



**CONNECTING
WOMEN
IN DIGITAL**

TWG TERMS OF REFERENCE: INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES

[WP3, Task 3.2]



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Introduction

This document outlines the framework for establishing the WIDCON Thematic Working Group (TWG) tasked with identifying and addressing key challenges and best practices in intersectional approaches for women in digital education and careers.

The TWG will focus on illuminating unique obstacles faced by women from diverse backgrounds across the digital pipeline – from education and training to career progression and leadership – shaped by intersecting factors such as gender identity, race, ethnicity, disability, age, migration background, socioeconomic status, and geographical location. The recommendations produced will serve as an essential resource for policymakers, industry leaders, and education stakeholders.

Purpose and scope of the TWG

Women's pathways in digital education, training, and careers are shaped by the ways that systems of power and inequality interact with multiple aspects of identity, including gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, age, migration background, socioeconomic status, and geographical location. For instance, social expectations, gender stereotypes, racism, socio-economic inequalities further shape women's experiences and influence access to learning and training opportunities.

These intersections produce distinct, context-specific forms of disadvantage and privilege at each stage of the digital pipeline, influencing who can access opportunities, resources, and positions of influence. This TWG examines these relational inequalities across the full pipeline – from early STEM education, through ICT higher education and vocational training, to early- and mid-career digital roles and leadership positions. By taking an intersectional approach, the group seeks to move beyond treating women as a homogeneous category and to propose policy interventions that identify and address structural barriers and enable equitable participation.

Focus area and challenge definition

The core challenge of this TWG can be described as follows: **"How can policies, education programs, training initiatives, and workplace systems recognize and address situated intersecting inequalities, ensuring that women from diverse backgrounds can access, persist, and advance across the digital pipeline".**

This challenge emphasizes the need to develop and implement systemic, evidence-based approaches that acknowledge the diversity of women's experiences and address structural barriers through inclusive policies, data-driven insights, and cross-sector collaboration. Towards this challenge, the following guiding questions have been defined so far:

1. How can intersectional data be used to identify and address structural barriers across education, training, and digital careers?
2. Which policies and institutional practices can reshape access to opportunities and resources for women facing intersecting inequalities?
3. How can cross-sector collaboration (education, employers, policymakers, civil society) implement frameworks that embed intersectional inclusion throughout the pipeline?
4. What monitoring and evaluation approaches can track intersectional outcomes and inform responsive, evidence-based interventions?

Objectives

To achieve the aforementioned purpose and to tackle the indicated challenge, the following objectives are defined for this TWG.

- Pipeline-Specific Recommendations: Targeted strategies for each stage (STEM education, ICT training, digital careers, leadership) highlighting interventions that address situated structural inequalities.
- Stakeholder Implementation Toolkit: A set of actionable guidelines and checklists for education providers, training institutions, employers, and civil society to implement intersectionally-informed programs and practices.
- Knowledge Sharing & Advocacy Materials: Summaries, briefing papers, and case studies that stakeholders (policymakers, employers, educators) can use to implement changes or advocate for intersectional inclusion in practice.

Note that the list of objectives can be updated by the TWG experts.

Expertise required

To ensure high-quality and informed recommendations, the TWG will consist of 12 to 15 members with diverse geographic and stakeholder representation. Members must be part of the Forum and have relevant expertise in the TWG topic.

Preferred expertise should be in one or more of the following areas:

- Industry leaders. Senior executives or managers from the digital and technology sectors who have experience in human resource management and gender diversity initiatives.
- Academia & research. Scholars and researchers specialising in gender studies and digital transformation.
- Policy & advocacy. Representatives from government agencies, think tanks, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) focused on gender equity and workforce development.
- Education & training. Professionals are involved in managing training programs, mentorship sessions, and digital upskilling initiatives.
- Women in digital roles or leadership in digital sector. Women who have successfully navigated career and/or leadership pathways in the digital sector and can provide insights based on lived experience.

The TWG will prioritise geographical diversity and women's promotion (trusting in their personal experience) to ensure a balanced representation of perspectives across different EU countries and other regions, as well as a balance between gender studies and digital area

representatives to merge the theoretical and practical experience. This approach will support the development of comprehensive guidelines and best practices that reflect the full range of European experiences and challenges in promoting women's leadership in digital industries.

Value proposition for members

Participating in the TWG offers a unique opportunity to shape the future of digital area and equity across Europe. Members will collaborate with top experts from academia, policy, and industry to co-develop targeted, evidence-based recommendations aimed at overcoming the gender gap in digital area. By joining this TWG, the members will be able to:

- Influence European policy on gender and digital inclusion.
- Access and contribute to a high-level platform that showcases leading practices and innovations in intersectional approaches.
- Engage with a dynamic community of peers who are passionate about systemic change, education transformation, and gender equity.
- Co-author strategic outputs that will be disseminated at the Women in Digital Annual Summit and beyond, boosting both visibility and impact.
- Gain early access to emerging data, best practices, and insights through collaborative research, peer exchange, and expert consultation.

Together, this TWG will not just be identifying challenges – it will be shaping solutions that will resonate across educational systems, empower girls and women, and help secure a digitally inclusive Europe.

Roles and management of the TWG

The TWG will be composed of three main roles. Each of them is listed below, explaining how it will be selected and what the main responsibilities are for them:

Secretariat: The secretariat (contact email widforum@widigital.eu) is formed in the WIDCON project to manage the Forum as well as the TWGs. Main responsibilities:

- Facilitate the development of the TWG supporting the chair in the management.
- Collect and provide a list of registration for each TWG to the Chair.
- TWG progress revision and logistics.
- Communication and dissemination of the TWG results.

- **Chair and Co-chair:**

- Selection guidelines:
 - Each TWG in the WIDCON project has an assigned partner from WIDCON project, who leads the TWG and serves as the chair of the TWG.
 - For this TWG, the **chair** is Gražina Droessiger (Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, contact email grazina.droessiger@vilniustech.lt).
 - The co-chair is selected among the Chair organization, WIDCON partners or the Forum members, evaluating the person's expertise in the TWG topic and possibilities to contribute to the TWG management process.

- For this TWG, the **co-chair** is Rūta Jociūtė-Žolynienė (Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, contact email ruta.jociute-zolyniene@vilniustech.lt).
- Main responsibilities:
 - Select TWG members.
 - Organise and schedule the meetings, provide meeting minutes.
 - Align the TWG's target scope with the overall project vision and refine it according to the TWG topic.
 - Lead the TWG discussions and the presentation of its results.
- Expert:
 - Selection guidelines:
 - 12 to 15 experts will be selected for each TWG from registered Forum members in the TWG.
 - The expert's selection will be made by a joint effort of the chair, co-chair and secretariat members, analysing each profile (provided data, available online in LinkedIn, other systems or presented as a CV) and motivation (expressed in the application form).
 - The expert selection criteria will be oriented on multiple factors:
 - The person's experience in the digital and gender equality areas.
 - The person's dedication to contributing to the TWG's aim.
 - The TWG team as a whole should present diverse sectors.

- The TWG team as a whole should present diverse geographical and/or cultural regions.
- Main responsibilities:
 - Will participate in the TWG activities, providing their insights, sharing best practices and ideas for possible improvement paths.
 - Will contribute to the summary of the discussed questions and actionable recommendations.

Participation in multiple TWGs should be controlled to guarantee diversity and concentration on specific areas of expertise. There are no hard limits yet, but chairs may apply an assessment tool (point system) to manage oversubscription and ensure balanced representation across TWGs.

Experts' expected commitment and participation

To ensure the success and impact of the TWG, experts are expected to contribute actively to both the TWG internal events and key project events. The commitment required reflects the ambition of the initiative to produce high-quality, actionable insights and recommendations for the advancement of women in ICT.

Each expert will be part of a dedicated TWG aligned with their area of expertise and the project's core focus – supporting women across different stages of the ICT education pipeline.

Members are expected to:

- Participate in **regular virtual meetings and workshops** – on average every 3–4 weeks, with more frequent sessions (e.g., biweekly) during high-output phases such as drafting or review.
- Contribute to **situation analysis, and policy consultations** related to the TWG's scope.
- Share **data, insights, or institutional examples** relevant to their country or field.
- Collaborate on the **drafting and peer review of key deliverables**, including interim reports and recommendations.
- Provide **constructive feedback** in group discussions and document reviews.

- Attend the **Annual Women in Digital Summit**,¹ a high-level, in-person event designed to:
 - **Showcase the work of the TWG**, including findings and recommendations.
 - **Facilitate dialogue with policymakers, stakeholder representatives.**
 - **Build visibility** for the WiD Forum and its experts at the European level.

Experts' dedication is expected to be approximately 5 hours per month.

The experts of the TWG will expand their professional network and contribute meaningfully to advancing gender equity in the digital space. As recognition for their contributions, the WIDCON project will ensure expert visibility on its website and social media platforms, highlighting their input and reinforcing their role in shaping the discourse on women's digital inclusion.

¹ Participation in the Annual Summit is not compulsory to participate in the TWG but we encourage participants to attend the event and we will support participants with a travel allowance.

Support to participants

The WIDCON project provides dedicated support to facilitate the effective participation of members in the TWG. This support is designed to ensure smooth collaboration, efficient communication, and fair access to project activities.

Each TWG will have a dedicated **private SharePoint space**, managed by the respective Chair, where members can upload, access, and exchange relevant materials and documents. Additionally, an **independent channel on Discord** will be created for each TWG, offering an interactive space for members to share updates, events, news, and initiatives related to the group's thematic focus.

Members of the TWGs are encouraged to take part in the **WIDCON Annual Summit**. To ensure inclusiveness and active participation, the WIDCON project allocates specific funding to support travel and accommodation for TWG members attending the Annual Summit. This support is coordinated by the Secretariat in collaboration with TWG Chairs and is prioritised for active members who have significantly contributed to their TWG's work. Clear guidance on eligibility criteria, application procedures, and reimbursement processes will be circulated to all TWG members well in advance of each Annual Summit.

Initial work plan

To guide activities while allowing flexibility, the TWG will follow this initial work plan, that can be adapted according each TWG needs.

Consultation formats can include:

- **Online meetings and workshops** enabling broad participation across geographical boundaries.
- **Collaborative online platforms** for real-time document sharing, discussions, and continuous feedback.
- **Focus groups and interviews** for direct consultations with stakeholders to capture diverse perspectives.

In the first TWG meeting, a roundtable discussion will be organised to divide the main challenge into micro-ones, areas of barriers, and its more detailed specifications. This will combine more creative and more structured approaches in highlighting the existing challenges and laying the path to further discussion on who is affecting it and what actions could be taken to change it.

Further meetings will follow the format, where a quick recap of the previous meeting results will be done, with a possibility to raise some new questions or insights generated after the meeting. Further, the meeting will concentrate on a new discussion topic, using different formats, depending on the discussed question (interviews and reviews to estimate the main barriers and extract the best practices, roundtable discussions and workshops to generate new ideas, etc).

The discussions will be summarised, providing concentrated key points and actionable recommendations. Considering some questions or ideas might be too specific or not widely accepted, each decision or report should be consensus-driven. If the decision is not supported by at least 2/3 of the WTG members, an additional discussion session should be used to express the arguments for and against. After this session, the majority opinion is used to make the decision. This should lead to a more unified vision and final recommendations validated by the full TWG.

The TWG will operate for a period of up to 9 months, ensuring sufficient time for research, analysis, stakeholder consultation, and the development of actionable recommendations.

To guide activities while allowing flexibility, the TWG will follow this initial work plan, that can be adapted according each TWG needs.

Phase 0: Preparation of the TWG

- Approval of the Terms of Reference (ToR) by the Secretariat.
- Formal launch of the TWG and the Call for Interest.
- Gathering of applications and expert selection.

Phase 1: Initiation (Month 1)

- **Kick-off meeting** to introduce participants, clarify objectives, and establish working rules.
- **Expert mapping** to review participants' expertise and identify potential gaps requiring additional consultation.

- **Formalisation of participation** will include signing of the ToR (within the deadline) by all TWG members and submission to the Chair. The ToR must be accepted as issued. Individual edits, footnotes, or disclaimers are not permitted. Clarifications are handled via email and FAQs prior to signature. Lack of signature by the deadline triggers reserve-list activation.

Phase 2: Problem analysis and research (Months 2–3)

- **Structuring of the problem.** Develop a taxonomy of the main barriers.
- **Situation analysis and data collection.** Collect relevant case studies, statistical data, and reports.
- **Consultations.** Conduct discussions, expert interviews, and stakeholder focus groups.
- **Interim reporting.** Consolidate initial findings for group review and feedback.
- By the end of Month 3, the TWG should have confirmed its challenge and collected sufficient material to proceed.

Phase 3: Development of recommendations (Months 4–7)

- **Case study identification.** Highlight successful examples and regional best practices.
- **Defining intervention areas.** Identify priority fields for action (policy, education, industry).
- **Drafting solutions.** Formulate targeted recommendations and practical interventions.

- **Integration workshops.** Organise sessions to consolidate findings, align on recommendations, and refine proposed solutions.
- **Drafting outputs.** Assign writing responsibilities for sections of the deliverable.
- By Month 7 a structured draft (Table of Contents and drafted sections) of the TWG results should be completed.

Phase 4: Validation and finalisation (Months 8–9)

- **Peer review and validation.** Share the draft with experts and stakeholders for feedback.
- **Refinement and finalization.** Integrate feedback and produce the final report and recommendations.
- **Dissemination planning.** Prepare strategies to communicate findings to policymakers, industry, and education stakeholders. Presentation of Best practices and/or results at the WiD Annual Forum.
- By Month 9 the TWG must be completed and validated.

Expected outcomes

The TWG should produce some of the following key deliverables:

- **Policy brief.** Summarising key barriers, best practices, and expert recommendations and providing actionable insights for policymakers, with a focus on improving gender and leadership representation in digital industries across different EU regions.
- **Organization briefing toolkit.** Providing presentations decks, executive summaries and briefing notes for dissemination among organizations to support leadership empowerment initiatives inside of the organizations.
- **Educational framework.** A guide for integrating intersectionality aspects into digital skills training programs, emphasising tailored approaches based on EU-wide best practices.
- **Best practices repository.** Case studies, success stories, and best practices that can serve as models for other regions or institutions.

Review and adjustments

A mid-term review may be conducted to assess progress and make necessary adjustments to ensure alignment with objectives and expected outcomes. The TWG's work plan may be adapted as needed to accommodate emerging insights or stakeholder feedback.

The review may be done by the WIDCON Secretariat, in collaboration with the Governing Board, evaluating the progress and achieved results in month 5. For this period the phase 1 should be finished, and a structured summary of the challenges and objectives of the TWG should be provided. As well, the initial version of at least one outcome should be provided.

Conclusion

By bringing together a group of experts dedicated to understanding and addressing intersecting inequalities that affect women's access, participation, and advancement across the digital education and career pipeline, the TWG aims to drive meaningful change through targeted, actionable recommendations. The insights generated will summarise the best EU experiences and serve as a foundation for sustainable policy and industry interventions that enhance girls and women opportunities in the digital area.

Approval and acceptance

By signing below, the Chair of the TWG and the Member of the TWG confirm their agreement with the content of this Terms of Reference and commit to fulfilling their roles as described.

Chair of the Thematic Working Group:

Name and surname: _____

Position: _____

Organization: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Member the Thematic Working Group:

Name and surname: _____

Position: _____

Organization: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____