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## Femme Forward

Sustainable transition pathways to facilitate entry into tech employment or entrepreneurial sector.

**Extended Document**



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the European Union

## About Femme Forward

Femme Forward - *Fast-tracking women into new tech careers and supporting successful female-led start-ups* - is a two-year transnational project funded under the Erasmus+ Programme.

Through an innovative and comprehensive training programme, women with various backgrounds will be empowered to either start a career in tech or employ their experience and knowledge to set up a tech start-up.

Femme Forward will identify, develop and pilot high-quality digital education content to tackle the current gender gap in the digital economy, enabling at least 500 women to start on the track to tech employment or entrepreneurship.

Femme Forward will offer an easy-to-use and extensive repository of tested, high-quality educational materials, available in multiple languages and on a multi-device compatible learning platform: [femmeforward.eu](https://femmeforward.eu).

## Project partners

The Femme Forward consortium comprises 15 partners led by SIMPLON.co, bringing together key industry, technology and education stakeholders in Europe.

### Full partners

1. SIMPLON.CO (France)
2. TOP-IX (Italy)
3. ENGIM PIEMONTE (Italy)
4. Tech and Teach GmbH (Germany)
5. BeCode (Belgium)
6. Big Blue Data Academy (Greece)
7. CYPRUS COMPUTER SOCIETY (Cyprus)
8. Asociatia ETIC (Romania)
9. Le Techspace (Belgium)
10. HOCHSCHULE HANNOVER (Germany)
11. Factoria F5 (Spain)

### Associated partners

1. AMAZON WEB SERVICES EMEA SARL
2. RANDSTAD NEDERLAND BV
3. FUJITSU SERVICES LTD
4. DIGITALEUROPE AISBL

### Subcontractors

Schuman SA

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## Legal Disclaimer

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## 1. Introduction

**Femme Forward** is a two-year transnational project targeting the low representation of women in digital jobs and start-ups. Through an innovative and comprehensive training program, women with various backgrounds will be empowered to either start a career in the tech sector or employ their experience and knowledge to set up a tech start-up.

There are not many large-scale initiatives in the European ecosystem with significant industry support and in-depth knowledge on transitioning female graduates into tech positions. Femme Forward seeks to meet this gap by designing and testing educational tools and materials built on partner knowledge of the target group and digital skills training requirements. The project will roll out with a unified skilling approach across nine countries, developing two paths: one targeting tech careers and the other targeting tech founders.

Femme Forward explicitly targets the need to produce more digital specialists with advanced skills while ensuring that women are equally represented in digital studies and careers.

Work Package 6 of the Femme Forward project focuses on accompanying graduates either on their way to employment in the tech industry or developing their start-up ideas further.

The aim is to implement an efficient process to transition graduates into employment or entrepreneurship based on their chosen path.

### What is a Transition Pathway, and why is it important?

As more and more companies embrace digital transformation, finding skilled employees to support the transition is becoming an increasing problem. According to Eurostat, in 2020, more than 1 in 2 companies had challenges filling ICT-related vacancies (Eurostat, 2021. [ICT specialists - hard to fill vacancies 28-06-2021](#)). The shortage in the ICT sector is increased by the limited representation of women in the pool of specialists available to meet the growing demand: Eurostat has found that only 18,5% of ICT specialists employed in the EU in 2020 were female. (Eurostat, 2023. [ICT specialists in employment - Statistics Explained](#))

The gender disparity within the digital economy raises several obstacles for businesses, such as the mismatch between consumer needs and product characteristics, that, according to HEC Paris, reduce the pace of innovation ([Building Back Better: Why Gender Diversity Needs to Be at the Heart of the Innovation Agenda | HEC Paris](#)). With such a critical labour shortage, Europe cannot afford to exclude half of the population from the specialist pool. Last, advocating for a better representation of women in tech jobs is not only good for

business, as explained above, but also necessary for an equal and democratic society. As EIGE indicates, closing the STEM gender gap will contribute to an increase in EU GDP per capita of 610 – 820 billion EUR by 2050 and help raise employment by 850 000 persons (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2018. Economic benefits of gender equality in the EU: [How gender equality in STEM education leads to economic growth](#)).

To strive for a better representation of women in tech employment and entrepreneurship, Femme Forward, as well as developing a training program focusing on the most in-demand advanced digital skills, aims to ensure entry into tech employment or entrepreneurship sectors. To do this, we have collected a series of good practices, organised based on the requirements of the most relevant stakeholders, aimed at maximising the process of integrating trained women into the world of work. **The intent is to offer an operational checklist, a practical guide, and demonstrate best practices** to support those transitioning from training to professional affirmation.

## How to use it?

This Transition Pathway is divided into two sections, one for each training path. It will provide a guide that can focus on the specific challenges of each career. Each unit offers different strategies for the most relevant stakeholders to address the needs of both sectors.

**For Future Tech Careers**, a pathway will be designed to increase the employability of tech course graduates by large tech companies and SMEs. In particular, there will be actions to be taken by the **training providers** and **employing companies**, which will create supportive environments and local partnerships for labour market integration.

- Training providers will be guided through a series of actions divided into whether they should be taken before, during or after the course. These actions will enable them to inform and better prepare students for the transition to the labour market.
- Employing companies will find a series of good practices and advice to be implemented at the recruiting stage to make it more accessible for new employees to enter the company and assess their skills.

**For Future Start-up Founders Careers**, a path will be specifically designed to accelerate the entrepreneurial vocation within participants, with a strategic focus on nurturing and cultivating the skills and mindset needed for success. We will focus on **training providers** and **Future Founders** as the primary stakeholders.

- Training providers will be guided to maximise the effectiveness of the learning experience.



- The Future Founders, on the other hand, will be presented with various possible options to put into practice the knowledge and the approaches acquired in the training path.

**The main contents of this document, especially the operational checklists, are also summarised in a presentation format for more agile and immediate reference (see Annex).**

## 2. Future Tech Careers

### Main stakeholders and their role

Key stakeholders such as training providers and employing companies are pivotal when transitioning graduates into employment.

**Training providers play a crucial role by equipping graduates with valuable insights into the world of work and the specific skills that companies demand.**

They also aid in developing essential soft skills and assist in the job search process. Consequently, graduates gain the opportunity to receive career guidance, acquire the necessary tools for a smooth transition into the workforce, bridge any existing skill gaps required for their desired roles (both technical and soft skills), continuously enhance their expertise while on the job, and boost their self-confidence. These will contribute to establishing a stable and prosperous career in the technology sector. To achieve this, training providers should be proficient in delivering soft skills training, conducting labour market research, offering student guidance and orientation, and demonstrating flexibility and critical analysis regarding curriculum development.

**On the other hand, employing companies can facilitate the integration of new employees and accurately assess their skill sets.**

Their proactive involvement proves invaluable to graduates as it enables them to identify suitable tech roles, receive support during the initial phases of their employment, and establish professional networks. To fulfil these objectives, employing companies should develop streamlined processes for onboarding new employees, provide opportunities for continuous training and skills enhancement, foster networking prospects, offer constructive feedback, and cultivate a safe and supportive work environment.



## Actions to be taken by training providers (pre, during and post-course delivery)

### Pre-course

**Industry Research:** Conduct thorough research on the current and future needs of the tech industry. Research can include understanding the emerging technologies, skill gaps, job trends, and demands of companies regarding technical skills, soft skills, and domain-specific knowledge. This research helps identify the areas where tech courses need to be aligned.

**Employer Engagement:** Establish partnerships and collaborations with tech companies, both large companies and SMEs, to understand their workforce needs and requirements. Conduct regular dialogues with employers to gather insights on the skills and competencies they seek in tech graduates. Engagement can be done through industry advisory boards and guest lectures by industry experts.

**Curriculum Review:** Review the existing tech course curricula to identify gaps and misalignments with industry needs. Ensure the courses are up-to-date, relevant, and aligned with industry trends and technologies. Identify areas where new topics, skills, or technologies must be incorporated into the curriculum to bridge the gap between the skills taught in the courses and the skills demanded by companies.

**Flexible Curriculum Design:** Design the tech course curricula flexibly, allowing for regular updates and modifications based on the changing needs of the industry and specific characteristics of the students and the class. Accommodating emerging technologies, industry trends, employer feedback, and the student's attitude can ensure that the courses remain relevant and aligned with the needs of the companies over time.

**Non-formal or Informal Skills:** Verify the status of recognising non-formal and informal skills in each country. Not all countries have formalised the recognition of non-formal and informal skills, so mapping with formal skills or specific professions in each state is essential.

**Instructors Professional Development:** Provide opportunities for continuous professional development for faculty and instructors delivering tech courses. Workshops, seminars, and training programs can keep them updated with industry trends, technologies, and pedagogical approaches. Faculty should be equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to deliver courses aligned with the needs of companies effectively.

**Industry Certifications and Partnerships:** Seek industry certifications and partnerships to enhance the credibility and relevance of tech courses. Industry certifications can validate the skills and knowledge of graduates, making them more attractive to potential employers. Partnerships with tech companies, industry bodies, or professional associations can provide students access to resources, expertise, and opportunities and ensure that the courses align with industry standards and requirements.

**Identify and Connect with Women in the Tech Community to Act as Role Models:** Identify “successful” women in the tech industry who can showcase their experiences, inspiring other women to pursue careers in tech. Building a supportive network of women in tech can create a positive and empowering environment that encourages personal growth and career advancement.

## During the course

**Industry Experts as Faculty:** Involve industry experts in tech courses as faculty or guest lecturers. This involvement can bring real-world industry perspectives into the classroom and provide students with insights into the practical application of their skills in a professional setting. Industry experts can also guide on the latest tools adoption, technologies, and practices used in the industry and help bridge the gap between academia and industry.

**Internship and Project Work:** Provide opportunities for internships, capstone projects, and real-world industry projects as part of the tech courses. These opportunities allow students to gain hands-on experience, apply their skills in real-world scenarios, get exposed to the challenges and requirements of the industry, and enhance their employability. It can also be an opportunity to foster teamwork and social bonding among participants by including community projects.

**Soft Skills Development:** Incorporate soft skills development modules into tech courses to ensure graduates are equipped with essential skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership. Employers highly value soft skills, which are critical for professional success. The training programs should also offer safe spaces to increase women’s self-trust by working with female role models.

**Corporate Meetings:** Organise corporate meetings that connect students with companies, allowing them to learn about the company’s philosophy

and technical roles. These meetings should feature Human Resources and technical representatives who explain the company's values and the specific technical contributions. It's an opportunity for students to assess their compatibility with the company and gain insights into potential roles. These meetings can bridge the gap between students and employers, facilitating informed career decisions and identifying talents.

**Mock Interviews and Work on the Participants' CVs:** Organise workshops on CV improvement to guide participants to effectively showcase their skills, experiences and accomplishments and tailor successful CVs for specific job roles. Additionally, organise mock interviews to allow the participants to refine their interview skills in a safe and supportive environment. The sessions can be conducted by experienced interviewers or HR professionals who can provide constructive feedback.

**Job Orientation:** Create a training module to provide essential information about employment contracts and labour market concepts. This module aims to equip individuals with the necessary knowledge, like different types of employment contracts. Additionally, it offers insights into the dynamics of the labour market, including trends, demand for specific skills, and potential career pathways. Job orientation empowers individuals to make informed decisions regarding their employment options, ensuring they understand contract types and the labour market landscape.

**Tutoring:** Provide a tutor to the students during the course. Tutoring can strengthen subject comprehension, boost confidence, and build essential learning skills. Tutoring gives students individualised attention they don't get in a crowded classroom.

**Networking Events and Community Meet-ups:** Promote events for women in the tech industry and encourage participation in women's networks and technology forums/conferences, to create opportunities for them to connect, share experiences and build professional relationships.

## Post-course

**Feedback Loop:** Establish a feedback loop with companies to gather opinions on the performance of tech course graduates continuously. This process can help identify areas of improvement and make necessary adjustments to the curriculum to align with the needs of the industry. Regular employer feedback can also help identify new emerging skills and technologies that must be incorporated into the courses.

**Employment Agencies and Organisations:** Connect with employment agencies and organisations, both public and private, that support job placement. They play a crucial role in job placement and orientation, connecting individuals with job opportunities, offering guidance, and helping them explore different career paths.

**Follow-up Meetings with Alumni:** The training institution should maintain regular contact with its former students, who have now become insiders in the company, through a structured follow-up process. To ensure ongoing support and collaboration, this process could involve scheduled interactions at specific intervals, such as three, six, and twelve months.

**Mentoring Programs:** Incentivise and facilitate mentoring programs where experienced professionals advise and support women in their transition to the industry and organise regular meetings with mentors to discuss progress, challenges, and learning pathways.

**Lifelong Learning:** The course will encourage and give students the tools to pursue their training independently and remain constantly updated. Creating a network between students and between students and lecturers will help exchange information on additional courses, events, and workshops.

## OPERATIVE CHECKLIST

### PRE

- Conduct industry research to understand the current and future needs of the industry.
- Engage with employers to gather insights into their needs and requirements.
- Review the existing tech course curricula for misalignments with industry needs.
- Design flexible curricula that can be updated based on changing industry demands and student characteristics.
- Map non-formal or informal skills training (based on local regulations).
- Provide professional development opportunities for faculty and instructors.
- Seek industry certifications and partnerships to enhance credibility and relevance.
- Identify and connect with women in the tech community to act as role models and supporters.

## DURING

- Involve industry experts as faculty or guest lecturers in tech courses.
- Provide opportunities for internships, capstone, community and real-world industry projects.
- Incorporate soft skills development modules into tech courses.
- Mock interviews and work on the participants' CVs.
- Organise meetings with corporates during courses aimed at presenting real projects and employment opportunities/needs (involve Human Resources and tech people).
- Include a job orientation module in the curricula.
- Activate tutoring programs.
- Encourage participation in women's networking events, community meet-ups and forums/conferences.

## POST

- Leverage public-private employment agencies and organisations.
- Establish a feedback loop with companies for continuous improvement.
- Organise regular follow-up meetings or feedback collection with students and keep them engaged as future trainers or direct gateway to the corporate.
- Incentive and facilitate mentoring programs.
- Structure advanced training programs and workshops to keep alums involved as lifelong learners.

## Actions to be taken by employers

**Onboarding Program:** Companies should have a comprehensive onboarding program for new hires to familiarise them with the company environment, job profiles, and career paths. This process may include orientation sessions, training programs, and mentorship opportunities to help graduates understand the company's culture, values, policies, and expectations. Furthermore, women might have different demands on their employer (e.g. part-time or remote so they afford childcare). Therefore, an employer with dedicated career support for women is more attractive.

**Employee Shadowing/Companion System:** New hires should be paired with experienced employees as companions or mentors. This process allows graduates to shadow their mentors, learn from their experience, ask questions, and receive guidance on their job responsibilities, tasks, and projects. This system can help accelerate the integration of new hires into the company environment.

**Gradual Task Assignments:** New hires should be initially assigned low client-impact tasks that allow them to build their confidence and gain experience. These tasks can be less complex and critical, allowing them to understand the company's processes and systems and gradually progress towards more challenging assignments.

**Training and Skill Development:** Companies should provide their new hires with continuous training and skill development opportunities. Upskilling and reskilling can include technical training, soft skills development, and opportunities to learn new tools, methods and technologies. It helps graduates to stay updated with the latest industry trends and enhances their employability.

**Mentoring and Career Guidance:** Companies should establish a mentoring program where experienced employees can provide guidance and career advice to new hires. It can include regular mentoring sessions, performance feedback, and goal setting to help graduates understand their career progression opportunities within the company and set goals for their professional growth.

**Performance Recognition and Rewards:** Companies should have a performance recognition and rewards system in place to acknowledge the efforts and achievements of new hires. It can include regular feedback sessions, performance evaluations, and incentives based on their contributions to the company. Recognising and rewarding the performance of new hires motivates them to excel in their roles and enhances their sense of belongingness to the company.

**Career Development Opportunities:** Companies should provide their new hires with career development and growth opportunities. They can include internal job postings, cross-functional training, and exposure to different projects and teams. Providing a clear career path and growth opportunities within the company encourages new hires to stay committed and motivated in their roles.

**Feedback Loop:** Establishing a feedback loop where new hires can provide feedback on their onboarding experience, training programs, and work assignments can help companies continuously improve their employability-boosting initiatives. Input from new hires can help identify areas of improvement and implement necessary changes to enhance their experience and success in the company.

**Collaboration and Team Building:** Companies should encourage collaboration and team-building activities among their new hires. Team-building exercises, group projects, and cross-functional collaboration opportunities are examples. Building a collaborative and inclusive work culture fosters a sense of teamwork, boosts morale, and enhances the employability of new hires by helping them develop teamwork and communication skills.

**Networking Opportunities:** Companies should provide networking opportunities for new hires to connect with employees from different departments and levels. They can include networking events, social gatherings, and online forums. Networking helps new hires build professional relationships, expand their network, and learn from experienced professionals, contributing to their career growth.

## OPERATIVE CHECKLIST

- Onboarding Program:
  - Comprehensive orientation programs.
  - Mentorship sessions.
  - Access to company resources and policies.
  - Specific opportunities for women.
  
- Employee Shadowing/Companion System:
  - Pairing with experienced employees for guidance and support.
  - Understanding the practical application of skills.
  
- Gradual Task Assignments:
  - Assigning low client-impact tasks.
  - Building confidence and experience.
  - Gradual progression towards more complex assignments.
  
- Ongoing Training and Development:
  - Workshops, seminars, webinars, or online courses.
  - Keeping graduates updated with the latest technologies and industry trends.
  
- Performance Evaluation and Feedback:
  - Feedback sessions with managers or peers.
  - Constructive feedback for continuous improvement.



- Mentoring and Coaching:
  - Alignment between the company tutor and training tutor is needed.
  - Guidance, support, and career advice from experienced professionals.
  
- Cross-functional Exposure:
  - Opportunities for cross-functional exposure.
  - Rotations or job shadowing in different teams or departments.
  
- Recognition and Rewards:
  - Performance-based incentives, awards, or public recognition.
  - Acknowledging contributions and achievements.



### 3. Future Start-up Founders Careers

#### Main stakeholders and their role in the transition

During transitioning graduates into successful start-ups or other employment opportunities, the key stakeholders are the training providers and Future Founders themselves. The actions described in the following paragraph are designed to bring multiple benefits and necessitate active involvement from these stakeholders across various domains.

**Training providers** are crucial for Future Founders as they offer specialised knowledge and skill development programs tailored to the needs of entrepreneurs. They can provide access to experienced instructors and industry experts who offer valuable guidance and mentorship. Training providers also facilitate networking opportunities, connecting founders with potential co-founders, mentors, and investors. They offer validation and feedback on business ideas, helping founders refine their concepts, and provide resources and tools for effective business planning and management. Training providers are vital in instilling a growth mindset, equipping founders with essential skills, and enhancing their credibility in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Once they have received the basics of entrepreneurship, **Future Founders** are asked to choose whether to start their business venture right away or to enrich their experience working in the field. Therefore, choosing which path to take is crucial in the transition journey and will be the focus of this paper's analysis.

#### Actions to be taken by training providers

Compared to the previous chapter, entrepreneurial training is to be considered more as an experiential path rather than a track based on theoretical notions to be acquired.

By definition, entrepreneurial "training" takes place in the field, facing real challenges daily and developing a real-time decision-reaction process that takes into account a continuous feedback loop ([Lean Startup Methodology](#) - "Build - Measure - Learn").

The actions we propose for training providers are more of an orientation than accurate prescriptions and the distinction between Pre-During-Post used in the previous section partially loses its meaning and cannot be replicated.

**Needs Assessment:** Conduct a thorough needs assessment to understand women entrepreneurs' specific challenges and requirements. This process can involve surveys, interviews, or focus groups to gather insights into the target audience's aspirations, skills gaps, and potential barriers they face.

**Curriculum Development:** Develop a comprehensive and relevant curriculum that addresses the unique needs of women entrepreneurs. The curriculum should include problem validation, business modelling, product-market-fit, lean and agile product development, pivoting, leadership, etc.

**Inclusive and Open Environment:** Create an inclusive and empowering learning environment that fosters collaboration, encourages participation, and provides a safe space for women to share experiences and ideas.

**Expert Instructors with On-Field Experience:** Recruit instructors with expertise in entrepreneurship, preferably those with experience supporting women in business. These instructors should possess excellent communication skills, be able to facilitate discussions effectively and serve as role models for aspiring women entrepreneurs. Invite successful entrepreneurs and industry experts as guest speakers to share their experiences and insights.

**Mentoring and Networking Opportunities:** Facilitate mentoring and networking opportunities by connecting participants with successful women entrepreneurs, industry professionals, and potential investors. Encourage participants to build relationships, seek guidance, and expand their professional networks.

**Community Meet-ups:** Promote events for women in the tech industry to create a supportive and inclusive environment where women can expand their network and share insight. Encourage participation in women's networks and technology forums/conferences to foster a strong sense of community.

**Practical and Experiential Learning:** Incorporate practical exercises, case studies, and real-world examples into the curriculum to provide hands-on experience and reinforce key concepts. It can include business simulations, group projects, and site visits to successful women-led businesses.

**Mock Pitching Events:** Arrange regular simulated pitching events where founders can practice presenting their ideas and receive feedback. Invite experts to provide constructive criticism and guidance and emphasise the

importance of storytelling, clarity, and effective communication during these events.

**Personal Development and Confidence-Building:** Include sessions or modules focusing on personal development, building self-confidence, and overcoming common barriers women entrepreneurs face. The training programs should offer safe spaces and aim to increase women's self-trust by working with female role models. Moreover, training should create a culture that celebrates learning from failures and encourages founders to take calculated risks and develop leadership, resilience and perseverance.

**Flexibility and Accessibility by Design:** Ensure the course is designed with flexibility and accessibility in mind. Consider offering both in-person and online (live and on-demand) learning options to accommodate different schedules and geographic locations. Provide materials in accessible formats and consider any additional support needs. This inclusivity promotes diversity and ensures that aspiring women entrepreneurs, regardless of their specific situations, can participate and benefit from the course, increasing their chances of success.

**Ongoing Support:** Offer post-course support and resources to help participants implement their learning. This support can include access to online communities, continued mentoring opportunities, and additional training modules or workshops to address specific challenges that may arise during the entrepreneurial journey. Foster a sense of community through periodic meetups or networking events for participants to stay connected.

**Induction into Local Entrepreneurship Networks:** Facilitate industry visits to successful start-ups and incubators to expose participants to real-world entrepreneurial environments. Organise workshops and networking events where founders can connect with potential investors or partners.

**Evaluation and Feedback:** Continuously evaluate the course's effectiveness and gather feedback from participants to identify areas for improvement. Regularly assess participant satisfaction, learning outcomes, and long-term impact to refine and enhance future iterations of the training program.

## OPERATIVE CHECKLIST

This checklist serves as a guideline to ensure that training providers cover the necessary aspects for effectively delivering a course to train the new generation of women entrepreneurs.

- Conduct a thorough needs assessment to understand women entrepreneurs' specific challenges and requirements.
- Develop a comprehensive and relevant curriculum addressing the unique needs of women entrepreneurs.
- Create an inclusive and empowering learning environment.
- Recruit instructors with entrepreneurship expertise, preferably those supporting women in business.
- Facilitate mentoring and networking opportunities with successful women entrepreneurs and industry professionals.
- Promote community meet-ups and networking events.
- Incorporate practical exercises, case studies, and real-world examples into the curriculum.
- Arrange regular mock pitching events for practice and feedback.
- Include sessions/modules focusing on personal development and overcoming barriers.
- Design the course with flexibility and accessibility in mind.
- Offer post-course support, community access, mentoring opportunities, and additional resources.
- Facilitate industry visits and networking events.
- Continuously evaluate the course's effectiveness and gather participant feedback.

## Actions to be taken by Future Founders

If, after completing a technical course, the natural landing point is to find employment in a tech company, in the case of a training experience in the entrepreneurial field, the options are many. Therefore, it is the beneficiary of the training which is the most interesting stakeholder to analyse.

Below are listed the diverse pathways available to women entrepreneurs after completing an entrepreneurial skills course, allowing them to explore avenues aligned with their interests, goals, and aspirations.

Gender-sensitive opportunities are to be encouraged when choosing the path. In the same way, organisations in which female representation is higher have a greater chance of being chosen.

**Kickstart your Start-up:** Armed with newly acquired entrepreneurial skills, a woman entrepreneur can embark on her start-up journey. They can develop and launch their business idea, leveraging the knowledge gained from the course to navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship. Start-up

accelerators or incubators can offer support, mentorship, resources and funding to help early-stage start-ups grow and succeed.

**Get Employment in a Start-up:** Women entrepreneurs can also choose to apply their entrepreneurial skills by working for an existing start-up. By joining a start-up, they can contribute their expertise, learn from experienced founders, and gain practical experience in a dynamic entrepreneurial environment.

**Join a Venture-building Program:** Some organisations or institutions offer venture-building programs where aspiring entrepreneurs can join a team to develop and launch new ventures. These programs provide resources, mentorship, and a supportive environment for individuals to work on innovative projects.

**Gain Experience in an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem:** Women entrepreneurs may work with entrepreneurial ecosystem players such as incubators or accelerators, start-up studios or similar organisations. By joining these initiatives, they can immerse themselves in the start-up community, gain insights into early-stage ventures' challenges, and provide support and mentorship to other entrepreneurs.

**Join a Corporate Interested in Open Innovation or Corporate Venture Programs:** Corporations increasingly recognise the value of innovation and entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs can explore opportunities to join a corporate organisation with an open innovation or corporate venture program. This option allows them to work within a structured environment while still applying their entrepreneurial skills and contributing to the company's innovation initiatives.

**Freelancing or Consulting:** Women entrepreneurs can leverage their entrepreneurial skills by offering freelance services or becoming consultants in their areas of expertise. They can provide specialised services, advice, or strategic guidance to other businesses or individuals.

**Social Entrepreneurship:** Women entrepreneurs may use their entrepreneurial skills to address social or environmental challenges. They can start a social enterprise or nonprofit organisation that aims to create a positive impact while generating sustainable revenue.

**Venture Capital or Angel Investing:** With a solid understanding of entrepreneurship and business, women entrepreneurs may explore joining venture capitalist firms or becoming angel investors. They can invest in

early-stage start-ups, providing funding and mentorship to support emerging entrepreneurs.

**Research and Academia:** Some women entrepreneurs may be passionate about research and teaching. They can pursue academic opportunities, research entrepreneurship, teach courses, or mentor future entrepreneurs.

**Policy and Advocacy:** Women entrepreneurs can engage in policy-making and advocacy efforts related to entrepreneurship. They can contribute their insights and experiences to shape policies, promote gender equality, and support initiatives that foster an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

## POSSIBLE PATHS

- Kickstart your start-up:
  - ◆ Develop and launch your business idea.
  - ◆ Attend an accelerator or incubation program
- Get employment in a start-up:
  - ◆ Apply entrepreneurial skills in an existing start-up environment
- Join a venture-building program:
  - ◆ Join a team to develop and launch new ventures.
- Gain experience in an entrepreneurial ecosystem:
  - ◆ Work with incubators, accelerators, or start-up studios.
- Join a corporate interested in open innovation or corporate venture programs:
  - ◆ Contribute entrepreneurial skills within a corporate environment.
- Freelancing or Consulting:
  - ◆ Offer specialised services or strategic guidance to businesses or individuals.
- Social Entrepreneurship:
  - ◆ Start a social enterprise or nonprofit organisation.
- Venture Capital or Angel Investing:
  - ◆ Invest in early-stage start-ups, providing funding and mentorship.
- Research and Academia:
  - ◆ Engage in research, teaching, or mentoring in the field of entrepreneurship.
- Policy and Advocacy:
  - ◆ Contribute to policy-making and advocacy efforts in entrepreneurship.

## 4. Conclusions

The Transition Pathway outlined in the document is of utmost importance in bridging the gap between trained graduates and the world of work. As highlighted by Eurostat, the shortage of ICT specialists is a pressing issue, and increasing the representation of women in the tech sector is crucial for driving innovation and economic growth. The pathway offers a systematic approach to support women's transition into tech employment or entrepreneurship by providing a series of actions and strategies.

For Future Tech Careers, training providers play a central role in preparing graduates for the job market by aligning their curricula with industry needs, offering soft skills training, and facilitating employer engagement. Employing companies also play a critical role by providing supportive environments for new employees and implementing inclusive hiring practices.

For Future Start-up Founders Careers, training providers focus on experiential learning and fostering a growth mindset. They equip aspiring entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and offer mentoring and networking opportunities. Future Founders can explore various pathways, such as starting their ventures, joining existing start-ups, engaging in social entrepreneurship, or venturing into venture capital and academia.

Inclusivity, adaptability, and ongoing support are fundamental components of the Transition Pathway, ensuring that women from different backgrounds can access opportunities in the tech sector. By promoting women's participation in digital jobs and entrepreneurship, Femme Forward contributes to the success of businesses and societal and economic prosperity. As the project progresses, it will continue to refine and enhance the Transition Pathway, fostering a more equitable and vibrant digital economy in Europe.

## 5. Annex

### I. Sustainable transition pathways to facilitate entry into tech employment or entrepreneurial sector.

#### KEY GUIDELINES - PRESENTATION