

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: LATVIA

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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.

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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.

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INTRODUCTION OF THE CONDUCTED ACTIVITIES

Structured interviews and national workgroup sessions in Latvia were conducted in February 2026. Five structured interviews were carried out using the project questionnaire: three with young women aged 18–24 from different backgrounds and two with youth workers working with young people in youth organizations and municipal youth services. The interviews were conducted in an informal and safe environment, allowing participants to share their experiences, talents, career challenges, and perspectives on labour market changes and the influence of AI.

In addition, two online national workgroup sessions were organized with a total of ten experts from fields such as youth work, education, psychology, business, and non-formal education. The discussions focused on labour market changes, barriers faced by young women, and feedback on the draft Multiple Intelligence Competence Framework. The sessions provided professional insights and recommendations for improving the competence domains and their relevance for young women's employability.

NATONAL CONTEXT

Latvia currently has a relatively moderate unemployment rate compared to previous years, with unemployment fluctuating around 6–7%. At the same time, a gender pay gap remains visible, with women on average earning around 15–18% less than men depending on the sector. Young women often face several barriers when entering the labour market, including gender stereotypes related to certain professions, difficulties balancing work and family responsibilities, and limited access to childcare support. Geographic differences also play an important role, as employment opportunities are concentrated in larger cities such as Riga, while young women from rural regions may face fewer career opportunities.

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Employers in Latvia increasingly report shortages in several areas, particularly in digital skills, IT and data-related competencies, engineering, healthcare, and skilled technical professions. At the same time, transversal skills such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, and language skills are also highly demanded in the labour market. Young women often demonstrate strong relational and communication abilities, but self-confidence and the willingness to advocate for themselves professionally may sometimes be less developed due to cultural expectations and socialization patterns.

For vulnerable young women, additional barriers may include economic difficulties, limited access to educational opportunities, lack of supportive role models, or experiences of social exclusion. Young women from rural areas, ethnic minority backgrounds, or those with disabilities may encounter additional challenges related to accessibility, mobility, or discrimination. Artificial intelligence and digitalisation are gradually transforming Latvia's labour market by automating routine tasks and increasing the demand for digital literacy, analytical skills, and the ability to work effectively with technological tools. At the same time, human competencies such as communication, creativity, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking are becoming increasingly important in adapting to these changes.

STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS INPUT

The five structured interviews included three young women aged 18–24 and two youth workers working with young people in different contexts. The interviews highlighted both the strengths young women bring to the labour market and the challenges they face when developing their careers.

The interviewed young women identified communication skills, adaptability, initiative, and the ability to build relationships with others as some of their main strengths. Participants also mentioned creativity, leadership potential, and time-management skills as important personal abilities. At the same time, several

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interviewees expressed that their talents are not always recognised, particularly when they lack formal work experience or when their abilities are not visible in traditional academic environments. Some participants also highlighted practical skills and hobbies - such as arts, sports, or creative activities - that are rarely valued in education or employment settings but still represent important personal strengths.

Several barriers affecting young women's career development emerged from the interviews. These include limited work experience, financial constraints related to education, geographic inequalities between urban and rural areas, and challenges connected with language or cultural background. One participant described barriers related to disability and the need for flexible working arrangements. Youth workers also noted that time pressure, parental expectations, and limited opportunities for young people with fewer resources can restrict their participation in development activities. Psychological barriers such as lower self-confidence and hesitation to advocate for oneself were also mentioned.

Participants had mixed perspectives on the influence of artificial intelligence on the labour market. Some interviewees perceived AI as a useful tool that can simplify tasks such as documentation, research, and information processing. Others expressed concern that AI may replace certain professions, particularly in fields such as translation or content creation, and reduce creativity or independent thinking. Youth workers observed that digitalisation is rapidly changing job structures and increasing the importance of digital literacy, critical thinking, and the ability to evaluate information produced by AI systems.

Across the interviews, several competencies were consistently identified as important for the future labour market. These include communication skills, emotional intelligence, problem-solving abilities, adaptability, and critical thinking. Language skills and digital competencies were also highlighted as important for professional development. Youth workers emphasized that self-confidence, emotional resilience, and the ability to express one's opinions are particularly important for young women's employability.

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Participants also highlighted the importance of mentorship, supportive environments, and experiential learning opportunities. Activities such as simulations, non-formal learning workshops, volunteering, and project-based learning were seen as effective ways for young women to discover and develop their talents. Both young women and youth workers emphasized that opportunities to experiment with different roles and receive constructive feedback are essential for strengthening confidence and career readiness.

Overall, the interviews confirmed that while young women possess strong interpersonal and adaptive competencies, structural barriers, limited recognition of diverse talents, and rapidly changing labour market conditions continue to influence their career opportunities. Strengthening non-formal learning opportunities, mentorship, and competence-based development approaches could help better support young women in navigating the evolving AI-driven labour market.

NATIONAL WORKGROUP SESSION INPUT

Two national workgroup sessions were conducted online in February 2026 with a total of ten experts from different professional backgrounds, including youth work, formal and non-formal education, psychology, business, and pedagogy. The sessions provided an opportunity to discuss labour market developments influenced by artificial intelligence, identify barriers affecting young women's employability, and validate the draft Multiple Intelligence (MI) Competence Framework from a practical perspective. Participants shared observations from their professional experience working with young people and contributed suggestions for improving the framework.

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During the discussions on labour market trends, experts noted that artificial intelligence and digitalisation are gradually reshaping the structure of work and the skills required from employees. Many tasks are becoming more automated, and workers are increasingly expected to combine technical knowledge with broader transversal skills. AI tools are already being used in areas such as research, content creation, project writing, marketing, and data analysis. However, participants emphasized that AI should be treated as a support tool rather than a replacement for human judgment. Critical thinking, the ability to verify information, and responsible use of digital tools were identified as essential competencies in an AI-influenced labour market. Experts also highlighted that while certain routine tasks may decline due to automation, professions that require human interaction, creativity, empathy, and decision-making will remain highly relevant.

The experts also discussed barriers that young women face when entering or progressing in the labour market. Structural barriers such as childcare responsibilities, limited family support, and geographic differences between urban and rural areas were mentioned as significant factors affecting employment opportunities. Cultural expectations and gender stereotypes were also highlighted as continuing to influence career choices and professional development. In addition, psychological factors such as lower self-confidence, perfectionism, and fear of failure can discourage young women from applying for certain positions or pursuing leadership roles. Experts emphasized that young women from vulnerable backgrounds - such as those from rural regions, socially disadvantaged families, or with experiences of violence or instability - often face additional challenges related to limited access to opportunities and support networks.

Participants also reflected on how young women's talents and competencies are recognized and developed. Experts agreed that young women often demonstrate strong relational competencies, including communication skills, empathy, and cooperation. However, competencies related to self-expression, leadership, and confidently defending one's opinions are sometimes less developed or less encouraged. Experts emphasized the importance of strengthening self-awareness, emotional regulation, and critical thinking, as these abilities help young women better navigate professional and social environments.

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Regarding the Multiple Intelligence Competence Framework, participants generally evaluated the proposed domains - personal, relational, and applied intelligence - as relevant and meaningful. At the same time, several recommendations were made to improve clarity and usability. Experts suggested simplifying the terminology and making the competence descriptions more accessible for young people. For example, some domains could be framed in more intuitive language to help young women relate to them more easily. Participants also recommended ensuring clearer distinctions between competence domains to avoid overlaps.

Experts also provided examples of observable behaviours that reflect the different competence areas. In personal intelligence, important behaviours include self-reflection, awareness of one's strengths and values, emotional self-regulation, and the ability to set and pursue personal goals. In relational intelligence, behaviours such as respectful communication, active listening, empathy, collaboration, and constructive conflict management were highlighted. For applied intelligence, participants emphasized creativity, practical problem-solving, digital competence, and the ability to use technological tools responsibly.

Another important topic discussed during the sessions was how youth workers can support the development of these competencies. Experts emphasized experiential learning as one of the most effective approaches. Activities such as project-based learning, volunteering, simulations, mentoring, and collaborative group work allow young women to experiment with different roles and develop practical skills. Reflection after activities was also considered essential, as it helps participants better understand their strengths, emotions, and learning processes. Informal education methods, including storytelling, creative exercises, discussions, and associative learning tools, were also mentioned as effective ways to encourage self-expression and personal development.

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Overall, the national workgroup sessions confirmed that young women's employability depends not only on technical knowledge or formal qualifications but also on a wide range of personal and relational competencies. Experts highlighted the importance of creating supportive environments where young women can explore their talents, develop self-confidence, and gain practical experience. The discussions also emphasized the need for competence frameworks that are easy to understand, flexible, and relevant to the realities of a rapidly changing labour market influenced by technological development and artificial intelligence.

SUGGESTED CHANGES OVER THE MI COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK BASED ON THE INPUT

Based on the discussions during the national workgroup sessions, experts generally considered the proposed structure of the Multiple Intelligence (MI) Competence Framework relevant and useful. However, several suggestions were made to improve its clarity, accessibility, and practical applicability for youth work and for young women themselves.

One of the main recommendations was to simplify the terminology used in the framework. Participants noted that the term "intelligence" may be less intuitive for young people and practitioners than the concept of "competences." Experts suggested presenting the domains in more accessible and relatable language so that young women can more easily understand and reflect on their own abilities. For example, personal intelligence domains could be described in more user-friendly ways, such as "me and myself" (intrapersonal), "me and my feelings" (emotional), "me and my thoughts" (cognitive), and "me and my goals" (purpose-oriented). Simplifying terminology would make the framework more suitable for practical application in youth work settings.

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Participants also recommended ensuring clearer distinctions between the different competence domains. Some experts noted that certain competencies, particularly within relational and social-emotional areas, may overlap. Clarifying definitions and providing concrete examples or observable behaviours for each domain would help practitioners better understand how to apply the framework and avoid confusion. Another suggestion was to emphasize competencies that are particularly relevant in the context of the changing labour market and the influence of artificial intelligence. Experts highlighted the growing importance of critical thinking, the ability to evaluate information, ethical responsibility in the use of technology, and digital literacy. At the same time, participants stressed that human-centred competencies - such as communication, empathy, creativity, and the ability to collaborate - should remain central in the framework, as these abilities are unlikely to be replaced by AI.

Experts also suggested strengthening the focus on personal well-being and self-awareness within the personal intelligence domain. Skills related to self-reflection, understanding personal values, recognizing one's boundaries, and maintaining a healthy balance between personal and professional life were seen as essential for young women's long-term development. Participants emphasized that competence development should not focus only on improving weaknesses but also on recognizing and strengthening existing talents.

In the relational intelligence domain, participants recommended placing greater emphasis on constructive communication, non-violent communication, and the ability to manage disagreements respectfully. The ability to clearly express one's opinions, justify perspectives, and take initiative in group situations was considered an important leadership-related competence that should be highlighted more explicitly.

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Finally, experts suggested that the framework should include more practical examples of observable behaviours and real-life applications of competencies. This would make the framework easier to use for youth workers and more understandable for young women assessing their own abilities. Providing examples linked to everyday situations, project work, teamwork, or leadership activities could significantly improve the usability of the competence framework in non-formal education contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted interviews and national workgroup sessions provided valuable insights into the strengths, challenges, and development needs of young women in the current labour market context. The findings confirm that young women often demonstrate strong interpersonal abilities, adaptability, creativity, and motivation to develop their skills. At the same time, several barriers continue to affect their access to opportunities, including structural challenges such as limited childcare support, geographic inequalities between urban and rural areas, and cultural expectations that may influence career choices. Psychological factors such as lower self-confidence and hesitation to take leadership roles were also identified as influencing young women's professional development.

The discussions also highlighted the increasing impact of digitalisation and artificial intelligence on the labour market. While AI offers opportunities to increase efficiency and access information, it also requires individuals to develop strong critical thinking, digital literacy, and responsible technology use. Experts emphasized that human-centered competencies - such as communication, empathy, creativity, and the ability to collaborate - will remain highly relevant in the future labour market, even as technological solutions become more widespread.

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The results of the activities suggest that the Multiple Intelligence Competence Framework is a relevant tool for recognizing and supporting diverse talents among young women. However, several improvements could increase its usability and impact. In particular, simplifying the terminology, providing clearer definitions, and including observable behaviours and practical examples would make the framework easier to apply in youth work contexts. The framework should also continue to emphasize the importance of personal awareness, relational competencies, and applied skills that combine creativity, practical problem-solving, and responsible use of technology.

Overall, the findings underline the importance of holistic competence development approaches that go beyond traditional academic measures of ability. Supporting young women's employability requires creating environments where they can explore their talents, develop confidence, and gain practical experience through non-formal learning methods. The insights gathered from the interviews and workgroup sessions will contribute to further refining the MI Competence Framework so that it better reflects the realities of young women's lives and the evolving demands of the modern labour market.

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