opportunity for networking

Serbia: Feedback on the organisation is extremely positive, given the high level of satisfaction among participants, who highlighted the excellence of the training organisation, structure, and quality of resources. Most 6 participants also confirmed that they had achieved their learning objectives. This aligns with the expectations before the training, where participants highlighted challenges in skills deficit and access to knowledge, while after the training, they expressed a high likelihood of using the learned skills in their business activities. Additionally, satisfaction with the module, particularly Module 2, as well as positive feedback about the trainers, further confirm the successful addressing of identified challenges and meeting participants' expectations.

Spain: The organisation in general was very well rated. Regarding the presentations and slides, 91.6% considered them good or very good, the time and structure of the content was considered good or very good by 91.7% of the participants, the quality of the materials presented was considered good by 50% and very good by the other 50%, and the duration was considered good or very good by 91.7%.

In summary, across countries, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive considering the reported satisfaction regarding different aspects of the Pilot organisation

4. Lessons learnt

Under this section are provided all lessons learnt and recommendations for improvement by the participants extracted from country reports.

Finland (Testing Module 1):
It is important to hold physical meetings/training sessions. Participants network in a completely different way than in online training. Participants appreciated the discussions on the subject and examples from real life.
AI as a subject is of great interest. Most participants were very positive about AI's potential for their businesses, although there were also some critical voices.
They tried ChatGPT, which was appreciated by the participants. Canva was also tested on a smaller scale and was positively received as a potential tool.
Some wanted a more in-depth course, especially in AI.
Considering that several organisations offer entrepreneurship courses, it's important to find the "little extra."
It can sometimes be challenging to attract participants to a course, but once they are there, they are very active and interested.

Bulgaria (Testing Module 1):
A more precise selection of trainees based on their skill levels in specific topics is recommended. In the second pilot training, most participants already possessed intermediate to advanced digital skills. Consequently, some

participants felt that they did not receive new information or that the provided information did not add value for them.

Romania (Testing Module 1):
The training was structured into four key modules: 1 Artificial Intelligence, 2 Social Media Strategy, 3 Online Character Building and Video Content 4. TikTok, Reels, and Shorts. Their suggestion is that it is essential to define in advance the level at which we want to hold the training, and to select the participants and trainers accordingly.

Slovakia (Testing Module 3): In general, they received positive feedback on the Pilot testing event from participants. Participants liked materials with interesting information and recommended tools.
In relation to the content of the materials, participants suggested focusing also on AI, digital marketing, and social media which they missed during the pilot testing event. They explained to participants that RE-FEM training materials contain also those topics in different modules which were not tested during the Pilot testing event in Slovakia but will be part of the training available on the open education platform. Some of the participants also suggest including even more practical information using language and terminology that women entrepreneurs would easily understand.

When it comes to suggestions for improvement in connection with the organisation and content of the pilot testing event, participants appreciated the networking part, the possibility to share their experiences, the panel discussion, and the opportunity to hear experiences and advice from experts and professionals. Some participants would like to extend the time slot to this activity dedicated in the agenda and have more time to share their experiences and get feedback from other participants and experts who took part in the event.

Hungary (Testing Modules 1, 2, 3, 4, 5):
Some of the tasks were found very useful, e.g. (1) Learning new things, (2) Resilience action plan (developing practical steps for improvement and resilience), (3) Analysing strengths and weaknesses, (4) Resilience mind map.

The small group work was very useful, although some felt that the groups should have been mixed more so that everyone could interact with everyone else. The group work gave deeper understanding of the tasks and the concept of becoming resilient.

The participants found this training good because of the new knowledge provided, the comprehensive structure and flexibility (included theory, tests, and practical exercises), friendly and inclusive community, and supportive atmosphere. The methodology applied allowed space for the supportive female energies.

The training was highly valued for its comprehensive structure, useful and practical tasks. Participants appreciated the small group work, which enhanced their understanding on resilience, however they suggested more group mixing for better interaction. The training was effective due to its new knowledge, however some of the participants required more practical examples/solutions on the topics of resilience. The methodology applied created a supportive atmosphere, and incorporation of female energies.

The participants found extremely useful the resilience self-assessment applied at the beginning of the training, however they required more guidance regarding the evaluation of the test. The need for more guidance and feedback from the trainer was a quite general observation.

Serbia (Testing Module 2):

Participants found the training inspiring, innovative, useful, and creative.

The organisation of presentations during training was well-received.

Participants enjoyed the pleasant atmosphere and professionalism of the instructors. They appreciated the interactive nature of the training sessions and the expertise and accessibility of the instructors.

The diversity of content and the inclusion of useful business information were appreciated.

The participants found the entire training excellent and received a lot of useful information.

They highlighted the effectiveness of the trainer in making finance topics understandable and for being pleasant, clear, and supportive.

Participants found easy access to all topics, especially those related to finance and innovation.

There were no specific suggestions for improvement as participants found everything excellent.

Overall, the feedback indicates high satisfaction with the training, with participants praising various aspects such as content, delivery, instructor qualities, and accessibility to topics.

Spain (Testing Module 1):

In general, they received positive feedback on the Pilot testing event from participants. They liked materials and considered the information received and recommended tools interesting.

What the participants liked most, according to the comments they left us, was the information on digital tools, especially everything related to artificial intelligence, which can help them automate and improve the efficiency of their processes, the practical exercises, the knowledge of the speakers and the interaction with them.

One participant said that she would have liked to be able to do more exercises, another suggested going deeper into image optimisation with AI and another would have liked to have even more time to go deeper into the topics presented (although this can be done with the online course). As a suggestion for improvement, one of the women had a serious disability and in her opinion more breaks would have been necessary.

The fact that the Pilot Workshop was delivered online has only been slightly negative considering that women have had more difficulties in increasing their networking with other women, but fortunately it has been very positive because it has been possible to reach the entire Andalusian territory, with a high percentage of participants with fewer opportunities, either because they belong to rural areas, or because they are unemployed or have a disability.

In addition to theory and exercises presented in the RE-FEM syllabus, at the initiative of the presenters, a video was made about the RE-FEM project, elaborated using artificial intelligence, so that women could see in practical ways how it works. Although work should be done for example to improve its inclusive language, this was highly appreciated by the women.

The sessions were very participative; the attendees were also interested in accessing the RE-FEM online course when it becomes available and perhaps some of them in the LinkedIn Group; it was good that we managed to involve a trainer who participated in Pilot 1 to act as a presenter of part of the contents in Pilot 2 and most importantly, the feedback from the entrepreneurs themselves, presented in this country report, has been very good.

In view of the above, and taking into account that 40% of women entrepreneurs with fewer opportunities were reached among the participants in Andalusia, it is considered that the result of the pilot training for women entrepreneurs has been very positive.

5. Recommendations

As can be concluded from the previous sections, the feedback received has been very positive.

The pilot trainings were generally very well-received, with areas like skill-building being positively highlighted. They were seen as an opportunity to gain fresh information to support clients, explore new business opportunities, and enhance professional and community activities.

The pilot trainings were effective, with AI being the standout topic, providing many answers to participant's questions and equipping them with the tools needed to tackle the challenges ahead. The participants also confirmed that they improved during the training, especially because they were enriched with information, perspectives and practical skills that were previously unavailable to them. During the training the participants were enthusiastic and got involved.

Based on the received feedback, we can say that the training gave the entrepreneurs confidence for their everyday life. This experience and knowledge make them adaptive and flexible both in business and private life.

In summary, the pilot training successfully met the expectations of the participants and equipped them with practical skills and knowledge relevant to female entrepreneurship. Therefore, we can conclude that the course has contributed to promoting female entrepreneurship and improving the digital skills of women entrepreneurs.

In any case, there is always room for **suggested improvements**, which are summarised in the following recommendations for the content developers of the training modules to make the necessary updates:

- Offer deeper and more complex content: Several participants expressed a desire for advanced content, particularly on AI. Training updates should consider offering supplementary modules for those seeking deeper insights.
- Focus on AI and digital tools: AI is a key area of interest. Future modules should provide in-depth coverage of AI tools, which were well-received. A half-day workshop on AI applications is recommended.

- Update AI content regularly: AI content should be updated with the latest developments and explained in simple terms, with more exercises for deeper exploration. Different levels of learning depth should be established.
- Include more real-life examples: Participants valued practical discussions. Training modules should feature more real-life case studies to better illustrate concepts and enhance understanding.
- Interactive and practical materials: Participants appreciated interactive exercises. Training materials should be hands-on, featuring best practices and clear, non-academic language to ensure accessibility.
- Improve group work dynamics: Mixing groups more during small group activities can encourage greater interaction among participants.
- Customizable content: Given the diverse backgrounds of participants, training materials should be flexible and adaptable to address the specific needs of different businesses.
- Identify unique value propositions: To stand out from other entrepreneurship courses, the training should highlight its unique features, such as specialised content and innovative teaching methods.
- Improve engagement strategies: Enhance marketing and outreach efforts to boost initial enrolment, as participant engagement is generally high once enrolled.
- Inform participants about new resources: Notify participants across partner countries when the upcoming RE-FEM online course and LinkedIn Group are available, as there is strong interest in these resources.
- Maintain physical meetings: In-person sessions are valuable for networking and engagement. Future training should continue incorporating physical meetings to foster interaction.

Based on these recommendations, training modules can be refined to better meet the needs of women entrepreneurs, ensuring more effective and impactful learning experiences. These considerations can also be taken into account for future training. Despite these challenges, most participants found the course useful and would recommend it to others.

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