October 2024
Deliverable 6.3

Femme Forward

Strong Women in Tech Community

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.

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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Revision History			
Version	Date	Modified by	Comments
1	29 Sep 2024	Tech and Teach gGmbH	Initial version / Collecting Data. Document filled in by all partners
1.1	24 Oct 2024	Tech and Teach gGmbH	Ready for review
1.2	29 Oct 2024	Tech and Teach gGmbH	Final Version (after comments from reviewers)

Disclaimer

Table of Contents

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Each partner has provided contents about its own training programme.

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Introduction

At the heart of the Femme Forward program lies the belief that community is one of the most powerful tools for empowering women in tech. Beyond offering technical training and skill development, Femme Forward is designed to create a supportive network where women can collaborate, share knowledge, and provide mutual encouragement as they embark on their tech careers or entrepreneurial journeys. Building such a community fosters a sense of belonging, confidence, and resilience—qualities that are essential for navigating the challenges of the tech industry, particularly for women who may often find themselves in underrepresented spaces.
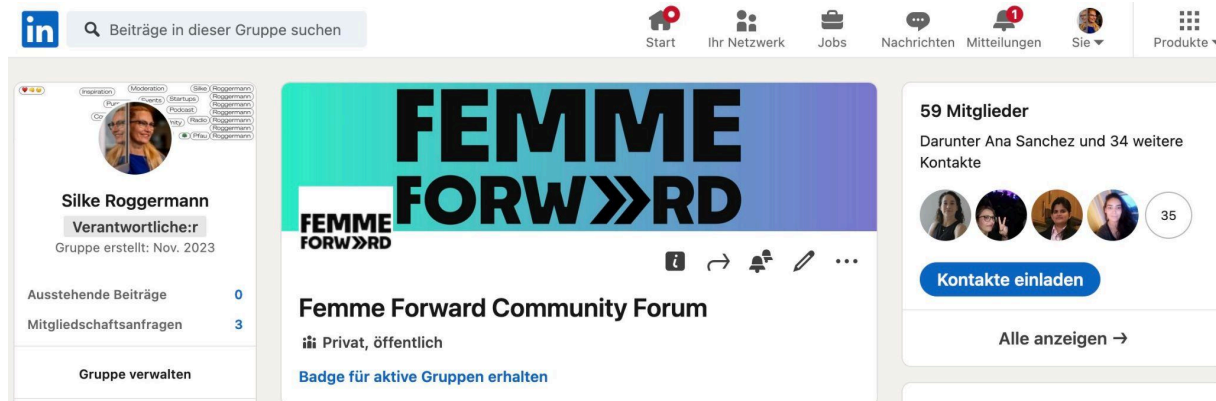
The creation of this community is not only about networking but also about providing ongoing support for program participants, ensuring that they continue to benefit from the resources, mentorship, and connections they formed during the program. It was with this goal in mind that the development of a "Strong Women in Tech community" became a central focus of the Femme Forward initiative.

In line with the Deliverable 6.3 to build an "active, user-friendly, and multilingual forum" for graduates, the task was to establish a space that could facilitate international community-building and ongoing interaction among participants from different countries. While initially planned as a feature on the project's website, we recognized that a more accessible, scalable, and sustainable solution would be necessary to achieve the full potential of this community.
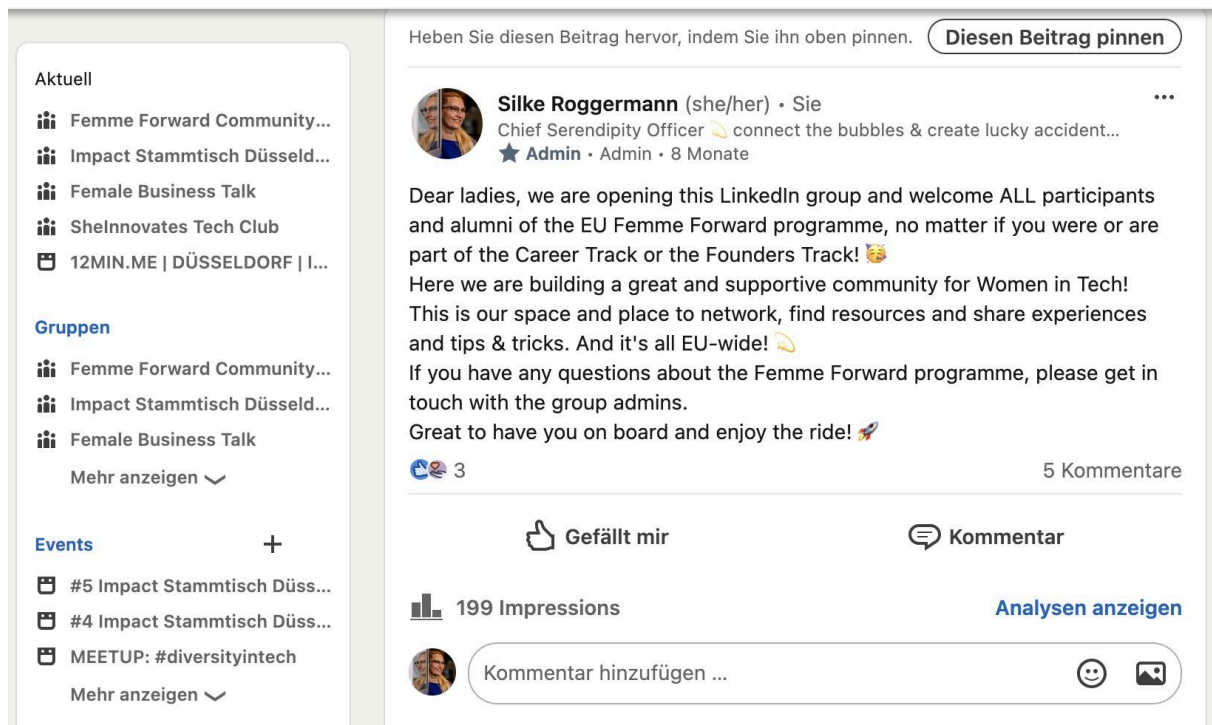
The "Femme Forward Community Forum"

Rather than limiting the community to the project website, we made the strategic decision to build the "Femme Forward Community Forum" on LinkedIn — a globally recognized and widely used platform. This choice was driven by several key factors: accessibility, standardization, lower maintenance needs, and sustainability.

FEMME FORW>>RD
Empowering Women In Tech

Co-funded by the European Union

Here some screenshots of the LinkedIn Group:

Silke Roggermann
Verantwortliche:r
Gruppe erstellt: Nov. 2023

Ausstehende Beiträge 0
Mitgliedschaftsanfragen 3

Gruppe verwalten

FEMME FORW>>RD

Femme Forward Community Forum
Privat, öffentlich
Badge für aktive Gruppen erhalten

59 Mitglieder
Darunter Ana Sanchez und 34 weitere Kontakte

Kontakte einladen

Alle anzeigen →

FEMME FORW>>RD Femme Forward Community Forum

Aktuell

- Femme Forward Communityy...
- Impact Stammtisch Düsseld...
- Female Business Talk
- SheInnovates Tech Club
- 12MIN.ME | DÜSSELDORF | I...

Gruppen

- Femme Forward Community...
- Impact Stammtisch Düsseld...
- Female Business Talk

Mehr anzeigen ⌄

Events +

- #5 Impact Stammtisch Düss...
- #4 Impact Stammtisch Düss...
- MEETUP: #diversityintech

Mehr anzeigen ⌄

Heben Sie diesen Beitrag hervor, indem Sie ihn oben pinnen. **Diesen Beitrag pinnen**

Silke Roggermann (she/her) • Sie
Chief Serendipity Officer 🪄 connect the bubbles & create lucky accident...
⭐ Admin • Admin • 8 Monate

Dear ladies, we are opening this LinkedIn group and welcome ALL participants and alumni of the EU Femme Forward programme, no matter if you were or are part of the Career Track or the Founders Track! 🥳
Here we are building a great and supportive community for Women in Tech!
This is our space and place to network, find resources and share experiences and tips & tricks. And it's all EU-wide! 🪄
If you have any questions about the Femme Forward programme, please get in touch with the group admins.
Great to have you on board and enjoy the ride! 🚀

👏 3   5 Kommentare

👍 Gefällt mir   💬 Kommentar

📊 199 Impressions   **Analysen anzeigen**

Kommentar hinzufügen ... 😊 🖼️

By leveraging LinkedIn, we ensured that the Femme Forward community would be available to all participants, regardless of their location or technical expertise. As a platform already familiar to most professionals, LinkedIn removes the barriers that come with requiring participants to learn a new system. This standardized approach also ensures consistency across regions, allowing women from different countries to connect seamlessly in a space that is intuitive and easy to use.

Furthermore, LinkedIn offers an extended networking potential beyond the Femme Forward community. Participants can not only engage with their peers and mentors from the program but also access a broader ecosystem of tech professionals, recruiters, and thought leaders. This expanded reach provides long-term value, helping participants continue to grow their professional networks and find new opportunities well after the conclusion of the Femme Forward program.

In addition to LinkedIn as the central hub, regional partners have created country-specific sub-communities on platforms like for example Slack and WhatsApp. These localized communities provide more intimate spaces for real-time conversations, regional discussions, and culturally specific support, while still tying into the broader, global network on LinkedIn.

The "Femme Forward Community Forum" on LinkedIn ensures that all participants, mentors, and partners have a central place to engage, share knowledge, and collaborate across borders. It creates a truly global network, where ideas can be exchanged, best practices shared, and mentorship extended, supporting the career progression of women in tech around the world.

By opting for a centralized platform, we also address long-term sustainability. LinkedIn's established infrastructure ensures that the community can remain active and valuable even after the project formally ends. This reduces the need for constant maintenance and resource investment that would be required with a standalone platform, making it a more cost-effective and a scalable solution.

In summary, the decision to host the Femme Forward community on LinkedIn, with complementary regional sub-communities, aligns perfectly with our goal of fostering a sustainable, accessible, and globally connected network of women in tech. It allows us to meet the objectives of this work package while ensuring the community remains a valuable resource for years to come, continually supporting and empowering women in their tech careers.

Femme Forward Communities Across Partner Countries

The Femme Forward program was not only designed to equip women with the skills and knowledge to succeed in tech but also to foster strong, supportive communities that extend beyond the training itself. Each participating partner in the program took an active role in creating and nurturing local communities for their participants, utilizing various platforms to best suit the needs and preferences of their cohorts. These communities have been essential in maintaining ongoing engagement, offering a space for continued learning, networking, and mutual support.

In the following sections, we will highlight how the partners in the Femme Forward network — from Germany to Belgium, Cyprus, Italy, and beyond — exemplary developed these communities. These localized groups, built on platforms such as Slack, WhatsApp, and other channels, have provided tailored support for women in each region. Whether for sharing resources, hosting discussions, or organizing mentorship sessions, each community has played a vital role in empowering women and fostering long-lasting connections.
The data and information were provided by the respective partners.

CAREER TRACKS

BeCode - Country of delivery: Belgium

Implementation period: April 24, 2023 - October 27, 2023

We use two main platforms to foster our community, both chosen for their capacity to encourage engagement, career development, and ongoing learning among participants.
Discord serves as our primary communication tool, used during and after training to connect learners and alumni through specific channels that support continuous interaction and guidance.
Additionally, in early 2024, we launched Wecode, a dedicated alumni platform that operates as a social network, centralizing job offers, forums, and event sharing for the community.
The BeCode business team is responsible for managing and supporting these community platforms, ensuring they remain active and valuable for all members.

SIMPLON.CO - Country of delivery: France

Implementation period: October 2nd, 2023 - December 20th, 2023

Simplon.co chose to use Discord as the primary tool for communication and collaboration with the learners in the Femme Forward course. A discord server allows us to have multiple channels within the course-specific server (such as one on technical questions, one on job seeking etc.). Furthermore, it allows learners to be connected to the server for all past and present Simplon trainees, thus fostering a community beyond the confines of the course itself.
The community is managed and run by the project manager / support officer for the training, in this case Elisa Benoist who is part of the Paris regional team.

Cyprus Computer Society - Country of delivery: Cyprus

Implementation period: October 02, 2023 - December 23, 2023

During the course, we utilized a WhatsApp group (CCS-FF AWS re-Start) and Google Drive as our primary platforms for communication and resource sharing. After the course, the WhatsApp group remained the main channel for participant interaction and updates. WhatsApp was selected for its ease of use and on-the-spot communication capabilities, making it simple to manage while fostering an informal and safe space for participants. This environment encourages participants to share accomplishments and engage with shared resources.
Posts during the course included lecture reminders, links to course materials (such as slides and videos of recorded sessions), and project support. Following the course, updates focused on participant news, exam achievements, and job opportunities.
The CCS team manages the WhatsApp group, carefully selecting and sharing relevant news and updates with participants to keep them engaged and informed.

Factoría F5 - Country of delivery: Spain

Implementation period: March 04, 2024 - June 14, 2024

Factoría F5 uses Slack as the primary platform for communication and collaboration in the Femme Forward program. Slack was chosen for its user-friendly interface and ability to manage multiple channels, making it an ideal tool for organizing diverse topics and facilitating engagement.
Within the Slack workspace, we have created dedicated channels to address key areas of the program, including course announcements, general updates,

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materials and resources, job opportunities, events, and study groups.

The Slack channels are managed by the technical and soft skills support coordinator, with additional input from the instructors, ensuring smooth communication and consistent support throughout the training.

ENGIM - Country of delivery: Italy

Implementation period: November, 2023 - March, 2024

ENGIM used WhatsApp as the primary tool for communication and engagement with learners, chosen for its accessibility to all participants.

Additionally, a Google Drive shared folder was used during the course to facilitate resource sharing. Follow-ups were conducted both via WhatsApp and in person.

The community of learners is managed and supported by two coordinators from ENGIM San Paolo (Rome), who oversee communications and ensure participants receive timely updates.

FUTURE STARTUP FOUNDERS TRACKS

Codingschule (Tech and Teach gGmbH) - Country of delivery: Germany

Implementation period: October 9, 2023 - November 30, 2023

Upon registration, all participants received an invitation to join the Slack channel, which saw active use from the very beginning. In addition to email communications, Slack facilitated almost daily exchanges of information throughout the 8-week course, including updates on individual classes, links to relevant resources, event details, literature recommendations, and citations. A Miro board was also utilized in parallel, allowing trainers and participants to introduce themselves in detail, including links to personal websites and LinkedIn profiles. After the course, the LinkedIn group and a WhatsApp group became the most effective and accessible means of communication for ongoing interaction.

The Miro board allowed for fixed, readily accessible information that might be easily overlooked on dynamic communication channels like Slack. Due to the accessibility and ease of use of these platforms, they were quickly accepted and embraced by participants.

The program manager for the Future Founder track serves as the moderator and community manager for all of the above channels.

TOP-IX - Country of delivery: Italy

Implementation period: November 8, 2023 - January 19, 2024

During the course, we utilized Telegram, Vimeo, and Google Drive as our primary platforms.

After the course, we continued with weekly posts on Telegram and held a follow-up online meeting via Zoom. Participants were also encouraged to connect through LinkedIn with each other and with the Codingschule group to foster broader networking.

Telegram was chosen as a platform because it provides a less structured, easily maintainable communication channel that doesn't require subtopics or subgroup management.

Additionally, TOP-IX frequently uses Telegram for other projects, making it a familiar tool for the team. Telegram's informal environment allows participants to comfortably share their achievements and engage with resources. Content posted included reminders for lectures, links to recorded materials, and project support. Following the course, posts focused on sharing startup news, recommendations, entrepreneurial opportunities, and updates on alumni career paths.

The TOP-IX team manages the Telegram channel, carefully curating relevant news and updates for the participants.

Cyprus Computer Society CCS - Country of delivery: Cyprus

Implementation period: 03 April 2025 - 05 June 2025

During the course, we used a WhatsApp group (FF Future Startup Founders 2024) and Google Drive as our primary communication and resource-sharing platforms.

Following the course, the WhatsApp group continued to serve as the main channel for ongoing interactions. To encourage broader networking, participants were also invited to connect via LinkedIn, particularly with the group created by Codingschule.

WhatsApp was chosen for its convenience and ease of use, allowing for spontaneous, on-the-spot communication that's straightforward to manage. This platform creates a safe and informal space, motivating participants to share accomplishments and access available resources. During the course, posts included lecture reminders, links to materials (such as slides and videos of recorded sessions), and support for project work. After the course, updates have focused on sharing startup news, recommendations, entrepreneurial opportunities, and information about relevant networking events. The CCS team is

responsible for managing the WhatsApp group, ensuring relevant news and updates are curated and shared with participants.

Example

The following example highlights the effectiveness of a supportive community within the Femme Forward network:

Hope Wilson, a participant in the Femme Forward Future Founders program run by Codingschule in Germany, received extensive support from the community as she worked on founding her startup, *Serverless Salad* (this digital platform is designed to empower entrepreneurs through an efficient and user-friendly approach to discovering and customizing cloud technology and AI solutions).

With this concept, Hope applied to the Grace Startup Accelerator Program in Berlin. She received invaluable guidance from Melisa Manrique, an accelerator alumna and trainer in the Femme Forward program, who shared insights from her own experience with her startup, *My Migrant Mama*, at the Grace Accelerator program.

One of the requirements for joining the Grace Accelerator was a temporary relocation to Berlin—a challenge that Hope was able to tackle with the help of the Femme Forward community: another participant, based in Berlin, quickly helped her secure suitable accommodation, underscoring the power of this network to provide both professional and practical support when needed.

Conclusions

The Femme Forward Women in Tech Community has proven to be a valuable platform for fostering connections and empowering women in the tech industry. Each partner implemented their own regional communities using platforms such as Slack, WhatsApp, Telegram, and LinkedIn to engage participants, share resources, and offer ongoing support. Through these communities, participants were able to exchange knowledge, receive mentorship, and stay informed about job opportunities, contributing to their career growth and confidence in tech.

Many partners noted that informal platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram were particularly effective for real-time communication and maintaining engagement beyond the formal course. These platforms facilitated quick interactions, sharing of achievements, and timely reminders for ongoing training or opportunities. Slack was highlighted as beneficial for organizing diverse topics into sub-channels, allowing structured discussions while promoting collaboration.

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The most successful communities were those that prioritized consistent interaction and support. Platforms that allow easy access and minimal technical barriers are often more engaging, with participants feeling comfortable sharing their experiences. The ability to create a safe space for open dialogue was key to ensuring the community's strength.

Some partners experienced challenges when trying to maintain engagement after the course ended, particularly on more structured platforms like Slack, where some participants were less familiar or found it more difficult to navigate. Additionally, maintaining a high level of participation in discussions became difficult as participants transitioned into their professional careers.

Partners identified several indicators of a strong community:

- Active Participation: Frequent exchanges between members, sharing successes, questions, and opportunities.
- Supportive Environment: A space where participants feel safe to ask questions and share challenges without judgment.
- Networking Growth: Observing participants connect with industry professionals or share professional growth opportunities, such as job offers or collaborations, was a strong sign of an impactful community.
- Sustained Engagement: Communities that remained active even after the formal training ended indicated a lasting connection and the program's lasting impact.

While hard data, such as number of posts or frequency of engagement, can offer a quantitative measure, the quality of interactions was seen as equally important. Participants' willingness to contribute to discussions, offer help to peers, and maintain their presence in the community over time were all signs of a strong community. Surveys or feedback forms from participants also provided valuable insights into their level of satisfaction and engagement within the community.

A robust community of women in tech has far-reaching benefits. Participants who engage in these communities gain confidence, mentorship and support from their peers. This network creates pathways to new job opportunities, enhances skills through shared knowledge, and fosters leadership qualities. Additionally, these communities can inspire women to continue their journey in tech, break barriers in male-dominated spaces, and ultimately contribute to a more diverse, inclusive tech industry.

In conclusion, the Femme Forward community initiative has successfully demonstrated the power of peer support, engagement, and collaboration in empowering women to thrive in the tech sector. Going forward, these insights will help improve how we build and maintain strong, supportive networks that continue to empower women long after they have completed the program.

Recommendations for Future Programs

Building on the successes and lessons learned from Femme Forward, future programs should continue to prioritize the creation of strong, supportive communities. Ensuring that participants have access to user-friendly platforms that facilitate easy communication and ongoing engagement is key. We recommend incorporating a structured follow-up process to maintain active participation after the formal program ends. Providing opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring and networking, as well as regular check-ins with program facilitators, can help sustain the momentum. Additionally, it is important to regularly gather participant feedback to adjust the community's structure and resources as needed. Future programs should also consider expanding the cross-border collaboration between participants to foster a more international tech community and enhance the reach and impact of the initiative. Finally, offering localized content that caters to specific regional needs, while maintaining a global perspective, will strengthen the overall inclusivity and relevance of the program.