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## Femme Forward

Participating in a European Women in Tech  
Stakeholder Conference



Co-funded by 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 are 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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## Introduction

Participating in one or multiple women in tech conferences was an important objective for the project in order to showcase the training and results. The partners quickly decided to organise the participation in an event in the second year of the project (2024), in order to be able to present results during the conference. This meant waiting for at least a good part of the training sessions to have been completed.

Furthermore, even though the official project objective was to participate in 1 conference, the partners decided to try to participate in at least two, in two different cities, thereby helping to further disseminate the project and its results.

For each conference, the objective was to allow one of the consortium members to participate in a panel discussion, really giving them time to present the Femme Forward project in its entirety, with detailed discussions ranging from sourcing students to the role of private companies to female specific courses.

We have added two European conferences to the report: the first took place in March 2024 and was organised by associate partner AWS. Partner Bencode participated in a panel discussion, as well as associate partner Randstad. The second conference was the 20x30 Advanced Digital Skills Summit, held in Madrid in May 2024.

We have also added a third summit which partners AWS attended in Bahrain: the EU-GCC Business Forum. Though not specifically aimed at a European audience, and therefore not technically in line with the objective of the work package, we thought it would be interesting to add an example of a dissemination event which goes slightly beyond the scope of Europe.

# Inclusive AI & Skills, Brussels

Dates: 13th March 2024

Location: Brussels, Belgium, Solvay Library

PP Benelux delivered a Conference in Brussels, bringing over 20 European public and private speakers on stage on how to advance AI and inclusive digital skills development in Europe. 160 delegates participated from 18 different countries including 14 member states and 70% of speakers were female.

The Conference was held on the same day the European lawmakers gave final approval to the EU AI Act. Utilising this moment in the midst of the Belgian EU Presidency of the European Union, AWS set-up the Conference in order to:

- 1/ engage with strategic Belgian government stakeholders on AI and digital policy
- 2/ give visibility to the study AWS recently published on how to unlock the potential of AI in Europe and
- 3/ showcase AI for good and inclusivity in re- and upskilling.

The Femme Forward project was represented by two partners:

- Béatrice de Mahieu, Chief Executive Officer, BeCode
- Thomas Jajeh, Chief Digital Officer, Randstad Enterprise Solutions

## Key Results & Learnings

Policymaker highlights: The Belgian President of Economic Affairs, Severine Waterbley, spoke on stage about the skills and gender gap in ICT and explained Belgium is open to work with the private sector on closing the skills gap. Sigrid Rajalo, director of innovation and technology at the Estonian Ministry of Economic affairs and Eglė Markevičiūtė, former senior government Head of Digital & Innovation Policy at Consumer Choice Center of Lithuania, both spoke about national initiatives and the need for diversity and scaling women in tech and AI to foster the innovation within Europe.

Other highlights: Alex Boyd (Director Strand partners) presented the AWS study results regarding Europe's journey towards the European Commission's Digital



Decade goals. A link to the study was sent after the event to all delegates upon requests from policy makers in the room.

BeCode was able to showcase the Femme Forward programme aimed at women, detailing the training that had taken place in Brussels for 45 women as part of the Femme Forward project. Emphasis was put on outcomes for trainees after training.

Feedback from participants was really positive, including from the Cabinet of the Belgian Secretary of State / Digital affairs, Séverine Waterbley, President of the Ministry of Economy - Federal Government of Belgium : “Don’t miss a chance to get all the talents on board!”



Figure 1: Photo of Conference group in Brussels

## 20x30: Europe's Advanced Digital Skills Summit

On May 16th 2024, Noelia Torres, CEO of Factoría F5, one of the training entities within the Consortium, represented Femme Forward at the 20x30: Europe's Advanced Digital Skills Summit.

The 20x30: Europe's Advanced Digital Skills Summit is an influential one-day event, held annually in Madrid, Spain. The summit is focused on addressing Europe's critical digital skills gap, with the overarching goal of adding 20 million new ICT specialists by 2030, in line with the EU's Digital Decade strategy. This event, opened by Rehana Schwinninger-Ladak, Head of Interactive Technologies at the European Commission, brings together a diverse group of stakeholders from business, academia, and public policy to discuss the future of digital skills and their critical role in ensuring Europe remains competitive in a rapidly evolving global digital landscape.

The summit features a wide range of activities, including keynote speeches, roundtables, workshops, and best practice showcases. Its objectives are to foster collaboration and innovation, ensuring that Europe stays at the forefront of global technological advancements, particularly in cloud computing, AI, cybersecurity, and data science. Central topics include strategies to close the gender gap in advanced digital skills and innovative approaches to SME digital transformation.

Femme Forward participated in this summit, specifically through Noelia Torres, CEO of Factoría F5, who was a speaker on the panel, "Leveraging the potential of women to address the advanced digital skills gap." This panel explored how empowering women in tech can help close the digital skills gap, a theme aligned with the FemmeForward project's goals.

During the panel "Leveraging the potential of women to address the advanced digital skills gap" Noelia shared insights on closing the gender gap in advanced digital skills. She highlighted impactful initiatives such as the Femme Forward program co-financed by the European Union and designed to empower women across Europe, promoting their participation in the technology industry, and promoting female role models.

The 2024 edition featured over [150 attendees](#), with 47 speakers representing diverse sectors across Europe, including CEOs, Deans, Senior Strategists and policy makers from leading companies and institutions such as FPS Policy and Support, IDC, Founderland, Factoría F5, Uni Systems, Trinity Business School,



Telefónica, Siemens, SAP, European Commission and IBM, among others, representing a broad spectrum of sectors and expertise with the aim to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange to drive forward Europe's digital transformation.

Table 1: Core panels and speakers from the 20x30: Europe's Advanced Digital Skills Summit:

Panel/Session	Speakers
Healthcare and the Data Revolution	Ernestina Menasalvas (UPM), Miguel Angel Sicilia (Ramon y Cajal Hospital), Zheshen Jiang (CHU de Liège), Christoph Thümmeler (6G Health Institute)
Organisational Change and Skills-Based Profiles	Na Fu (Trinity Business School), Nadya Semenova (Digital Transformation Expert), Kelly Gamble (SAP), Sofia Platias (Uni Systems), Miguel Valdivieso (IBM)
Industry Perspectives: Acquiring Talent in a Fast-Changing Environment	Ana Garcia Robles (BDVA), Araceli Venegas-Gomez (QURECA), Michael Barngrover (XR4Europe), Nina Olesen (ECSO), Daniel Saez (ITI), Kristen Doran (SAP)
Specialised Project Showcase: Cloud-Powered SME Digital Transformation	Irina Frigioiu (Funding Box)
20 Key Learnings for SME Digital Transformation	Horacio González-Vélez (National College of Ireland)
Making the Business Case for Skills Investments	Laurent Muzellac (Trinity Business School), Alejandra Blázquez (Cisco), Kamil Svec (Telefónica Tech), Salvatore Moccia (EIT Digital)
Digital Society & Human Values	Anna Bon (EURIDICE)

Leveraging the Potential of Women to Address the Digital Skills Gap	Stephanie von Behr (Founderland), Maria Mezher (HR Consultant), <b>Noelia Torres (Factoría F5)</b> , Mark Jordan (Skillnet Ireland).
Financial Risk and Compliance in the Age of AI	Helen Packard (Financial Conduct Authority, UK), Javier Tarancón (Bank of Spain), Matteo Falsetta (GFT Technologies)
Unlocking the Power of Data: 1st European Data Space for Skills	Daniella Manassero (DIGITALEUROPE), Matthias De Bièvre (Visions), Anu Passi-Rauste (HeadAI), Daniel Alonso (BDVA)
Exploring Gen AI's Impact on Legal Services	Teresa Martín (Mavens), Ciara O'Buachalla (DonnaAI), Giovanni Maria Riccio (E-lex), Risteard de Paor (Herbert Smith Freehills)
Fireside Chat: Sustainable Growth Through Advanced Digital Skills	Monique Calisti (Martel Innovate), Yiannis Loumakis (Uni Systems)

## Pre-Event Information and Communications:

🌟 This Thursday, May 16th, our CEO, Noelia Torres, will participate as a speaker in the 20x30: Europe's Advanced Digital Skills Summit. An international event that brings together leaders from education, public policy, and the technology industry to discuss the future of digital skills and the job market in Europe.

Noelia will take part in the panel "Unlocking women's potential to bridge the advanced digital skills gap," alongside Stephanie von Behr, Maria Mezher, and Mark Jordan. She will share her experience and insights on how to close the gap in advanced digital skills among women in Spain and Europe, through impactful initiatives such as our Cloud training for women, part of the FemmeForward program co-financed by the European Union, of which **Factoría F5** is a part.

📅 Register here and join us for this day of inspiration and learning. 🏡👤  
Link: <https://lnkd.in/dukTPR66>

#20x30DigitalSkillsSummit #Madrid



Figure 2: Screenshot of LinkedIn post



Figure 3: Twitter post by Factoria F5

### LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7195725864439865346>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/FactoriaF5/status/1789959219203944680>

### Post Event Information and Communications:

Yesterday, our CEO [Noelia Torres](#) participated as a speaker at the 20x30: Europe's Advanced Digital Skills Summit, an international event that brought together leaders from education, public policy, and the tech industry in Madrid.

In her speech, Noelia highlighted impactful actions taken by [Factoría F5](#) aimed at reducing the gender digital gap, such as our training for women, part of the [#FemmeForward](#) program co-financed by the [#EuropeanUnion](#), of which [#FactoríaF5](#) is a member in consortium with other European entities and international private agents. Besides reviewing our projects, she explained how we strengthen our impact by promoting female role models, reinforcing the network of women in technology, and integrating a gender perspective into our training programs, achieving nearly 60% participation of women.

The panel "Unlocking women's potential to bridge the advanced digital skills gap" was moderated by [Stephanie von Behr](#) from [Founderland](#), and Noelia participated alongside [Maria Mezher](#), Head of TA and BP at [Productsup](#), and [Mark Jordan](#), Chief Strategy Officer at [Skillnet Ireland](#).

[#20x30ADSSummit](#), [#20x30DigitalSkillsSummit](#), [#SmartTechEurope](#), [#AdvancedSkillsSummit](#), [#EUDigitalSkillsSummit](#) LeADS

Mostrar traducción



Figure 4: LinkedIn post by Factoria F5



*Figure 5: photo of workgroup including Noelia Torres from Factoria F5*

Links:

**LinkedIn:**

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/factor%C3%ADaf5\\_cloud-femmeforward-uniaejneuropea-activity-7197178526767157248-Tbeh?utm\\_source=share&utm\\_medium=member\\_desktop](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/factor%C3%ADaf5_cloud-femmeforward-uniaejneuropea-activity-7197178526767157248-Tbeh?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop)

## Femme Forward in Bahrain

AWS representative Claire Spiller attended the 7th EU-GCC Business Forum in Bahrain on November 21st 2023.

The 7th EU-GCC Business Forum, a pivotal event for strategic cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), took place on November 21, 2023, at the Ritz Carlton in Manama, Bahrain.

Themed "Redefining Economies: Building a Sustainable and Diversified Future," the forum was an exceptional platform for knowledge exchange and high-level dialogue. It featured four panel discussions with speakers from diverse backgrounds, including public and private sectors, academia, and think tanks. This diverse representation fostered a comprehensive perspective on pressing issues.

Claire Spiller, AWS, took a place on the 4th panel discussion, "Empowering Women in the Economy: Strategies for Economic Inclusion & Sustainable Development". The forum discussion addressed the crucial role of inclusivity in economic sustainability, particularly emphasising the contribution of women in trade. This perspective highlighted that an inclusive economy is not only a catalyst for innovation but also a cornerstone for stability and resilience. Claire was able to present the Femme Forward project as being a fantastic example of this inclusivity for women in the Tech sector and as a way of leveraging untouched potential.

Topics covered by the panel discussion:

- Progress on Gender Equality Amidst Global Challenges
- The Importance of Male Support in Women's Empowerment
- Successful Initiatives for Gender Equality
- Leveraging ESG in the Private Sector for Change
- Industry 4.0's Potential for Women
- Knowledge Transfer and Gender Equality
- Actions to Accelerate Gender Equality





Figure 6: photo of event in Bahrain

## Conclusion

By choosing to participate in multiple events rather than the *one* initially planned, the consortium was able to increase the visibility level for the project and therefore highlight the importance of integrating more women in cloud computing (which the Femme Forward project trains in), but also in tech roles in general.

The consortium partners are still looking out for other events in which to spread the word about the Femme Forward project, within Europe and beyond, as part of work package 7 (Communication & Dissemination) but also as this serves our stated sustainability goals within WP8.