



**CONNECTING  
WOMEN  
IN DIGITAL**

## **TWG TERMS OF REFERENCE:**

**TWG3 - REPROGRAMMING SKILLS: VET AS A  
CATALYST FOR WOMEN'S DIGITAL TRANSITIONS**

[WP3, Task 3.2]



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## Introduction

This document outlines the framework for establishing the WIDCON Thematic Working Group 3 (TWG3) tasked with identifying and addressing key challenges and best practices in transforming vocational education and training (VET) systems to support women's digital transitions.

The TWG will focus on identifying unique obstacles women face in acquiring advanced digital skills and shifting into tech-focused careers, and how innovative VET models can overcome these obstacles. The recommendations produced will serve as an essential resource for policymakers, industry leaders, and education stakeholders.

## Purpose and scope of the TWG

The purpose of TWG3 is to investigate and develop strategies by which VET can act as a catalyst for women's successful transitions into digital roles. This group's scope encompasses reimagining VET programs and institutions, through modular curricula, AI-enhanced learning, and co-design with industry, to better enable women to enter, pivot, or re-enter digital career pathways at any stage of life, thereby addressing the persistent gender gap in ICT professions.

## Focus area and challenge definition

The core challenge of this TWG can be described as follows: **How can VET “reprogram” its own structures to empower women to reprogram their careers in the age of AI, automation, and cybersecurity, while ensuring that such transformation remains connected to real labour-market needs and opportunities in the digital economy?**

This challenge emphasizes the need to move beyond traditional upskilling/reskilling approaches. Instead, VET systems should evolve into dynamic digital ecosystems that leverage data analytics, AI-assisted guidance, and agile, modular curricula co-designed with industry, and informed by labour-market intelligence to anticipate market shifts and support continuous reskilling. In other words, the focus is on transforming VET institutions themselves – not just their course offerings – so they can provide flexible learning architectures and pathways that remain aligned with emerging digital occupations and employer demand. This means enabling women to enter, pivot, or re-enter digital fields at any stage of life, with clear connections between training outcomes, employability, and workforce participation.

Towards this challenge, the following guiding questions have been defined so far:

- How can VET systems leverage AI-driven and data-based tools to personalize women’s upskilling and reskilling pathways while ensuring alignment with emerging digital job profiles?
- What models of career re-entry and lifelong learning can enable women to transition from non-digital to digital roles, maintaining both flexibility and relevance to labour-market needs?
- In what ways can modular and micro-credential approaches in VET be linked to recognized occupational standards and real-world skills demand in AI, automation, and cybersecurity?
- How can VET institutions collaborate more closely with employers, SMEs, and industry networks to co-design programs that combine educational innovation with employability outcomes?
- How can regional and sectoral partnerships – among VET centres, companies, and public employment services- help create sustainable pathways for women’s participation in the digital workforce?

These questions will steer the group’s inquiry and discussions. The TWG’s outcome orientation is toward actionable recommendations, for example, exploring models such as “agile VET labs” within training centers, inclusive AI-based learning guidance systems, and micro-credential frameworks designed for gender-responsive reskilling – that can be adopted by stakeholders to drive change.

## Objectives

To achieve the aforementioned purpose and to tackle the indicated challenge, the following objectives are defined for TWG3 (noting that this list can be refined by the TWG members as needed):

- **Identify and analyze innovative approaches** – such as AI-driven guidance tools, data analytics, modular learning units, and micro-credential frameworks – to personalize digital upskilling pathways in VET, ensuring that these approaches also reflect current and future labour-market trends.
- **Develop a framework for “career re-entry”** through VET, outlining how women transitioning from non-digital sectors can be supported to acquire in-demand tech skills. This includes defining supportive program elements (e.g. bridge courses, mentoring, flexible scheduling) in cooperation with employers and industry bodies.
- **Explore strategies for transforming VET institutions into innovation hubs** – formulating how VET centers can collaborate with local employers, tech companies, and start-ups to deliver work-based learning, internships, and projects that, in turn, translate into employability opportunities for women.
- **Recommend governance and funding models** that incentivize inclusive innovation in VET. This may involve public-private partnerships, performance rewards, or accreditation systems that encourage VET providers to continually update curricula and outreach practices in response to both learner and employer needs.
- **Compile and evaluate best practices and case studies** of successful initiatives across Digital Europe program countries where VET programs have effectively enabled women’s digital transitions, highlighting those that demonstrate strong cooperation between education and the labour market.

## 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, with an emphasis on diversity across sectors and regions:

- **VET providers and practitioners:** Professionals from vocational education and training institutions, with experience in curriculum design, skills training, and program management.
- **AI in education experts:** Specialists in educational technology or artificial intelligence applied to learning (e.g. adaptive learning systems, intelligent tutoring), particularly those with knowledge of personalized learning tools and their application to employability pathways and skills forecasting.
- **Lifelong learning and adult education specialists:** Experts in continuous professional development, adult upskilling/reskilling programs, or modular learning frameworks (such as micro-credentials) who understand how adults (especially women) engage in career transitions and how learning outcomes connect to job mobility and re-employment opportunities.
- **Inclusion and diversity advocates:** Professionals or researchers focused on gender inclusion in tech, diversity and equality in education/workforce, or social innovators who have worked on empowering women in STEM fields, ideally with knowledge of intersectional barriers to digital employment.
- **Digital economy and labour-market analysts and experts:** Individuals who study labor market trends, the impact of AI/automation on jobs, and future skill needs – to provide insight on aligning VET offerings with evolving digital economy demands.



- **Public and private sector stakeholders:** Policy makers, workforce development officials, industry training managers, or HR leaders involved in reskilling and adult education initiatives, who can contribute practical perspectives on implementing and funding training programs.

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 TWG3 offers a unique opportunity to shape the future of digital education and equity across Europe. Members will collaborate with top experts from academia, policy, and industry to co-develop targeted, evidence-based recommendations aimed at making VET a catalyst for women's successful digital transitions. By joining this TWG, the members will be able to:

- **Influence European policy** on gender and digital inclusion by contributing to high-level recommendations and strategic initiatives.
- **Access and contribute to a high-profile platform** that showcases leading practices and innovations in **gender-responsive digital skills training and VET modernization**.
- **Engage with a dynamic community** of peers passionate about systemic change, educational transformation, and gender equity in the digital economy.
- **Co-author strategic outputs** (policy briefs, toolkits, frameworks, etc.) that will be disseminated at the Women in Digital Annual Summit and other venues, boosting members' visibility and impact.
- **Gain early access to emerging data, insights, and best practices** through collaborative research, peer exchange, and expert consultations within the TWG.

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 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.

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- **Chair and Co-chair:**
  - Selection guidelines:
    - Each TWG in the WIDCON project has an assigned partner from WIDCON, who leads the TWG and serves as the chair of the TWG.
    - For this TWG, the **chair** is Rubén Abarca, [r.abarca@evta.eu](mailto:r.abarca@evta.eu) from EVTA
    - The co-chair will be 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 Silvia Genero, [silvia.genero@enaip.net](mailto:silvia.genero@enaip.net) from ENAIP

- 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 (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 (listed above).
      - 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 **literature reviews, case 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 and thought leadership** in group discussions and document reviews.

- Attend the **Annual Women in Digital Summit**,<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Thematic Working Groups. This support is designed to ensure smooth collaboration, efficient communication, and fair access to project activities.

**Collaboration tools:** 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.

**Support for participation in the Annual Summit:** 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:** 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.
- Deadline for applications and expert selection.

## Phase 1: Initiation (Month 1)

- **Kick-off meeting:** to introduce participants, clarify objectives, and establish working rules.
- **Expert mapping:** review of participants' expertise and identification of potential gaps requiring additional consultation.
- **Formalisation of participation:** 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  
**Literature review 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. At least one workshop should be organised per TWG.
- **Drafting outputs:** Assign writing responsibilities for sections of the deliverable.
- **By Month 7:** A structured draft (Table of Contents and drafted sections) should be completed.

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

- **Peer review and validation:** Share the draft with external experts and stakeholders for feedback.
- **Refinement and finalisation:** 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 deliverable 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 leadership development 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 committed group of experts dedicated to **reprogramming skills through VET as a catalyst for women's digital transitions**, TWG3 aims to drive meaningful change through targeted, actionable recommendations. The insights generated by this working group will synthesize the best of European experiences and innovative ideas, serving as a foundation for sustainable policy and practice interventions that enhance women's inclusion and advancement in the digital economy. Ultimately, the work of TWG3 will contribute to building more adaptive VET systems and a more gender-inclusive digital future across Europe.