

WOMANITYLEAP

Equipping youth workers to cultivate Multiple Intelligence competencies in young women for leadership and career readiness in the AI-dominated era



BRIDGING THE COMPETENCIES AND TALENTS OF YOUNG WOMEN AND THE DEMANDS OF THE JOB MARKET
NATIONAL REPORT: BELGIUM

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

WOMANITYLEAP

BRIDGING THE COMPETENCIES AND TALENTS OF YOUNG WOMEN AND THE DEMANDS OF THE JOB MARKET

NATIONAL REPORT: BELGIUM

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE PROJECT	2
ABOUT THE MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE CONCEPT	3
INTRODUCTION OF THE CONDUCTED ACTIVITIES	4
NATIONAL CONTEXT	5
STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS INPUT	10
NATIONAL WORKGROUP SESSION INPUT	23
SUGGESTED CHANGES TO THE MI COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK BASED ON THE INPUT	26
CONSLUSIONS	28

WOMANITYLEAP IS BUILT AROUND ONE PRACTICAL MISSION: YOUTH WORKERS GET BETTER TOOLS TO RECOGNISE DIVERSE STRENGTHS, AND YOUNG WOMEN GET CLEARER, MORE CONFIDENT PATHWAYS FROM TALENT TO SKILLS TO OPPORTUNITIES.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

WomanityLEAP is a 24-month Erasmus+ project which supports youth workers to nurture every kind of talent based on an innovative Multiple Intelligence concept, and to help young women (16–29) grow into confident, capable leaders with real opportunities in a changing, AI-shaped world. It is ran by 6 partnering organizations located in Bulgaria, Belgium, Spain, Cyprus, Latvia & Serbia.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

ABOUT THE MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE (MI) CONCEPT

Why Multiple Intelligences?

- AI and automation are reshaping jobs and skills requirements
- Human strengths become more valuable: creativity, judgment, empathy, collaboration, leadership
- Many young women still face barriers (confidence, stereotypes, access, and limited career exposure)
- Youth workers need a practical framework to recognise strengths fairly and translate them into opportunity

The traditional lens:

- Modern education has been heavily influenced by the IQ scale and narrow measures of “smart”
- This shaped testing, grading, and what society rewards
- Strengths that don’t fit IQ-style measurement often stayed invisible: creative, emotional, leadership and practical capabilities

The MI concept:

- MI reframes intelligence as multiple capacities, not one score
- Everyone has a unique profile of strengths that can be developed
- WomanityLEAP turns this into a youth work tool for guidance, confidence and career direction

THE QUESTION ISN’T IF I’M INTELLIGENT, BUT WHICH INTELLIGENCES I CAN GROW AND APPLY.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

INTRODUCTION OF THE CONDUCTED ACTIVITIES

The interviews were conducted on an individual basis through one-to-one sessions with the selected participants.

Three interviews were organized with the young women and two with youth workers. One of the interviews with the young women took place online through Zoom while the remaining two took place in person at the premises of the Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce (Avenue Henri Jaspar 113, 1060 Saint-Gilles) in order to provide a safe and accessible environment, allowing participants to choose the space where they felt comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives. Both formats managed to ensure safe and confidential interaction and created an open exchange of views and opinions that were completely transparent.

The first session of the workgroup was conducted in person at the premises of our organization. 7 out of the 10 experts participated in the workgroup session, enabling a shared perspective dialogue, exchange of ideas and discussion on shared challenges. The gathering also allowed for a peer-discussion where participants go to know each other and created a friendly environment for future encounters. The three remaining experts took part in the consultation online through Zoom Platform as it was the most convenient format for their participation due to different constraints.

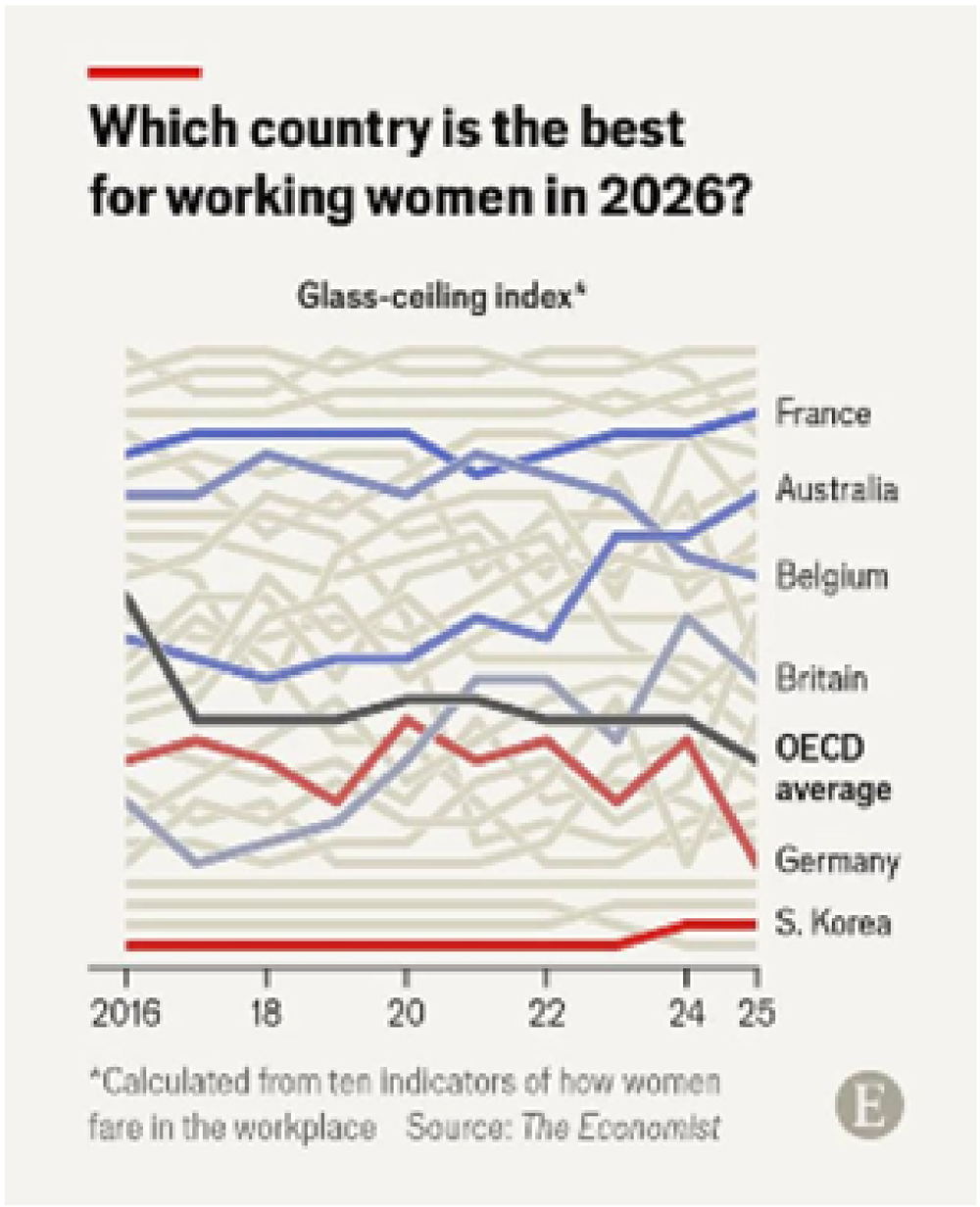
Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

NATONAL CONTEXT

In Belgium, in the third quarter of 2025, the employment rate among people aged 20-64 reached 72.7%, while the ILO unemployment rate for individuals aged 15-64 was estimated at 6.5%. These figures come from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) results published by Statbel, Belgium's national statistical office.

Belgium scores 68.5 out of 100 in the Gender Equality Index, placing the country 7th among EU Member States. Since 2015, Belgium's score has increased by 9.5 points, and it has risen by 4.9 points since 2020. These improvements are mainly driven by progress in the areas of power, knowledge, and money.



Although, compared to other countries Belgium is positioned relatively high, in recent years, its score drops noticeably, especially into 2022 and 2023. This suggests that Belgium's environment for working women worsened during that period rather than improving.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

What specific barriers young women face in Belgium?

Belgium is experiencing significant digital transformation across industries, driven by advances in artificial intelligence, automation, and data-driven technologies. As in many European countries, the digital economy is growing rapidly and creating demand for new technical and transversal skills.

Despite progress in gender equality, women remain underrepresented in digital and technological professions. In Belgium, only about 19% of ICT specialists are women, reflecting a persistent gender imbalance in the technology sector.

At the same time, recent statistics show positive trends in digital skills among younger generations. Among people aged 16-34, young women increasingly demonstrate equal or higher levels of digital skills compared to young men, indicating strong potential for future participation in the digital workforce.

Belgium has adopted several policy initiatives to address gender disparities in the digital economy. One of the key frameworks is the Women in Digital National Strategy (2021-2026), coordinated by the Federal Public Service Economy. The strategy aims to:

- increase digital skills among women
- encourage girls to pursue STEM education
- promote female participation in ICT careers
- support reskilling and upskilling initiatives for women

Belgium also faces broader labour market challenges related to gender equality. Although the country performs relatively well in reducing the gender pay gap compared with many OECD countries, structural inequalities in career progression, sector segregation, and leadership representation persist.

Furthermore, the digital and AI sectors continue to experience a shortage of qualified professionals. Encouraging young women to enter these fields is therefore both a social equity priority and an economic necessity.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

What skills are in general in shortage?

Belgium faces persistent labour shortages across several sectors, particularly in digital technologies, engineering, healthcare, and technical professions. The rapid digitalisation of the economy and the growing adoption of artificial intelligence are increasing the demand for new skill sets.

One of the most significant shortages concerns digital and ICT skills. Employers report difficulties recruiting professionals in areas such as software development, cybersecurity, data science, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence. The demand for advanced digital specialists continues to grow faster than the supply of qualified workers. In addition to technical expertise, Belgian employers increasingly seek hybrid interdisciplinary skills, combining technological knowledge with social, analytical, and creative capabilities. Workers who can integrate digital tools with business understanding, communication, and innovation are particularly valued in sectors such as finance, logistics, healthcare, and digital services. There is also a strong demand for transversal skills, including communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving. As workplaces become more digital and collaborative, the ability to adapt to change and learn new technologies quickly has become essential.

Another challenge is the skills mismatch between education and labour market needs. While Belgium has a relatively high share of tertiary graduates, employers frequently report that graduates lack practical workplace experience or applied digital skills. Strengthening the connection between education, vocational training, and industry needs remains an important priority. For young women specifically, underrepresentation in STEM and ICT fields further contributes to skill shortages in the technology sector. Increasing women's participation in these fields is therefore considered an important opportunity for addressing labour shortages.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

What other relevant aspects are influential for young women to find jobs

Belgium has a relatively high level of educational attainment, and women represent a large share of tertiary education graduates. However, despite strong educational outcomes, women remain underrepresented in certain high-growth sectors such as ICT, engineering, and digital technologies. This limits their access to some of the fastest-growing and highest-paid professions.

Labour market participation among women in Belgium is generally high compared with the European average, but gender disparities still exist. Women are more likely to work part-time than men, which can affect long-term income levels, career progression, and access to leadership positions. These patterns are often linked to caregiving responsibilities and work-life balance challenges. Another important factor influencing employment opportunities for young women is the segregation of educational and career choices. Women are still significantly underrepresented in STEM fields, which contributes to skill shortages in the technology sector while limiting career opportunities for women in emerging industries such as artificial intelligence and digital innovation. At the same time, Belgium has implemented several initiatives to promote gender equality in the labour market. Government programmes, educational reforms, and initiatives from civil society aim to encourage girls and young women to pursue STEM education, strengthen digital skills, and improve access to mentorship and professional networks.

Finally, regional differences in employment opportunities can also influence young women's access to jobs. Labour market conditions vary between Belgium's regions (Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels), with different levels of employment rates, economic sectors, and training opportunities. Policies that support inclusive labour markets, access to childcare, and equal opportunities in education and employment are therefore key factors in improving employment prospects for young women.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

How AI influences Belgium's labor market

Artificial intelligence is increasingly shaping Belgium's labour market by transforming job requirements, creating new occupations, and changing the way organisations operate. One major impact of AI is the growing demand for digital and data-related professions. Sectors such as finance, logistics, healthcare, manufacturing, and public administration are increasingly adopting AI technologies for data analysis, automation, and decision-making processes. As a result, there is rising demand for professionals with expertise in machine learning, data science, AI development, and digital systems management.

At the same time, AI is transforming existing jobs rather than simply replacing them. Many routine and repetitive tasks are becoming automated, allowing workers to focus more on analytical, creative, and interpersonal tasks. This shift increases the importance of digital literacy, problem-solving skills, and adaptability. AI is also contributing to the emergence of new professional roles, such as AI specialists, data analysts, AI ethics experts, and digital transformation consultants. These roles require interdisciplinary knowledge that combines technical expertise with ethical, legal, and societal understanding. Because of these changes, lifelong learning and reskilling are becoming increasingly important in Belgium's labour market. Workers are expected to continuously update their skills in order to adapt to new technologies and evolving job requirements.

For young women, the expansion of AI-related sectors presents both challenges and opportunities. Encouraging greater participation of women in digital and AI-related education and careers is seen as a key step toward addressing labour shortages and promoting gender equality in Belgium's future labour market.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS INPUT

Structured Interviews with young women

1st interview: The interviewee is a 23-year-old young recent graduate (November 2025) who is currently completing an internship and plans to continue her studies with a master's degree in the near future.

Perception of Talent and Self-Identification of Strengths

The interviewee identified dedication, adaptability, and good memory as her main personal strengths. Dedication was described as the ability to fully commit to a task in order to achieve a goal. Adaptability was characterized as the capacity to adjust to different environments over time, even if not immediately. Memory was considered a practical skill that can support professional activities, such as remembering deadlines, events, and responsibilities.

Interestingly, the participant initially struggled to identify talents outside the academic or professional context, suggesting that young individuals may not always recognize or articulate their abilities unless prompted. However, she later mentioned reading and writing as personal interests and strengths, indicating that informal or personal talents may often be undervalued or overlooked when discussing employability.

Recognition and Valuation of Talents

The participant stated that she has not experienced situations where her talents were explicitly unrecognized, particularly within the university environment. However, she expressed the desire for commitment and effort to be acknowledged in the labor market, highlighting the importance of meritocracy which she feels be less and less present in several domains.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

Career Aspirations

The interviewee expressed a clear career aspiration: working in international security within either public or private institutions. This indicates a strong interest in globally oriented and policy-related fields. Her intention to pursue further education also reflects a strategy to strengthen her qualifications before fully entering the job market.

Barriers to Employment

One of the main barriers identified by the participant is the lack of professional experience. As a recent graduate, she noted that many employers expect candidates to already have internships or practical experience, which creates a challenge for individuals at the beginning of their careers. This reflects a common structural issue in the job market, where entry-level candidates are expected to already possess work experience.

Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence and the Changing Job Market

The participant perceives the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the labor market as currently positive, mainly in terms of productivity tools such as assistance in writing emails or documents. However, she expressed uncertainty about how AI might reshape the job market more broadly. This uncertainty suggests that while young professionals are aware of technological change, they may not yet fully understand its long-term implications for employment.

Skills Required for Future Employment

The interviewee identified adaptability as the most important skill for future jobs. She emphasized that the ability to adjust to changing circumstances, new technologies, and emerging types of work will be crucial in a rapidly evolving labor market.

1.Coping Strategies in Difficult Situations

When facing challenges, the participant reported that she relies on seeking advice from more experienced individuals. This highlights the importance of mentorship and guidance during early career stages.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

2.Skills Development Needs

The young woman expressed a strong interest in developing public speaking skills. She believes this ability is particularly important for women, who may sometimes hesitate to express their ideas until they feel completely confident.

3.Training Needs for Young Women

If she were to design a training program for young women, she would focus on:

- Public speaking
- The ability to “take space”, meaning the confidence to express ideas and participate actively in discussions without excessive self-censorship.

This perspective reflects broader discussions about gender dynamics in professional environments, where women may feel pressure to demonstrate higher levels of certainty before speaking.

2nd interview: The second interview was done with a young woman of 29 years currently completing an extracurricular internship. She holds a bachelor’s degree on political science and diplomacy.

Recognition of Talents and Organizational Barriers

She reported that her talents are not always fully recognized in professional environments. She explained that this often occurs when organizational structures and timelines do not align with the potential and pace of employees. According to her, institutional or organizational inertia, often rooted in cultural rather than practical barriers, can slow down innovation and prevent employees’ ideas or project proposals from being adequately supported.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

Self-Identified Talents and Strengths

The participant identified several personal talents, including:

- Writing and storytelling
- Photography
- Strategic vision and project development
- Long-term vision and planning capacity

In addition, she described her writing ability as the capacity to adapt language and tone to different contexts in order to achieve specific objectives, demonstrating communication versatility.

Desired Recognition in the Labor Market

Among her talents, the participant most wishes to have her capacity for project development and strategic vision recognized in the labor market. The interviewee believes her talents could be applied through roles related to project management, strategic planning, or organizational development.

Additional Strengths Not Recognized by Institutions

Outside formal professional or academic recognition, the participant described a strong drive toward innovation and new ideas. However, she believes these ideas are often limited by psychological or cultural barriers within organizations, which can discourage experimentation or change. She suggested that if these barriers were reduced and individuals were given more trust and resources, innovative thinking could lead to meaningful change and greater recognition of individual contributions.

Career Aspirations

The participant expressed a desire to pursue a career where her work has a tangible and measurable social impact. She emphasized that recognition of her work is also important, whether in economic, social, or human terms. This indicates a strong motivation for purpose-driven employment, where personal contribution and societal benefit are both valued.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

Barriers and Challenges in the Labor Market

The interviewee identified several major challenges when searching for employment or planning a career:

- High competition, as many candidates are highly qualified
- Constant need for updating skills due to rapid changes in the labor market
- Time-consuming application processes, which can themselves feel like a full-time job
- Generational competition, where younger candidates may appear more competitive due to diverse experiences
- Geographical mobility expectations, where candidates are expected to relocate frequently but may also be criticized for perceived instability when they do so
- Overqualification, which can exclude candidates from certain positions
- Institutional bias, such as preference for candidates with degrees from specific universities or countries

Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence in the Job Market

The participant was uncertain about the broader impact of artificial intelligence on the job market. However, she shared an observation reported by human resources professionals: some job postings may not correspond to real vacancies. According to this perspective, some listings are created either by automated systems or by organizations for internal recruitment monitoring rather than genuine hiring.

Skills for Future Employment

When discussing future labor market needs, the participant emphasized two key competencies:

- Rapid learning ability
- Generalist knowledge rather than narrow specialization

She argued that because knowledge and technologies evolve quickly, professionals who can learn quickly and adapt across different fields may have an advantage over highly specialized individuals.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

Skills the Participant Would Like to Develop

The participant expressed interest in developing several additional competencies:

- Faster learning and processing speed
- Advanced digital and computer-related skills
- Understanding complex interpersonal and organizational dynamics, including political or power structures within institutions

Training Needs for Young Women

If she could design a training program for young women, the participant would focus on:

- Strategic communication
- Public speaking
- Professional self-presentation
- Self-defense in professional contexts, meaning the ability to understand what should or should not be said in professional environments
- Advanced IT competencies

She also noted that gender discrimination may become more evident as women approach their late twenties or early thirties, making it particularly important for women to develop skills that help them navigate professional environments and advocate for themselves.

Emotional Support and Coping Strategies

The participant initially chose not to answer the question about coping strategies during difficult situations. However, she later suggested that emotional support and companionship, including the presence of a pet, can provide comfort and help individuals cope with challenges.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

3rd interview: The third interview was done with a young woman of 23 years old, recent graduate on political science with a double degree and currently pursuing a Master's degree while doing an internship on EU Affairs.

Recognition of Talents and Organizational Barriers

She reported that her talents are not always fully recognized especially in the University Context where grades and numbers worth more than personal value.

Self-Identified Talents and Strengths

The participant was not convinced of her talents, but when put face to a decision she claimed to be a very proactive person and suggested this as talent. She mentioned she would like to be recognized in the labour market, for her precision, her organizational skills and her empathy.

Additional Strengths Not Recognized by Institutions

Outside formal professional or academic recognition, the participant described herself being a very empathetic person especially towards understanding other's circumstances and situations.

Career Aspirations

The participant expressed a desire to work in an international context in harmony with other people, where multiculturalism is considered an asset and where the wellbeing of each person is put forward and respected.

Barriers and Challenges in the Labor Market

The interviewee identified high competition as a major challenge, noting that many candidates are highly qualified. They also pointed out that initial screening processes can exclude applicants who, while not appearing the most qualified on paper, may possess valuable skills and competencies that are not immediately evident in their CVs but could emerge at a later stage.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence in the Job Market

According to her perspective, AI is reshaping the labour market and is likely to influence the profession she aims to pursue in the future. However, she views this transformation positively, because of its potential to automate repetitive and time-consuming tasks, thereby simplifying overall workloads and increasing efficiency.

For example, in many professional contexts, AI tools can handle routine administrative duties such as scheduling, data entry, or document formatting. This allows to dedicate more time to higher-value activities that require critical thinking, creativity, and interpersonal skills. From her point of view, rather than replacing jobs entirely, AI serves as a supportive tool that enhances productivity and creates opportunities for workers to develop more strategic and meaningful aspects of their roles.

Skills for Future Employment

When discussing future labor market needs, the participant emphasized that skills about the use of AI will be required more because in every professional context the use of such tools tends to be diffused and expected from the employees.

Skills the Participant Would Like to Develop

The participant expressed a desire to further develop her ability to analyse situations in a more rational and effective way, rather than reacting primarily on an emotional level. She recognizes that while emotions are natural and important, relying too heavily on them can sometimes hinder clear decision-making, especially in professional contexts.

Training Needs for Young Women

If she could design a training program for young women, the participant would focus on leadership development initiatives aimed at strengthening self-confidence and encouraging women to step outside their comfort zones. She believes that such programs should help young women feel more secure in their abilities, empowering them to take initiative, express their ideas, and pursue opportunities they might otherwise hesitate to seize.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

For example, the program could include workshops on public speaking, decision-making, and negotiation skills, as well as mentoring sessions with experienced professionals who can share their own career paths and challenges.

Emotional Support and Coping Strategies

The participant explained that, when facing difficult situations, she finds strength in reminding herself that she is ultimately responsible for her own future. This mindset helps her maintain a sense of control and personal agency, even in challenging circumstances. Rather than feeling overwhelmed or dependent on external factors, she focuses on what she can do to improve her situation.

By adopting this perspective, she is able to stay motivated and proactive, using obstacles as opportunities for growth rather than setbacks. This approach supports her resilience, as it encourages her to take initiative, make decisions independently, and remain focused on her long-term goals despite temporary difficulties.

4th Interview: The fourth interview was done with a young teacher of English subject to students aged 11-18 from complex backgrounds, including economic, familiar and social matters. Youth are generally expulsed from other schools and finish in the school where she teaches.

The youth workers primarily work with vulnerable young women, including those expelled from school, at risk of social exclusion, or experiencing family difficulties. Their role focuses on providing emotional support, life skills, and practical guidance, rather than purely academic teaching.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

Common Challenges

She shared that in her context, young women present challenges that are mostly emotional and social in nature. For instance:

- Emotional regulation: anger, low self-esteem, difficulty managing feelings
- Social difficulties: trouble choosing friends, experiencing or perpetrating bullying, seeking attention from men
- Behavioral issues: anti-social behaviors, occasional violence, risky decisions
- These challenges indicate that interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies are critical gaps that youth work aims to address

Impact of AI and Digitalisation

Current impact: Minimal on youth work and employment at this stage. Teaching methods and youth work approaches are somehow affected but being the youth she works with, from difficult background, where most of them cannot have technological devices the impact is a bit more limited than in other schools.

Skills risk: Young women who are unmotivated, closed-minded, or unwilling to develop skills are at risk of being negatively affected in the future labor market.

Opportunities: Limited awareness of AI-driven opportunities; emphasis remains on strengthening human-centered skills rather than technical or AI-related skills.

Barriers to Development

Economic barriers: Limited financial resources reduce access to opportunities such as training, work experience, or extracurricular activities.

Family influence: Family dynamics often constrain youth workers' ability to help; interventions are limited if the family is unsupportive.

Substance abuse: Substance use presents additional obstacles to development.

Online risks: Unsafe online environments affect young women's well-being and opportunities.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

She emphasized the hardest barriers to address are family influence and online safety, as youth workers can teach skills, but external factors remain strong. For instance, she mentioned an example of a case where she tried to teach how smoking was bad for health but one of the young student replied saying that she buys cigarettes with her mom who also smokes. This shows the limited potential of affecting positively the decisions of youth when faced with stronger parental control.

Critical Competencies for Employability

Youth workers identified competencies essential for career readiness:

- Intrapersonal skills: self-awareness, emotional regulation, resilience, long-term vision.
- Relational skills: communication, teamwork, leadership, cultural awareness.
- Flexibility and adaptability: the ability to navigate change and uncertainty.
- Healthy competitiveness and social skills: important for both workplace integration and personal growth.

She claimed that the overlooked competences are languages and formal academic skills, while underdeveloped are interpersonal skills and people management abilities.

Methods for Developing Strengths

Youth workers use practical and experiential methods to identify and build skills:

- Life skills programs and structured personal/social support plans.
- Engagement in creative activities like radio stations or work experience projects.
- Focus on personal growth through reflection and real-world application rather than standardized testing.

Effective approaches could include hands-on activities that combine social, emotional, and employability skill development.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

Needs and Opportunities

Youth workers see a need for structured frameworks, such as a Multiple Intelligence Competence Framework, to systematize youth support. To prepare young women for an AI-driven labor market, the priority is to preserve human-centered skills (emotional intelligence, creativity, collaboration). She agreed that they require time, tools, and resources to integrate soft skill development with practical learning experiences.

5th Interview: The 5th interview was done with a young woman of 27 years old recent graduate from a Master's degree on political science and pursuing a Specialized Master's in Gender Studies and Decolonization. She has been actively involved in youth associations as youth worker for the past 4 years both in Brussels and at the international level.

Common Challenges

She shared that in her context, young women present challenges that are mostly emotional and social in nature. For instance, emotional regulation is a common issue, with some young women struggling to cope with anxiety, frustration, or self-doubt. Social difficulties are also frequent; many find it hard to navigate peer pressure, establish supportive friendships, or manage conflicts with classmates or colleagues. Behavioral issues occasionally arise, such as withdrawing from group activities, experimenting with risky behaviors, or overcommitting to responsibilities in ways that harm their wellbeing. She noted that these challenges highlight a critical need for developing both interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies to help young women build confidence and resilience.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

Impact of AI and Digitalisation

She observed that the current impact of AI and digitalisation on young women's opportunities is growing but uneven. While some sectors are beginning to automate routine tasks, many of the young women she works with do not yet have access to advanced digital tools, limiting immediate effects. Skills at risk include critical thinking, digital literacy, and adaptability, especially for those who are reluctant to explore new technologies or are unsure about how to translate their existing skills into digital contexts. She also noted that digitalisation creates opportunities in areas such as online activism, virtual collaboration, and creative digital content production, but young women often need guidance to recognize and access these opportunities.

Barriers to Development

Economic limitations remain a major barrier, preventing access to workshops, internships, or travel for educational programs. Family expectations sometimes restrict autonomy, with young women having to balance caregiving responsibilities or cultural obligations alongside personal development. Mental health challenges were cited as additional obstacles and that limited helping systems are at disposal.

Critical Competencies for Employability

She identified key competencies for young women's employability today. Intrapersonal skills such as self-confidence, emotional regulation, and strategic goal-setting are essential. Relational skills, including effective communication, negotiation, teamwork, and cultural awareness, are equally important. Flexibility and adaptability help young women navigate uncertainty, while networking and professional curiosity enable them to seize new opportunities. She highlighted that competencies often overlooked include digital research skills and formal project management, while underdeveloped areas include self-promotion, leadership confidence, and boundary-setting in professional environments.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

Methods for Developing Strengths

She explained that her approach focuses on experiential and participatory methods. Mentoring programs, reflective journaling, collaborative projects, and volunteering opportunities allow young women to discover their abilities in real-world settings. She encourages them to engage in creative activities such as organizing community events, producing digital media campaigns, or leading small advocacy projects. These methods help young women build confidence, practical skills, and a sense of agency. She emphasized that reflection combined with hands-on practice is particularly effective in fostering both visible and invisible skills.

NATIONAL WORKGROUP SESSION INPUT

Understanding and Applying Multiple Intelligences

Participants highlighted that they are unaware of the full range of their intelligences. While some were familiar with emotional or cognitive intelligence, others, like naturalistic, technological, or interpersonal intelligences, were less known. The discussion emphasized that intelligence is not a single, measurable score (e.g., IQ) but a multifaceted concept, drawing from Gardner and Sternberg's theories. The workgroup shared that relying solely on IQ tests can be limiting and demotivating for young women, as these tests do not capture creativity, emotional intelligence, or interpersonal skills.

Impact of AI and Digitalisation

The experts in the workgroup emphasized that AI represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the labour market. They highlighted that the automation of routine tasks, particularly in administrative and technical roles, may have a disproportionate impact on women, especially in sectors such as secretarial work. At the same time, the experts believe that AI can significantly enhance productivity, enabling young women to focus more on tasks that require creativity,

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

decision-making, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving, areas where human capabilities remain essential and cannot be easily replicated by technology. Furthermore, the group stressed the increasing importance of technological intelligence and AI literacy. In their view, young women who are able to understand and effectively use AI tools may gain a competitive advantage in emerging fields such as IT, cybersecurity, and digital marketing.Lastly, they underlined that human-centered competencies, like interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, creativity, and public speaking, will continue to play a crucial role in the future of work.

Barriers to Young Women's Development and Employment

Personal barriers: low self-confidence, fear, and impostor syndrome were consistently cited as obstacles preventing young women from exploring their talents or pursuing opportunities.

Structural barriers: childcare responsibilities, family expectations, societal stereotypes, and gendered division of labor limit access to certain jobs or career advancement.

Gender-based biases in professional settings were discussed, including the perception that men are more assertive in interviews or public speaking, and how women's contributions are sometimes undervalued or overlooked.

Participants emphasized that systemic change is slow, and while progress is being made at high levels, local and everyday interventions (like coaching and mentorship) are critical to empower young women.

Strategies to Support Young Women's Growth

The experts highlighted the importance of creating safe and supportive environments where young women can overcome fear and timidity, particularly in areas such as public speaking and leadership. They referred to examples such as

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

public speaking and leadership. They referred to examples such as coaching programs, where participants who initially lacked confidence were able, over time, to develop their skills and even take on mentoring roles themselves. They also emphasized the value of encouraging young women to explore their talents through structured initiatives, including programs like Felobel, volunteering experiences, and extracurricular activities. According to them, these opportunities play a key role in helping women identify and strengthen their unique abilities.

In addition, they stressed that fostering self-esteem, reflection, and awareness of one's own strengths is essential for supporting young women in pursuing both personal and professional goals. They believe that this internal development is just as important as acquiring technical or academic skills. Finally, the group underlined that youth workers have a crucial role to play. They should focus on active listening, empathy, and strong social and emotional intelligence, as well as on the ability to recognize and nurture the individual potential of each young woman.

Competencies for Youth Workers Supporting Young Women

Several key competencies were considered essential for effectively supporting young women in their personal and professional development. First, they emphasized the importance of promoting self-esteem, helping young women to believe in their own capabilities and recognize their potential. They also highlighted the role of social and emotional intelligence, particularly in managing group dynamics, understanding diverse personalities, and ensuring that different voices are balanced and respected within group settings. In this context, empathy and attentiveness were seen as fundamental, enabling youth workers to recognize individual needs and support each participant's personal growth. Furthermore, the experts stressed the importance of encouraging autonomy. They believe that young women should be supported in making choices that align with their talents and interests, including pursuing non-traditional career paths or creative fields that may fall outside conventional expectations.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

Finally, maintaining a positive environment was considered crucial. They underlined the value of providing constructive feedback in a way that addresses challenges without discouraging participants, thereby fostering motivation, confidence, and continuous development.

Optimism and Long-Term Perspective

While systemic barriers remain, the workgroup highlighted that progress is possible, particularly with increasing representation of women in leadership and more equitable education opportunities. Participants expressed that self-discovery, experiential learning, and consistent support are essential for young women to fully explore their talents and prepare for a changing labor market.

Overall Session Insight:

The session underscored the need to recognize diverse intelligences, empower young women through confidence-building and practical opportunities, and adapt to the evolving labor market shaped by AI and technology. Youth workers play a pivotal role by providing guidance, support, and safe environments that allow young women to explore their potential and develop both human-centered and technological competencies.

SUGGESTED CHANGES OVER THE MI COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK BASED ON THE INPUT

The national workgroup sessions suggested several important changes to the MI Competence Framework in order to make it more relevant, inclusive, and responsive to the realities faced by young women today. First, the experts recommended expanding the framework to better recognize underrepresented forms of intelligence. In particular, they stressed the need to include technological and AI-related intelligence, reflecting the increasing importance of digital skills in the labour market. They also emphasized the value of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, especially in connection with leadership, public speaking

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

self-confidence, and emotional self-awareness, which were seen as essential dimensions of young women's empowerment. In addition, the workgroup highlighted the importance of creativity and authenticity, noting that qualities such as critical thinking, originality, and unique human perspectives remain areas that technology cannot replace. Second, the experts proposed a shift from a framework focused mainly on assessment to one that supports development. Rather than relying too heavily on traditional measures such as IQ tests, they suggested adopting a more developmental and reflective approach that helps young women identify, strengthen, and apply their talents over time. In this perspective, self-assessment tools, coaching methods, and guided reflection should be integrated into the framework so that participants can explore their strengths and areas for growth in a safe and supportive way. A further recommendation concerned the stronger integration of human-centered competencies. The workgroup underlined that emotional intelligence, empathy, social intelligence, resilience, and critical thinking should be treated as core elements of the framework. They also stressed that communication and public speaking skills should be explicitly recognized, as these are crucial not only for professional development but also for building confidence, visibility, and agency in social contexts. The experts also highlighted the need for the framework to address structural and contextual factors that influence how intelligence can be expressed and developed. They noted that societal expectations, gender stereotypes, childcare responsibilities, and workplace bias can all limit opportunities for young women. For this reason, they suggested that the framework should include greater recognition of these barriers, as well as guidance on how to navigate workplace inequalities and overcome systemic obstacles. In addition, the workgroup recommended promoting long-term talent development rather than viewing intelligence as fixed or static. They proposed the introduction of progression pathways that encourage gradual skill-building through mentoring, experiential learning, practice, and reflection. According to this view, confidence and competence develop over time and should be supported through continuous opportunities for growth. Another key suggestion was to better

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

contextualize the framework for the AI era. The experts argued that the MI Competence Framework should explain how different intelligences interact with AI and technological tools, showing that AI can support and enhance human work but cannot replace essential human abilities. In this context, adaptability and technological literacy were identified as fundamental meta-competencies for future work environments.

Finally, the workgroup stressed the importance of inclusivity and personalization. They recommended that the framework should better account for individual differences and allow young women to pursue diverse educational, professional, and creative pathways. Instead of applying a one-size-fits-all model, the framework should include flexible modules that recognize different ways of learning, developing, and achieving success.

CONCLUSIONS

- **Recognition of Multiple Forms of Intelligence is Crucial**, the session confirmed that young women possess diverse intelligences beyond traditional academic or cognitive measures. Emotional, interpersonal, intrapersonal, creative, and technological intelligences are all critical for personal and professional growth, especially in the context of an AI-driven world.
- **Human-Centered Competencies Remain Irreplaceable**. AI may automate tasks, but competencies such as empathy, social intelligence, public speaking, critical thinking, and decision-making remain uniquely human and highly valued. The framework must highlight these as core skills for employability and empowerment.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

Contextual and Structural Barriers Influence Talent Development. Societal and structural factors, such as gender stereotypes, childcare responsibilities, workplace bias, and confidence gaps, can prevent young women from fully exploring their talents. The MI framework should integrate awareness of these barriers and provide strategies to navigate them.

Assessment Should Focus on Development, Not Ranking. Rigid measures like IQ tests were deemed insufficient and potentially demotivating. A shift toward development-oriented tools, reflection, and coaching is needed to help individuals recognize and grow their talents over time.

Empowerment Requires Long-Term Support. Sustained mentorship, coaching, and safe spaces are essential for young women to develop confidence, overcome timidity, and explore their potential. The MI framework should provide pathways for gradual skill-building and personal growth.

AI Skills Must Be Integrated Strategically: Technological and AI-related skills are increasingly important, but they should complement, not replace human-centered intelligences. The MI framework should explicitly incorporate AI literacy and technological interaction intelligence as part of modern competence development.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066

WOMANITYLEAP

BRIDGING THE COMPETENCIES AND TALENTS OF YOUNG WOMEN AND THE DEMANDS OF THE JOB MARKET

NATIONAL REPORT: BELGIUM

www.womanityleap.com

WomanityLeap

@womanityleap

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.
Project Number: 2025-1-BG01-KA220-YOU-000352066