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: SERBIA

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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

In Serbia, several activities were conducted as part of Work Package 2, Activity 1 to collect qualitative data on the competencies needed by young women in the AI-driven labor market.

Structured interviews were conducted with youth workers and young women from different educational and professional backgrounds. The aim of these interviews was to explore perceptions of key competencies, barriers to employment, and opportunities created by technological change.

In addition, two national workgroup meetings were organized online in order to discuss the topic with professionals working with young people.

- First meeting: 28 January 2026
- Second meeting: 26 February 2026

The national working group consisted of 10 participants from three cities in Serbia: Pozarevac (5 participants), Jagodina (4 participants), and Belgrade (1 participant). Participants included youth workers, professionals from civil society organizations, and individuals experienced in working with young people and vulnerable groups.

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NATONAL CONTEXT

Young women in Serbia face a number of structural, social, and cultural challenges that influence their participation in education, employment, and professional development. These challenges are particularly visible during the transition from education to the labour market.

Several contextual factors influence the opportunities available to young women:

- traditional gender roles still influence educational and career choices, particularly in technical and leadership-oriented fields
- women remain underrepresented in certain sectors such as technology, engineering, and entrepreneurship
- young women from vulnerable backgrounds often face additional barriers such as limited access to resources, unstable family environments, or reduced access to professional networks
- social expectations related to family responsibilities and caregiving can influence career decisions and professional opportunities
- young women may experience lower levels of self-confidence when entering competitive professional environments

At the same time, Serbia is experiencing significant technological and digital transformation. New sectors related to digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and innovation are emerging and creating new employment opportunities.

In this context, it becomes increasingly important to support young women in developing a broad range of competencies that combine digital skills with human-centered abilities such as communication, creativity, adaptability, and emotional intelligence.

Youth work, non-formal education, and mentoring programs play an important role in supporting young women in recognizing their abilities and building confidence for future professional engagement.

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STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS INPUT

Five structured interviews were conducted in Serbia with youth workers and young women in order to explore perceptions of the competencies required for young women to succeed in an AI-driven labour market.

The interviews included professionals with experience in youth work and social protection systems, as well as young women representing different educational and professional backgrounds. The interviews aimed to identify perceived barriers, opportunities, and competencies relevant for the future labour market.

1.Finidings from Youth Workers

Youth workers emphasized that young women, particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds, often face complex barriers related to family circumstances, financial instability, and psychological challenges. Many young women who have experienced institutional care, family instability, or exposure to violence struggle with issues of self-confidence, trust, and emotional security.

According to the interviewed youth workers, one of the most significant challenges is the development of self-belief and personal agency. Many young women have internalized negative expectations regarding their abilities and career opportunities. As a result, youth work interventions often focus on building self-confidence, self-awareness, and resilience.

Communication skills and emotional intelligence were also identified as key competencies. Youth workers emphasized that the ability to express ideas clearly, manage interpersonal relationships, and resolve conflicts constructively is essential for success in both professional and social environments.

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Furthermore, youth workers highlighted the growing importance of digital competencies. However, they stressed that digital literacy should not be understood only as technical knowledge but also as the ability to critically evaluate information, responsibly use digital tools, and adapt to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

Finally, the interviews confirmed that human-centered competencies such as empathy, creativity, and collaboration will remain highly valuable even in technology-driven labour markets, as these competencies are difficult to replicate through automation or artificial intelligence.

2.Findings from Young Women

The interviews with young women provided insight into how young women themselves perceive their abilities and opportunities in a rapidly changing labour market.

One of the interviewed participants was a secondary school student preparing for university studies in humanities and social sciences. She emphasized competencies related to empathy, communication, and creativity as her strongest qualities. However, she also expressed the perception that educational systems often prioritize analytical and technical competencies while undervaluing emotional intelligence and interpersonal abilities.

Another interviewee, a university student in the field of information technology, highlighted competencies such as analytical thinking, problem-solving, and continuous learning as essential for success in the technology sector. She emphasized that the IT sector offers significant employment opportunities but also requires constant adaptation to technological change.

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Despite the positive career prospects associated with digital sectors, the interviewee also noted that gender stereotypes still exist in technical environments, where women sometimes feel they need to demonstrate their competence more than their male peers.

Both interviewees expressed optimism about the opportunities created by technological development, while also recognizing the need for continuous skill development and adaptability.

3.Key insights from interviews

Across all interviews, three major groups of competencies emerged as particularly important:

Personal competencies

- self-confidence
- resilience
- emotional regulation
- motivation and self-awareness

Relational competencies

- communication
- teamwork
- empathy
- conflict resolution

Applied competencies

- digital literacy
- critical thinking
- creativity
- adaptability

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The interviews also highlighted that many competencies important for success in modern labour markets are not sufficiently recognized by formal education systems. This finding supports the need for competence frameworks that recognize multiple forms of intelligence and diverse skill sets.

NATIONAL WORKGROUP SESSION INPUT

Two national workgroup sessions were organized online in Serbia as part of the project activities.

The sessions were conducted on:

- 28 January 2026
- 26 February 2026

The national workgroup included 10 participants from three cities in Serbia:

- Požarevac (5 participants)
- Jagodina (4 participants)
- Belgrade (1 participant)

Participants included youth workers, representatives of civil society organizations, and professionals experienced in working with young people and vulnerable groups.

The workgroup sessions focused on discussing competencies necessary for young women to succeed in an AI-driven labour market and identifying challenges young women face in developing these competencies.

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Key discussion points

Participants highlighted that young women often encounter barriers related to:

- limited access to career guidance
- lack of confidence in pursuing leadership roles
- persistent gender stereotypes in certain professional sectors
- insufficient recognition of soft skills within education systems

Participants also emphasized that traditional educational approaches tend to focus primarily on academic knowledge, while competencies such as emotional intelligence, creativity, and collaboration receive less attention.

The discussion also addressed the growing influence of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in the labour market. Participants agreed that digital competencies will become increasingly important, but they stressed that technological skills must be complemented by human-centered competencies.

Another important topic discussed during the sessions was the role of youth work and non-formal education in supporting young women. Participants noted that youth work programs can play a crucial role in developing confidence, leadership skills, and practical competencies that are not always developed through formal education.

Identified competency priorities

The workgroup participants identified several competencies that should be prioritized in future educational and youth development initiatives:

- adaptability and continuous learning
- digital literacy and responsible technology use
- communication and collaboration skills
- creativity and innovative thinking
- emotional intelligence and resilience

Participants also emphasized that competence frameworks such as the Multiple Intelligence (MI) framework can provide a useful structure for recognizing diverse forms of talent and potential among young women.

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SUGGESTED CHANGES OVER THE MI COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK BASED ON THE INPUT

Based on the collected input, several suggestions were identified for improving the Multiple Intelligence competence framework.

First, the framework should more explicitly include emotional intelligence and psychological resilience as key competencies, particularly for young people facing social and economic challenges.

Second, digital competencies should be broadened beyond technical knowledge to include critical digital literacy, responsible use of technology, and adaptability to new technological tools.

Third, communication and collaboration skills should be emphasized, as modern workplaces increasingly rely on teamwork and interdisciplinary cooperation.

Finally, the framework should recognize different forms of intelligence and talent, ensuring that creativity, empathy, and social understanding are valued alongside analytical and technical abilities.

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CONCLUSIONS

The findings from Serbia highlight the importance of a holistic approach to competency development for young women. While digital and technological skills are increasingly necessary, human-centered competencies remain equally important.

Education systems, youth organizations, and policy initiatives should support the development of a wide range of competencies, including emotional intelligence, creativity, resilience, and critical thinking.

Empowering young women to recognize and develop their diverse abilities will strengthen their participation in the labor market and contribute to more inclusive and innovative societies.

The input collected in Serbia strongly supports the use of a competence framework that recognizes diverse forms of intelligence and talent. However, the framework should further strengthen competencies related to emotional intelligence, adaptability, creativity, and digital awareness in order to better reflect the needs of young women in a rapidly changing labour market.

Such an approach would help young women recognize their strengths, build confidence in their abilities, and prepare for meaningful participation in future professional environments.

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