A Word from the Partners

The EMPOWER project has been a response to the bleak picture that statistics continue to paint of the issues that vulnerable women face (e.g. domestic violence and human trafficking), and the need for more high-quality employability and entrepreneurship support to combat their exclusion from the labour market and local communities. Female Empowerment for Employability – A Guide for Policymakers presents an overview of our efforts, experiences and recommendations based on the development of the EMPOWER Training Programme that, in the past 2 years, has directly supported 98 support workers (including volunteers) and 89 women across the partner countries.

We are extremely happy to be able to write this today and to have played a small part in the so needed support of both vulnerable women and support workers in the specific areas of employability and entrepreneurship.

Before delving into the report, we would like to thank the European Commission and their life-long learning programme Erasmus+ as well as the UK National Agency Ecorys for their invaluable (financial) support and belief in the power of this project. We could not have done it without them.

The EMPOWER Project Team
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“Circles were empowered and help me achieve obstacles in life. Found this really beneficial and empoweful. Thank you.”
Executive Summary

Female Empowerment for Employability – A Guide for Policymakers presents the reasoning behind and results of the EMPOWER project. The project was inspired by our work with support organisations and the need for more high-quality support focused on employability and financial independence for vulnerable women at risk of exclusion from the labour market. The main objective of the EMPOWER Project was twofold:

To support women across Europe who have faced extreme hardship in their lives or are vulnerable to violence, abuse and trafficking, and to improve their employability and entrepreneurship skills through building their confidence, self-belief and resilience.

To equip support workers working with vulnerable women with the soft skills training necessary to pass these skills onto women in order to increase their employability and entrepreneurship opportunities.

The EMPOWER project was an initiative of 4 European Organisations, funded by Erasmus+:

• Inova Consultancy Ltd. – The United Kingdom
• Social Innovation Fund (SIF) – Lithuania
• Vinnumálastofnun (VMST) – Iceland
• KMOP – Greece

The EMPOWER project saw the development of two fully fledged training programmes – EMPOWER Others/yourself & EMPOWER Circles™ – with each of the project partners contributing to its content. The main topics covered focused on:

1. Knowing one’s strengths;
2. Building on strengths and confidence for employability and entrepreneurship;
3. Introducing positive psychology;
4. Introducing soft skills for employability;
5. Introducing soft skills for entrepreneurship;
6. Introducing tools for empowerment.

The EMPOWER Training Programme has been delivered to 98 support workers (including volunteers) and 89 women across the partner countries, receiving broad support and positive feedback from all participants.
Based on our experiences and feedback received, we present the following recommendations to increase the quality of and access to the support that is needed by both support workers, volunteers and vulnerable women. Implementing these recommendations will, hopefully, improve the recognition of strengths of all parties involved and hereby lead to a more resilient society.

- Services should be personalised and adapted to the needs of each beneficiary.
- Women with higher formal skills should be provided with specialised training, such as entrepreneurship.
- Career guidance should be combined with psychosocial counselling in order to improve women’s self-confidence and develop their soft skills.
- Low-skilled women should be provided with the opportunity to develop formal skills, such as ICTs and language skills.
- Soft skills should constitute a prominent element of the provided services.
- Mentoring approach – offer both individual and group mentoring; group mentoring helps women to acquire effective communication and conflict resolution skills.
- Services should offer job/skills matching with companies and paid apprenticeships.
- More financial support should be made available for organisations to offer thorough on-the-job-training, gather up-to-date information about the labour market, and offer support workers more external training opportunities.
- Policies should encourage stronger networking with other associated services, employment agencies, Business Advice Centres, etc. to improve the effectiveness of referrals as well as the dissemination of information regarding training programmes and professional skills’ development workshops for professionals.
- Services should offer more training opportunities that focus on employability and entrepreneurship support.
- The training offer for both support workers and vulnerable women should be more flexible, with a stronger focus on online training to accommodate for working hours and other responsibilities.
Statistics continue to paint a bleak picture of the issues vulnerable women face, within and outside of the European Union, preventing them from becoming economically or educationally active.

- 1 in 4 women across Europe experience domestic violence throughout their lifetimes (Council of Europe, 2002);
- between 6-10% of women suffer domestic violence in a given year (Council of Europe, 2002);
- 68% of human trafficking victims are women (2013, Eurostat); and
- a significant proportion of refugee women living in the UK have experienced violence prior to arrival and they remain vulnerable to violence in the UK, their country of asylum (Refugee Council, 2012).

Over the years, our work with support organisations (e.g. in the TRuTH Project, Inova aimed to increase awareness of the signs of human trafficking amongst social care workers, police, nurses, etc.) raised our awareness of the need for more high-quality support to vulnerable women at risk of exclusion from the labour market and from their local communities, in order for them to (re)gain employment and financial independence. In this, there is a strong reliance on volunteers to provide much needed support in the fields of personal empowerment, confidence and employability or entrepreneurship skills. Support workers and volunteers who work to provide support to vulnerable women have however been overlooked in terms of the type and variety of training they are provided with. Whilst issue-specific training is available, support workers widely report that they feel less able to provide information and guidance on issues relating to employability and entrepreneurship to their female clients (see chapter 2 for more information on our background research).

The partnership’s power lies in recognising these societal issues and taking action; and that is exactly what we did by creating the EMPOWER project. EMPOWER started in 2016, with invaluable support from the European Commission via the lifelong learning programme Erasmus+, to:

- support women across Europe who have faced extreme hardship in their lives or are vulnerable to violence, abuse and trafficking, and to improve their employability and entrepreneurship skills through building their confidence, self-belief and resilience.
• Equip support workers working with vulnerable women with the soft skills training necessary to pass these skills onto women in order to increase their employability and entrepreneurship opportunities.

The project was an initiative of 4 European Organisations:

Inova Consultancy Ltd (UK) provides a flexible consultancy service that responds to the needs of organisations and individuals internationally in the area of diversity, equal opportunities and entrepreneurship. Inova has specialist experience in the development and delivery of coaching and mentoring programmes in the UK and on an international level for women in a range of fields, including entrepreneurship, management and STEM. In 2013, Inova led a European project (TRuTh) alongside The Sheffield College which developed innovative, online training for frontline workers, to raise awareness of Human Trafficking.

Inova’s employees and associates combine experience and qualifications in organisational development, psychology, mentoring and coaching in addition to bringing in best practice from across Europe to assist organisations and individuals in the field of personal and business development.

Social Innovation Fund (Lithuania) is a non-governmental organisation, established in 1994 to assist adults to make positive changes in their life through the provision of educational opportunities, social support, information and advice.

Since its establishment the Social Innovation Fund has worked with different socially disadvantaged groups (women survivors of domestic violence, unemployed, disabled, single parents, people in remote areas, immigrants,) who have fewer opportunities in the society and the labour market. SIF pays special attention to unemployed women aiming to address the issues of their social exclusion increasing their self-confidence, and assisting them to develop the basic competences and as a result enhancing their employment opportunities. SIF offers guiding, coaching and mentoring services as well as training aimed at successful integration of disadvantaged people into society and the labour market.
The Directorate of Labour (Public Employment Services, PES), Iceland, manages the employment services in the country, providing counselling and employment services as well as providing courses and various activities for unemployed people. PES also delivers specific services to entrepreneurs through various projects for unemployed people. All those who are seeking work can get assistance and practical advice, free of charge, from counsellors in their job search. The emphasis is placed on empowering each individual and to provide him or her with an edge in the labour market.

The Directorate of Labour is also responsible for assisting refugee’s job searches and the Directorate of Labour has prepared a special educational program for employers and consultants about the various details of refugees. It contains a checklist and detailed booklet which among other things, explains the legal status of refugee’s and how employers can make the individuals feel welcome in their new work place.

The Directorate of Labour offers courses to refugee’s, including:
- Courses in Icelandic
- License to drive
- License to control industrial machinery
- Job search in English
- Work related measures

KMOP is one of the oldest Greek NGOs with more than 35 years of accumulated experience in the provision of services to disadvantaged groups. KMOP’s main areas of expertise include social welfare and health, employability and human rights protection, scientific research and the development of know-how in social policy issues.

Apart from direct provision of services through decentralised community-based facilities (Three Group Houses and one Day Care Centre for mentally ill as well as counselling centres in various towns) KMOP is also actively involved in both national and EU/international projects addressing social issues particularly focusing on low-skilled youth and long term unemployed, victims of violence and trafficking, disabled, elderly, migrants and minorities.
Over the past 2 years, we have trained no less than 98 support workers (including volunteers) and 89 women across the partner countries, helping participants to build their own and others confidence, employability and entrepreneurship through strengths-based coaching and mentoring. For this purpose, we developed the EMPOWER Training (see Chapter 3) and Circles™ (see Chapter 4).

The full programme consisted of 8 training sessions and 3 Circles™, with each of the project partners contributing to its content. The main topics, selected based on the Power to Change Report 2008, discussed in these sessions focussed on:

1. knowing one’s strengths;
2. building on strengths and confidence for employability and entrepreneurship;
3. introducing positive psychology;
4. introducing soft skills for employability;
5. introducing soft skills for entrepreneurship;
6. introducing tools for empowerment.

In the following we will present you with results, experiences and recommendations that demonstrate not only the success of the EMPOWER project (and the passion and drive that was put into its development) but also the importance of continued high-quality support for both vulnerable women and support workers in the specific areas of employability and entrepreneurship.

“It is always difficult for me to think about my problems, it makes me nervous, I feel anxious, because I can hardly see any solutions... During our sessions I was supported by the facilitator and group, so I started to think about the solution and realise that they exist. Started to see the light at the end of the tunnel.”

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP, PROJECT RESULTS AND OUTCOMES CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE: HTTPS://EMPOWERWOMEN.EU/ABOUT/
VET Trainers, Employability and Entrepreneurship

To start the EMPOWER project right, the partnership conducted broad research into the status and quality of training available for the target group of support workers, volunteers and vulnerable women. Desk research was carried out, an online survey was conducted and focus groups were organised in all 4 partner countries.

Some Desk Research Insights

Support workers contribute significantly to the improvement of vulnerable women’s mental capacities and personal development. The latter is a particularly sensitive group due to additional disadvantages they face based on their gender (e.g. discrimination, domestic violence, trafficking, etc.), and support workers are indispensable on their path towards (re)inclusion into society and the labour market. This group of professionals comprises workers coming from many scientific disciplines and sectors, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, doctors, nurses, sociologists, social workers, lawyers, adult trainers, educational counsellors, career counsellors, mentors, life coaches, administrative staff working in relevant services, etc. There is also a considerable number of people supporting women on a voluntary basis, providing assistance in everyday activities as well as emotional support, through NGOs and volunteering organisations. This group additionally includes people acting as mentors and personal coaches, but without necessarily having the corresponding educational background.

Our research has shown that support workers are mainly employed in support structures, including nursing homes, public services managed by the government, counselling centres, guesthouses, gender-equality support centres, municipalities’ social services, VET centres, non-governmental and voluntary organisations, consulting companies among others.

Available training provision for support workers

Training in partner countries is varied.

For instance, in Greece, privately employed professionals supporting vulnerable groups (not specifically women) are usually trained through certified programmes offered by consulting companies and VET centres, while publicly employed professionals usually receive training through programmes implemented by the Education Institute of the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA).

In Iceland, the training of support workers is limited to what they receive from their formal studies, but they can also attend specific training courses at so-called Life Learning centres.

In Lithuania, support workers who work with women who have experienced domestic violence are offered trainings by Specialized Help Centres (SHC) or other NGOs working in the field on the basis of the projects being implemented. Most trainings are provided in-house due to lack of resources and a preference to focus on equipping support workers with the specific skills and competences needed to offer proper psychological and emotional support to women, rather than facilitating their access into the labour market.

In the UK, organisations and agencies provide induction, support and training in a range of key areas for
support workers to meet the needs of their clients on a regular basis. However, in terms of organisations supporting women specifically, the training provided is ad-hoc and usually consists of on the job training, due to their limited training budgets.

In many cases and in all partner countries, support workers therefore seek out personal development through postgraduate courses and educational seminars conducted as part of (European) Programmes that pertain to the specific field and are implemented by various government agencies and NGOs.

**Focus Group Findings**

All partner organizations carried out focus groups with both professional and volunteer support workers aiming to explore their training needs and opinions regarding the services they provide to support vulnerable women in employability and entrepreneurship. In all countries involved, most of the participants were women, a majority of which also held a university degree. They were employed at NGOs, municipal social services and other public services, and provided support to both vulnerable women and other groups in need.

The main findings of the focus groups are summarized below and offer useful insights for the selection of policymaking priorities in the field of VET-training.

Participants identified a series of training and support services which help women in their (re)integration into the labour market. These include the services provided by public agencies which offer employability related services, various women’s and vulnerable groups’ psychosocial support programmes provided by NGOs, voluntary organisations and municipal social services, and vocational training and lifelong learning programmes, provided by public institute and private training providers.

As for the effectiveness of these services, there was a variety of opinions. For instance, most of the respondents from Lithuania and the UK consider the employment related services very beneficial to the women who use them, as they help them to build their self-confidence, discover their own strengths, realize the opportunities and motivate them to make positive changes in their lives. On the other hand, many of the respondents from Greece consider these services ineffective, as they tend to be temporary placements that neither add to the vulnerable women’s skills nor do they provide sufficient aid so that the women can escape hostile environments they find themselves in (e.g. domestic violence victims). Many participants, also, mentioned that the effectiveness of these services has been affected by governmental budget cuts, especially in Greece and in the UK.

The respondents suggested some incentives which could prove effective in facilitating women’s access to support services and to their attending to a training course:

- Better dissemination of information regarding the availability of support services.
- Providing financial support or compensating transportation costs.
- Service providers should extend their outreach to women.
- Building trust with the organisation and making participants feel safe.
- Granting childcare provision (preferably on-site).
- Providing information and services in other different language.
- Organizing training within school hours.
- Letting women have a taster session, just to try it out and to get confidence to come to future sessions knowing what it will be like.
- Providing a certificate of attendance/completion of the training.
- Presenting role models/success stories.
Support workers furthermore expressed the following competence requirements:

| Strong communication skills, i.e. being receptive and a good listener. | Professional and life experience. | Building a relationship of trust with women and being free of stereotypes and judgement. |
|———|———|———|
| Experience in leading training to encourage, support and bring positivity. | Empathy and compassion. | Emotional intelligence and maturity to support these women effectively. |
| Ability to convey information in informative, understandable and attractive way. | Patience and understanding of women, letting them acquire information and make changes in their own pace. | Emotional resilience and ability to work under stress, ability to solve conflict situations. |
| Positive attitude and ability to empower others. | Good knowledge of the appropriate support services. | Basic knowledge about entrepreneurship. |
|———|———|———|
| Skills and competences to better evaluate the psychological condition of the vulnerable women. |

**Recommendations regarding support services for vulnerable women**

Our research has demonstrated the variety in training types and methods among the partner countries involved, and affirmed the demand for specialised training that allows support workers to better serve the needs of vulnerable women who wish to (re-)enter the labour market.

Considering these training needs and in order to improve the services provided to vulnerable women, with the main aim of improving their employability, the EMPOWER consortium presents the following recommendations:

| Services should be personalised and adapted to the needs of each beneficiary. | Career guidance should be combined with psychosocial counselling in order to improve women’s self-confidence and develop their soft skills. | Low-skilled women should be provided with the opportunity to develop formal skills, such as ICTs and language skills. |
|———|———|———|
| Women with higher formal skills should be provided with specialised training, such as entrepreneurship. | Soft skills should constitute a prominent element of the provided services. | Mentoring approach – offer both individual and group mentoring; group mentoring helps women to acquire effective communication and conflict resolution skills. |
| Services should offer job/skills matching with companies and paid apprenticeships. | More financial support should be made available for organisations to offer thorough on-the-job-training, gather up-to-date information about the labour market, and offer support to workers more external training opportunities. | Policies should encourage stronger networking with other associated services, employment agencies, Business Advice Centres, etc. to improve the effectiveness of referrals as well as the dissemination of information regarding training programmes and professional skills’ development workshops for professionals. |
| Services should offer more training opportunities that focus on employability and entrepreneurship support. | The training offer for both support workers and vulnerable women should be more flexible, with a stronger focus on online training to accommodate for working hours and other responsibilities. |———|———|———|

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The EMPOWER Training Programme and its methodological approach

The EMPOWER Training Programme was developed based on the increasing need to provide high quality support and training to vulnerable women at risk of exclusion from the labour market. It also took into account support workers working with vulnerable women increased training needs, who report that they feel less able to support and provide information and guidance on issues relating to employability and entrepreneurship to their female clients. EMPOWER Training Programme thus presents an innovative blended training package which includes the:

**EMPOWER Others Training Package for Support Workers:** addressed to professionals and volunteers who support vulnerable women. The aim of this training programme is to equip support workers working with vulnerable women with the soft skills training necessary to pass these skills on to women in order to increase their employability and entrepreneurship opportunities.

**EMPOWER Yourself Training Package for Vulnerable Women:** addressed to women who have faced severe hardship in their lives (e.g. domestic violence, human trafficking, etc.) and wish to (re)enter the labour market. The aim of this training programme is to equip vulnerable women with greater confidence, belief & resilience to succeed economically.

The Methodology

The approach of the EMPOWER training programme is an iterative learning cycle (see Figure 1) for participants (support workers, volunteers and vulnerable women) where soft skill development (through workshops and practice) is complemented with the innovative Circles™ methodology (see Chapter 4 for more details about the EMPOWER Circles™ Training Programme).

“Now, I can understand better the ways all theories are put into practice. I am now certain that each one of us has to adjust into his/her client’s dynamics in order to be sure that he/she can set eligible goals.”
The Structure

With the EMPOWER programme being delivered to support workers (paid or on a voluntary basis) as well as vulnerable women, the course structure offered is similar for both target groups in order for the former to experience the same learning path – by getting a practical feel of all the tools that they can then use more effectively with their clients.

Overall, the training programme presented the following subject areas divided over 8 units with a total duration of 4 face-to-face training hours per unit:

- knowing your strengths;
- building on strengths and confidence for employability and entrepreneurship;
- positive psychology;
- soft skills for employability;
- soft skills for entrepreneurship;
- tools for empowerment.

The Training Units:

Unit 1 – Understanding the Bigger Picture
Unit 2 – Getting to Know Your (Clients’) Strengths
Unit 3 – Building on Your (Clients’) Strengths and Confidence for Employability and Entrepreneurship
Unit 4 – An Introduction to Positive Psychology
Unit 5 – Soft Skills for Employability
Unit 6 – Soft Skills for Entrepreneurship or Intrapreneurship for Those Not Looking to Develop a Business
Unit 7 – Putting it Into Action; Your (Clients’) Tools for Empowerment
Unit 8 – Empowering Others; Signposting Tools and Activities

“Discussion among participants was the most powerful part of this programme.”

Online EMPOWER Learning Hub

A very innovative aspect of the EMPOWER Training Programme is the online EMPOWER Learning Hub, which was developed to provide an online space for Support Workers and the vulnerable women they are working with in issues of employability and entrepreneurship. It includes the following courses:

- EMPOWER Others Training Package for Support Workers
- EMPOWER Yourself Training Package for Women Wishing to (Re)enter the Labour Market

The Hub is a simple web application, developed using the Moodle course management system. The main goal of the Hub is to provide new forms of learning experiences, where learners have the chance to work both synchronously and asynchronously on their learning activities. The users of the Hub have access to the learning materials of the EMPOWER Training Programme described above as well as to Open Educational Resources, including useful websites and educational videos, links to other relevant websites and materials; they also have the chance to test their knowledge with quizzes and exercises. All materials are available in English, Greek, Icelandic and Lithuanian languages.

Beyond its importance as a learning tool, the online EMPOWER Learning Hub is a powerful dissemination tool, which will be available after the end of the project, hereby ensuring its sustainability.

THE PROGRAMME IS AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH, GREEK, ICELANDIC AND LITHUANIAN ON OUR EMPOWER LEARNING HUB
HTTPS://EMPOWER.KMOP.GR/
The EMPOWER Training Programme in Practice

“Thank you for a very positive & fulfilling course & the opportunity to be part of a mentoring circle.”

“I know my values and their worth. This lesson has helped me with prioritising my values, that maybe in life we can’t always have it all.”

“Thank you for a very positive & fulfilling course & the opportunity to be part of a mentoring circle.”

“I know my values and their worth. This lesson has helped me with prioritising my values, that maybe in life we can’t always have it all.”

“I really enjoyed this lesson, I have taken away so much.”

“I love this course. I feel really confident about the future.”

“I am now more self-confident, my communication is more clear and assertive, less anxious, my English is also better and I speak lot more confident. That means so much!”

“I understood that the best job for me would be where my personal values and company values are similar.”

“It was so useful to share our experiences.”

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EMPOWER TRAINING PROGRAMME

EMPOWER Others

98 Support Workers & Volunteers

EMPOWER Yourself

89 Women

2 YEARS OF TRAINING

SOCIAL WORKERS

PSYCHOLOGISTS

TEACHERS

STUDENTS

CONSULTANTS
Interested in delivering the EMPOWER Training? – Here are some tips

Institutions wishing to offer the EMPOWER training courses need to provide learning with a supportive learning environment:

- create psychologically friendly surrounding;
- be acquainted with the background of the audiences and be aware of their needs and expectations;
- have experience on how to work with adults who have faced severe hardship;
- have the knowledge and skills to organise e-learning sessions;
- good knowledge of the teaching content;
- enjoy the following essential personal characteristics:
  » positive self-evaluation,
  » ability to motivate learners
  » ability to analyse behaviour
  » strong communication skills
  » respect and tolerance

They should furthermore ensure access to:

- a classroom with multimedia projector and a computer;
- other organisational tools (flipchart, handouts, pens & paper, etc.);
- optional = access to personal computers with internet connection for participants to access the EMPOWER Learning Hub;

When using EMPOWER project materials, organisations are required to reference the EMPOWER project and its connected partner organisations. Please contact Inova Consultancy Ltd. for more information.

“I found the Mentoring Circles really helpful – they are definitely something I will use with my service users at work.”

Inspiring Stories

The participants captured:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvHvQO-SBM0
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGcy7GfYt3w

Participant testimonials – see below

Sophie Maxwell – A Story of Success and Resilience
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQfETfV4KJE
Mary
Participant EMPOWER Others (UK) + Law Student and Volunteer at Ashiana

Please introduce yourself and let us know about your background.

My name is Mary Tear. I am a part-time Law Masters student at the University of Sheffield. I am from Beverley, in East Yorkshire. I work part-time in the Erasmus office at the University, and I also volunteer for a Women’s charity in Sheffield called Ashiana which works with vulnerable women who are escaping situations of trafficking, abuse or FGM.

What was the most valuable lesson you learned during the EMPOWER Training?

The most valuable thing I learnt during the EMPOWER training was the importance of having self-confidence, whilst encouraging vulnerable clients to also have confidence in themselves. I expected the training to be solely about the clients we work with, but a lot of it was about empowering ourselves. I learnt skills about confidence, heard about inspiring women who had developed skills themselves, and we made collages to demonstrate ourselves and our strengths. It has helped me to notice my own strengths at work and outside of work.

What was the biggest challenge to overcome whilst following the EMPOWER Training?

The biggest challenge was to discuss things about myself. For example, we were asked, as an icebreaker, to choose an adjective to describe ourselves. I think it is easy to lose confidence especially as a woman working with vulnerable people, and it’s difficult to be able to praise oneself. It was important for me to overcome this barrier, so that I could also teach vulnerable women how to identify their own wonderful skills and competences.

Do you have any advice for fellow support workers / women who find themselves in a similar position?

I would advise other support workers to take part in this training, and to, whilst working with the vulnerable clients, also check in with oneself and remind oneself what a great job you are doing. It is important to practice what you preach and really train yourself to be confident, in order to encourage this in other people around you.
L. T.
Participant EMPOWER Others (Greece)

Please introduce yourself and let us know about your background.

My name is L. T. and I am working as a social worker in the Women's Counselling Centre of the Municipality of Thessaloniki, providing support to the groups of vulnerable women who visit the Centre every day.

What was the most valuable lesson you learned during the EMPOWER Training?

The most valuable lesson I learnt during the EMPOWER Training Programme was that there are many interesting, practical and easy to use tools which can be applied in my work and can really help the women who wish to enter the labour market. For instance, after I introduced the SMART goal setting tool in my work, I found out that my clients are in a position to identify and set realistic goals and plans and therefore I am in the position to better support them.

Moreover, I learned that it is very important to focus on the development of these soft skills, which are necessary for the women in order to increase their employability.

What was the biggest challenge to overcome whilst following the EMPOWER Training?

There was no challenge that I needed to overcome whilst following the EMPOWER Training. The only difficulty that I faced was that I needed more time to grasp the concepts of entrepreneurship and business planning, since I do not have much experience on these topics.

Do you have any advice for fellow support workers?

I would definitely recommend my fellow support workers to participate in similar trainings and to get familiar with new methods and tools which can really improve their work as support workers who provide counselling or other services to vulnerable women.
Bjarney
Participant EMPOWER Others (Iceland)

How did you feel EMPOWER’s empowerment?

First and foremost, I gained faith in myself and my sense of safety increased. The projects that were carried out and discussions in time led me to spot my strengths that increased my confidence and, consequently, had a good impact on it and increased faith in my own capacity at work. A positive and constructive approach gave me freedom, and I gained confidence in mentors and participants who gave important space for me to test and study.

What was the most valuable lesson you learned during the EMPOWER Training?

I very much feel different about myself and this course was a great platform for me. It gave me a security that I had not found so much before. The project list that we received is invaluable and will continue to nourish. The most valuable lesson for me was to gain empowerment and see how other participants gained it also. Also, the exercises about listening, tolerance, setting goals for themselves. The entire approach of the course was solution-oriented and focused on constructive and positive approaches. There was nothing that I found blurred, but I did feel that I wanted to learn more about the conversation technology, as it is comprehensive and requires practice.

Have you used the EMPOWER Learning Hub to look at the exercises that we used in the course?

Yes, and will continue to do so. I have already taken part in a self-supporting group that I held during the course. The Learning Hub is like a golden moon, and I have told others who are working on empowering and strengthening other individuals about its value.

Do you think it is important to have a course for counselors and volunteers who are in a comparable position / working environment?

Not a question! It has been a good time for me to personally to get to know myself better and my strengths. I had time to find out where I was doing well and where I could improve myself. I got a mirror from others and was able set myself goals to work on before we met again. I became more aware of my strengths and enjoyed that.

I’m sure that is very good for other advisors and volunteers in a comparable working environment to meet in a course like this one. I would definitely recommend (and already have recommended) it to other people. It’s a really great course that I hope will be available again.
Virginijus Tamulionis
Participant EMPOWER Others (Lithuania) + Director of Alytus Region Men Crisis Centre

Please introduce yourself and let us know about your background.

I met many benevolent people in my life who helped me when I was going through hard times in my life and inspired by them I wanted to give a helping hand for those who are in need too. I took an opportunity to become volunteer at Alytus regional Women’s Crisis Centre Few years ago and in year 2016 with the group of volunteers opened Alytus regional Men’s Crisis Centre. I was assigned to manage the Centre and take care of its activities, organize its work and services for the people going through the critical periods in their lives and their families too. Many of our customers are women, because they come to see us when their men are in trouble and we consult women too. I have studied administration and management, so at the beginning couldn’t answer many questions of our customers, so I was looking for different courses in psychology, social care, etc. and applied for EMPOWER Others training at SIF in Kaunas, because it consisted of so many actual topics, related to my activities.

What was the most valuable lesson you learned during the EMPOWER Training?

The EMPOWER Others training was very special, because it motivated me to know myself better, my strengths and possibilities by applying tools of self-reflection, group discussions, sharing experiences between people having similar aims as me. I participated in all the sessions with great interest, had a possibility to reflect on my strengths, values, learned how we can help other people by motivating them to start new stage in their lives, think of goals, clarify them and evaluate the possibilities to reach them. I found that success stories can motivate people too and even learning about your needs and soft skills development can be a motivator. The greatest and very valuable experience for me were materials and exercises on presentation, because I was lacking confidence in public speaking. But after some encouragement and training during the EMPOWER sessions I was much better and later performed very well during my interview to the University, where I decided to get a master degree in sociology. So, I am working student again. There were no redundant topics in the course and I very much valued topics as Positive Psychology, Presenting Yourself, Employability and Entrepreneurship as well as Time Management, Resilience, just to name a few. All I have learned, I will be able to use in my consulting activities.

What was the biggest challenge to overcome whilst following the EMPOWER Training?

I wanted to do so much after the training: start new studies, work in the Crisis Centre and many more things in my life, so the biggest challenge for me was to clearly define my targets, to think on the way how to reach them, because I aimed more than I could do in the physical reality limited in time. I can’t say no if asked to help, so it was very useful for me to reflect on my goals and possibilities, to use tools from the EMPOWER training to define my visions and turn them into concrete steps. I am very glad I’ve tested some techniques in real file situations, so it is easier for me now to consult people and use tested tools for the problem solving.
Do you have any advice for fellow support workers / women who find themselves in a similar position?

The most important message for other support workers / consultants is that if you feel that you need more knowledge, do not hesitate and get support for your needs by finding and joining a really good training. EMPOWER Others is worth taking, because you can use the knowledge and experience from the course to strengthen yourself and help your customers a lot more.

Difficulties in life I treat as a GIFT, not as a punishment for the bad behaviour or the crime. We are as strong as we let ourselves be. I had a lot of pain and suffering on my way, but I also experienced the meaning and power of hope, belief and love. I understood later, that my experience had a meaning and this is the mission of my life, something that I have to share with other people going through hard times.

Please introduce yourself and let us know about your background.

My name is Yordanos. I came from Ethiopia and have a little girl. I went to university to study Marketing Management and have a BA degree. I’m currently doing basic courses in mental health nursing.

What was the most valuable lesson you learned during the EMPOWER Training?

The EMPOWER training helped me to overcome what happened in the past, to take advantage of negative scenarios of life and turn them into a cornerstone. It also taught me to motivate myself on how to take an opportunity from the surrounding that I’m in.

What was the biggest challenge to overcome whilst following the EMPOWER Training?

A lack of childcare made it hard to put all of my attention into the training as I always give half of it to my daughter.

Do you have any advice for fellow support workers / women who find themselves in a similar position?

Everything starts with a whisper, success is another daily routine to pass through. We need to remember that nothing is beyond our ability, that we are in charge of our thoughts, our body and our mental status.

Never be afraid to dream big and start doing things now. It all seems hard or dark when we think of it but sharing the experiences of successful people and learn from them makes our journey easier. E.g. Val’s (the EMPOWER Yourself Training Facilitator) life experience helped me to drop my ‘not me attitude’ and changed me to push myself towards my dream goal.
M. P.
Participant EMPOWER Yourself (Greece)

Please introduce yourself and let us know about your background.

My name is M. P. I am an unemployed woman, with basic education, 53 years old, with 3 adult children who now all support the family financially. I am divorced; I was informed of random relationships of my husband with other women and we ended our marriage when I found out that he has a child with another woman. Two years ago, I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and I am under medication and counselling.

What was the most valuable lesson you learned during the EMPOWER Training?

I learned many valuable lessons during the EMPOWER Training. The most important lesson for me was that I realised that I am not alone. There are a lot of women with similar difficulties and vulnerabilities to mine, and with the same need of support, understanding and respect. Through this group-work, I was helped to “build myself again” and bring out my strengths. I also had the chance to find out my self-presentation skills.

What was the biggest challenge to overcome whilst following the EMPOWER Training?

The biggest challenge that I had to overcome whilst following the EMPOWER Training, especially at the first meeting, was that I had to work in groups with other women that I have never met before. However, the trainer and the other women made me feel comfortable and at the end I was very excited to work with women with whom we share common problems and concerns.

Do you have any advice for women who find themselves in a similar position?

All women have to realise that they are not alone. There are (even though not many) appropriate support services and training programmes which can help them improve their soft skills, overcome their difficulties and return to the labour market.
Sonja
Interpreter (Iceland)

Please introduce yourself and let us know about your background.

I moved to Iceland in December 1998 after meeting an Icelandic man. We got married and moved to Iceland. We have two kids together but today I am a single mother and work as an interpreter.

When I moved, I thought it very difficult to start school in Iceland and start to learn Icelandic, it was hard for me to learn the language to begin with because the Icelandic language is very difficult. I already spoke English at the time and I think that helped me a lot because I could communicate with almost everybody in English. When I learned to speak Icelandic and I was able to communicate with people in their own language I felt more involved with people in and I gained more knowledge about everything that was going on in the society. I started to read the Icelandic newspaper and then felt the strength to go to school to learn how to be able to work in an Icelandic office and I also went to the Tourism school.

How did you deal with your challenges?

It was difficult in the beginning to start learning the language and it took time for me to start to understand people who spoke Icelandic to me, but I knew I wanted to find a good job and I knew that I would get a good job if I would be able to speak Icelandic and, in the end, I did.

Do you have any advice for women who find themselves in a similar position?

Yes, start learning Icelandic and immediately start working or meeting people who speak Icelandic to practice speaking the language. Don’t give up and continue to learn, get out of the house, enter the job market, study or take some courses; it is important to do something. If people give up on Icelandic studies, it is important to work with Icelanders, so that people learn the Icelandic language, and they need to practice speaking and understanding the language. It happens when you are around people.

Foreigners with a matriculation degree can also attend the University of Iceland and attend a one-year course called Icelandic for foreigners.
Lina Mars  
Participant EMPOWER Yourself  
(Lithuania)

Please introduce yourself and let us know about your background.

I was married soon after graduating from school and was never employed. I am looking all the time after the house and children. Dreaming a lot, attending different trainings and seminars. Years ago, I decided to take the massage course in order to learn the techniques and help my child who needs special care. Since then I am qualified massage specialist but helping only family members and friends with my massages. I have a dream to establish my own business, related with some physiotherapy and including beauty services too. I had some problems of psychological origin in the family, so decided to apply for help at one of the women organizations in Kaunas region and after psychological consultancy and discussions on my needs to gain knowledge on entrepreneurship they offered me to participate in the EMPOWER Yourself training ran by Social Innovation Fund, so I joined the group in spring 2017.

What was the most valuable lesson you learned during the EMPOWER Training?

I liked completely everything about the training. All information was very useful and relevant. Most enjoyable for me was the new experience of working in a group, to present myself, to reflect on my strengths, values, to learn a lot about entrepreneurship, to make my own plans for the future, to plan steps to make things happen, and learn techniques of visualisation and resilience, which I remember as the most important experiences for me. I met new people and made new friends. I was inspired to learn something else in my life, so I am attending English lessons now and am happy to make good progress in English language.

What was the biggest challenge to overcome whilst following the EMPOWER Training?

I was inspired to learn more and develop myself after EMPOWER Yourself training as well as to establish my own business related to physiotherapy. I am dreaming to turn my hobby into my work and business, because I am very physically active, attending different sports and events, so would like to encourage other people to do so, be healthy, be beautiful and be happy. The greatest challenges to make my dreams come true are financial obstacles, but I am not giving up, because I believe that if you really work hard you can reach the stars!

Do you have any advice for women who find themselves in a similar position?

I would advise every woman in my situation or similar not to give-up, to look for help, learn new things, develop yourself, get involved in voluntary activities, start helping others, don’t be afraid, because life can only get better. There are numerous organizations, which offer assistance for women in various difficult life situations. The future will be much better, if you dare and are not afraid of challenges.
As part of the EMPOWER project, the innovative Circles™ methodology developed by Inova Consultancy was carried out in all partner countries. The EMPOWER Circles™ programme is a unique mentoring process that brings together skilled facilitation using action learning techniques, coaching and mentoring, combined with career development/self-reflection tools. Throughout this chapter, we will demonstrate that and how the EMPOWER Circles™ have successfully supported:

- vulnerable women with increasing their career options and fostering the associated entrepreneurial spirit;
- support workers and volunteers with increasing their knowledge on how to support the vulnerable women they work with.

Before delving into the successes of our EMPOWER project, it is important to have a more thorough understanding of the educational philosophy that underpins the Circles™ methodology, which will therefore be presented in the next paragraph.

**Underpinning Philosophy**

The Circles™ methodology offers a unique group mentoring process bringing together skilled facilitation using action learning techniques, coaching and mentoring, combined with career development and self-reflection tools. The programme blends group discussion, individual airing of issues, reflection, goal setting and personal action planning.

**EMPOWER Circles™ - Purpose and Methodology:**

- EMPOWER Circles™ enable an individual to share their problems, issues, opportunities and challenges with others;
- EMPOWER Circles™ provide a safe yet challenging environment where ideas for getting a job/getting back into work or building a business can be explored and tested;
- Possible options for action can be generated and discussed;
- The individual is helped to find the next steps forward in furthering their idea to get back into work or start a business;
- EMPOWER Circles™ encourage development of self-reflection and self-belief;
- Participants are given opportunities to meet and network with other women/colleagues facing similar issues;
- Participants are given opportunities to make new contacts/friends and expand networks.

“Every time I attended the Circle group meetings I was expecting something very interesting and good to happen and my expectations were fulfilled every time. This was a great time and solid knowledge.”
EMPOWER Circles™ are learner led and learner focused. The concept of EMPOWER Circles™ is built on the process of learning as a journey; it starts from the understanding that the individual can be helped to reveal what they need to know, that some knowledge is already within us and needs to be brought forward, and that shared knowledge and learning from others can be extremely valuable. The focus is very much on questioning to reveal insights – whether this is through group discussions, completion of exercises and/or guided questioning from other participants.

For example, through guided questioning sections within an EMPOWER Circle™, each participant will be given a time slot to talk about their problem or opportunity and the other group members offer questions. The questioning is about discovery, trying to understand more fully any underlying issues which would be fruitful to explore further. Thus, the focus is on questioning rather than advice giving. Similarly, when completing exercises regarding self-development or self-reflection, participants are encouraged to question their responses and to support other group members in questioning why they responded to an exercise in a certain way. This process strengthens the development of self-reflection.

Learning from peers is the final powerful element of the methodology that results in positive beneficial outcomes for learners, resulting in a greater likelihood that participants put their goals into actions (i.e. turning intent into reality). Figure 2 portrays a visual representation of the action learning process adopted in the EMPOWER Circles™.

![Figure 2. The Action Learning Process](image-url)
EMPOWER Circles™ in practice

The EMPOWER Circles™ were delivered to four groups per country; two groups with support workers and two groups with women who have faced severe hardship in their lives (such as domestic abuse, human trafficking, prison, etc.). In December 2016, all project facilitators received training about how to approach the delivery of the Circles™ programme in Greece by trainers from Inova, the original developers of the Mentoring Circles™ methodology.

All Circle™ groups met for three sessions and had a duration of approximately 3-4 hours taking place at a location where participants were able to talk about their challenges and goals, confident that their stories would not leave the four walls of the meeting location. The Circles™ covered important areas such as soft skills building, goal setting and prioritising, finding your motivation, networking, communication, presentation, and time management.

Participants were given time to explore their preferred discussion area and goal setting activities within the programme. Facilitators were specifically instructed to help participants develop action plans to go forward and test out new ideas to achieve our main objective of empowerment. Each following session, participants were meant to bring these actions back to the Circle™ and review their progress. As the Circles™ methodology strongly focuses on questioning rather than advice giving, participants were encouraged to support each other and build the confidence to push each other out of their comfort zone.

In total, over 120 support workers and women participated in the Circles™ programme throughout the project’s lifetime, and project partners have committed to continue delivering the methodology in the future.

“It was a wonderful experience to work with the women at Askham Grange. It was humbling to work with them and hear their stories and the women really engaged fully with the process, although the concept of Mentoring Circles™ was quite unfamiliar to them and many found the self-reflection process difficult.

As a facilitator it was important to adapt to the group and work towards their level – for example, we take it for granted that a learner will be able to set themselves action points to work towards a goal but for many of these women they found it very difficult. For many, we needed to really make it quite basic and help them set very simple goals and action points to help them get used to the idea.”
Curious? Try one of our exercises!

Name ______________________
Date ______________________

The Wheel of Life

INSTRUCTIONS:

Each segment of the wheel represents one area of your life. Consider each section - how satisfied are you with all these areas of your life? Are you putting as much time, energy and attention into these areas as you would like?

The centre of the wheel is 0 and means you are totally dissatisfied; the outer edge is 10 and represents full satisfaction and achievement. Decide your degree of satisfaction from 0 to 10 and mark it on the relevant spoke.

Now draw a line to join your degree marks together.

• How balanced is your life?
• Which areas make you happy, satisfied and fulfilled?
• Which areas need improvement?

The goal is to find a balance that you are satisfied with.

You can find more tools, exercises and background information in our EMPOWER Learner Pack. This Guide has been uploaded to our freely accessible Learning Hub, all you need to do is register: https://empower.kmop.gr/.
Recommendations for Policymakers

The EMPOWER Project affirmed the need for more high-quality support to vulnerable women at risk of exclusion from the labour market and from their local communities, in order for them to (re)gain employment and financial independence. VET practitioners (support workers and volunteers) broadly demonstrated the wish to become more resourceful to tackle these challenges, with a broad focus on soft skills (e.g. communication, listening, resilience, etc.).

Based on our experiences and feedback received, we present the following recommendations to increase the quality of and access to the support that is needed by both support workers, volunteers and vulnerable women. Implementing these recommendations will, hopefully, improve the (recognition of) strengths of all parties involved and hereby lead to a more resilient society.

» Services should be personalised and adapted to the needs of each beneficiary.
» Women with higher formal skills should be provided with specialised training, such as entrepreneurship.
» Career guidance should be combined with psychosocial counselling in order to improve women’s self-confidence and develop their soft skills.
» Low-skilled women should be provided with the opportunity to develop formal skills, such as ICTs and language skills.
» Soft skills should constitute a prominent element of the provided services.
» Mentoring approach – offer both individual and group mentoring; group mentoring helps women to acquire effective communication and conflict resolution skills.
» Services should offer job/skills matching with companies and paid apprenticeships.

“The second pilot gave me the opportunity to learn more about the challenges support workers and volunteers have in motivating some of their clients in achieving their goals. The importance of sharing and learning from stories was an important point for reflection for all participants. It is always so refreshing to hear about the passion and commitment learners have for the women they are supporting and we look forward at Inova to hearing from them in the near future.”
More financial support should be made available for organisations to offer thorough on-the-job-training, gather up-to-date information about the labour market, and offer support workers more external training opportunities.

Policies should encourage stronger networking with other associated services, employment agencies, Business Advice Centres, etc. to improve the effectiveness of referrals as well as the dissemination of information regarding training programmes and professional skills’ development workshops for professionals.

Services should offer more training opportunities that focus on employability and entrepreneurship support.

The training offer for both support workers and vulnerable women should be more flexible, with a stronger focus on online training to accommodate for working hours and other responsibilities.

“The course delivery was very challenging, not due to the language barriers but more due to the very complex life experiences which when shared, stirred emotions within the rest of the group as well as with myself. The women were amazing, inspirational and strong and if in some small way the EMPOWER training supported them to see their inner strength and power then it was worthwhile and rewarding as a teacher. There was a lot of empathy in the room and by the end of the course, a lot of hope for the future.

It was a very positive experience for me!”
“I felt after the first circle that I am a bit overthinking. When I met incredible talented, opened, strong, intelligent immigrants I was able to realize my own negative prejudices of immigrants and my own situation. That helped me a lot to see the clear picture and strengthen my self-confidence.”
“The response to the Empower training has been amazing. The commitment and enthusiasm of the support workers involved has been incredibly positive and it was great to note that they felt that they had not only developed professional skills but had also grown on a personal level through the experience of trying out the exercises and learning more about coaching.”

“The circles went very well and the women felt very happy to meet in the circles and discuss what was on their mind about the training and their personal experience. We thought that it helped them to meet in the circle especially because in our group we had foreign women and they had a lot to talk about. The exercises that they did in the circle helped them to focus on their strengths and weaknesses.”
Shining a light on...

Throughout the EMPOWER project we have had the pleasure of working with a number of incredible organisations who constantly strive to support others. As a thank you for their involvement, we decided to honour their hard work by giving them their own little spotlight.

The United Kingdom

Buzz Sheffield
Buzz Sheffield exists to enrich the lives of vulnerable and isolated people in communities across Sheffield.
St Andrews Church
Upper Hanover Street
Sheffield, S3 7RQ
Phone: +44 (0)114 276 6174
http://buzzsheffield.co.uk/

ASSIST Sheffield
ASSIST Sheffield helps asylum seekers whose initial claims have been rejected, and who are therefore destitute.
Victoria Hall Methodist Church
Norfolk Street
Sheffield, S1 2JB
Phone: +44 (0)114 275 4960
http://www.assistsheffield.org.uk/

Ashiana
Ashiana supports those from communities who have been affected by violence and abuse.
PO BOX 367
Sheffield, S1 1HX
Email: info@ashianasheffield.org
Phone: +44 (0)114 255 5740
http://www.ashianasheffield.org/

City Hearts
City Hearts pursues the freedom and restoration of lives torn apart by modern slavery and life controlling issues.
The Megacentre
Bernard Road
Sheffield, S2 5BQ
Email: info@cityhearts.global
Phone: +44 (0)114 213 2063
http://city-hearts.co.uk/
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Snowdrop Project</strong></th>
<th><strong>Roshni Sheffield Asian Women’s Resource Centre</strong></th>
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| Snowdrop Project provides long-term support to empower survivors of human trafficking.  
Parkhead House  
Carver Street  
Sheffield, S1 4FS  
Email: info@snowdropproject.co.uk  
Phone: +44 (0)7881997983  
https://snowdropproject.co.uk/| Roshni helps to advance the welfare and education of Asian women in Sheffield.  
444 London Rd  
Sheffield, S2 4HP  
Email: admin@roshnisheffield.org.uk  
Phone: +44 (0)1142508898  
http://www.roshnisheffield.co.uk/ |

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<th><strong>VAS – Voluntary Action Sheffield</strong></th>
<th><strong>Shelter Sheffield</strong></th>
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| VAS provides support and leadership for the voluntary sector, and has done so for over 90 years.  
The Circle  
33 Rockingham Lane  
Sheffield, S1 4FW  
Email: info@vas.org.uk  
Phone: +44 (0)1142536600  
https://www.vas.org.uk/| Shelter is a national organisation that provides support to people experiencing problems with housing and homelessness.  
Furnival House  
48 Furnival Gate  
Sheffield, S1 4QP  
Phone: +44 (0)3445151515  
http://england.shelter.org.uk/ |

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<tr>
<th><strong>Together Women Project Sheffield</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sheffield MIND</strong></th>
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| Sheffield Together Women Project provides holistic and gender-specific support to vulnerable women across the city of Sheffield.  
106 Arundel Lane  
Sheffield S1 4RF  
Phone: +44 (0)1142758282  
http://www.togetherwomen.org/| Sheffield Mind is a leading provider of mental health and wellbeing services in Sheffield.  
110 Sharrow Lane  
Sheffield, S11 8AL  
Phone: +44 (0)1142584489  
https://sheffieldmind.co.uk/ |
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<tr>
<th>Addaction</th>
<th>Maan Somali Mental Health</th>
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<tr>
<td>Addaction is one of the UK’s leading mental health, drug and alcohol charities.</td>
<td>Maan is a local charity working with the Somali community in Sheffield to help address mental health and related needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 Sidney Street, Sheffield, S1 4RH</td>
<td>8 Paradise Street, Sheffield, S1 2DF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: +44 (0)114 2536830</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:admin.maan@tiscali.co.uk">admin.maan@tiscali.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.addaction.org.uk/">https://www.addaction.org.uk/</a></td>
<td>Phone: +44 (0)114 275 8556</td>
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<td><a href="https://www.facebook.com/maansmhs/">https://www.facebook.com/maansmhs/</a></td>
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<tr>
<th>Roundabout</th>
<th>Timebuilders</th>
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<tr>
<td>Roundabout provides shelter, support and life skills to young people in Sheffield.</td>
<td>Volunteering in Sheffield: TimeBuilders uses time-credits to create networks of friends who do the work needed to make communities stronger.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Circle</td>
<td>St Mary’s Church &amp; Community Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield, S1 4FW</td>
<td>Bramall Lane, Sheffield, S2 4QZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: +44 (0)114 253 6789</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:team@timebuilders.org.uk">team@timebuilders.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.roundabout-homeless.org/">http://www.roundabout-homeless.org/</a></td>
<td>Call: +44 (0)114 223 0240</td>
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<td><a href="https://www.timebuilders.org.uk/">https://www.timebuilders.org.uk/</a></td>
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<th>The Really NEET Project</th>
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<tr>
<td>Change a young person’s life today and they may change the world tomorrow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SYAC Business Centre, Units 114 &amp; 110 Wicker, Sheffield, S3 8JD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:sophie@reallyneetproject.co.uk">sophie@reallyneetproject.co.uk</a></td>
<td>Phone: +44 (0)114 272 5736 / +44 (0)7979190498</td>
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<td><a href="http://reallyneet.co.uk/">http://reallyneet.co.uk/</a></td>
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<td><strong>Women of foreign origin</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>W.O.M.E.N.</strong></td>
<td><strong>RKÍ - Rauði krossinn á Íslandi</strong>&lt;br&gt;The Icelandic Red Cross, offering services for immigrants and asylum seekers. Since 2004, they furthermore operate a shelter for homeless women named Konukot (‘Women’s Cottage’) together with the City of Reykjavík</td>
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<td>The goal of W.O.M.E.N. is to unite, to express and address the interests and issues of women of foreign origin living in Iceland to bring about equality for them as women and as foreigners in all areas of society.</td>
<td>Túngata 14, 101 Reykjavík&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:info@womeniniceland.is">info@womeniniceland.is</a>&lt;br&gt;www.womeniniceland.is&lt;br&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Túngata 14, 101 Reykjavík&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:info@womeniniceland.is">info@womeniniceland.is</a>&lt;br&gt;www.womeniniceland.is</td>
<td>Efstaleiti 9, 103 Reykjavík&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:central@redcross.is">central@redcross.is</a>&lt;br&gt;Phone: +354 570 4000&lt;br&gt;www.rki.is</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Services</strong>&lt;br&gt;Social Services available all across Iceland.</td>
<td><strong>Multicultural Board</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Fjölmenningarráð)&lt;br&gt;Services and information for immigrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.reykjavik.is">www.reykjavik.is</a>&lt;br&gt;www.hafnarfjordur.is&lt;br&gt;www.kopavogur.is</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:fjolmenningarrad@reykjavik.is">fjolmenningarrad@reykjavik.is</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://reykjavik.is/radognefndir/fjolmenningarrad">http://reykjavik.is/radognefndir/fjolmenningarrad</a></td>
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<td><strong>NMI - Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands</strong>&lt;br&gt;Offers advice to entrepreneurs.</td>
<td><strong>Regional Support for Entrepreneurs</strong>&lt;br&gt;Regional Support in 8 parts of the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keldnaholt, 112 Reykjavík&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:nmi@nmi.is">nmi@nmi.is</a>&lt;br&gt;Phone: +354 522 9000&lt;br&gt;www.nmi.is</td>
<td>Various websites</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>The Centre for Gender Equality (Jafnréttisstofa)</strong>&lt;br&gt;The Centre is a national bureau and oversees administering the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008. The aim of the Act is to establish and maintain equal status and equal opportunities for women and men, and to promote gender equality in all spheres of society.</td>
<td><strong>Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands</strong>&lt;br&gt;Offers advice to entrepreneurs.</td>
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<td>Borgum við Nordurslóð, 600 Akureyri&lt;br&gt;Email: <a href="mailto:jafnretti@jafnretti.is">jafnretti@jafnretti.is</a>&lt;br&gt;Phone: +354 460 6200&lt;br&gt;www.jafnretti.is</td>
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Women’s Shelter (Kvennaathvarfð)
The shelter provides place to stay for women and their children who have been physically or psychologically abused in their own home by a family member. The shelter also offers support and counselling for victims of rape.

Email: kvennaathvarf@kvennaathvarf.is
www.kvennaathvarf.is

Multi-Cultural Center (Fjölmenningararsetur)
Information regarding all aspects of Icelandic society.

Email: mcc@mcc.is
Phone: +354 450 3090
http://www.mcc.is/english/

Greece

Greek Organisation of Labour Force Employment
Public authority promoting employment and vocational training in Greece. Among other activities, it provides, applies and funds programmes that facilitate access to employment, while also offering professional orientation and counselling support, placing emphasis on groups that are most affected by unemployment, as well as vulnerable population groups such as women.

www.oaed.gr

General Secretariat for Gender Equality and its Counselling Centres all over Greece
Public authority providing services to vulnerable women of all types. Main services include:
Psychosocial counselling
Legal counselling and information on the rights of women victims of violence
Legal aid (in collaboration with local lawyers’ associations)
Referrals to guest houses, hospitals, employment agencies, child support services etc.

www.isotita.gr

National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA)
National agency in charge of coordinating social support and solidarity services to people in direct need of help, such as refugees and unaccompanied minors. Among other services, it has 6 guesthouses across Greece for vulnerable people such as abused women and teenagers in need, and provides psychosocial support to the guesthouse residents during their stay.

http://www.ekka.org.gr/
Office for Equality – Municipality of Athens
Among others, it offers psychological and social support to women who are victims of violence. Also, it implements programmes with the aim to prepare the women on a social and employment level, improve their skills and place them in viable employment. This involves a combination of actions concerning information, career guidance and counselling, Greek language classes for migrants and job training.

https://www.cityofathens.gr/en/office-equality-0

PRAKSIS
Independent NGO, whose main goal is the elimination of social and economic exclusion of vulnerable social groups and the defence of their personal and social rights. Its beneficiaries include Greek poor, homeless, uninsured, economic immigrants, asylum seekers/ refugees, unaccompanied minors, trafficking victims, sex workers, etc. Basic services provided by PRAKSIS through specific programs include (among others): psychological support, social support, work counselling and promotion to labour.

https://www.praksis.gr/en/

Centre for Research on Women’s Issues (CRWI) “Diotima”
Non-governmental women’s organisation, aiming at systematically highlighting discriminations against women on all levels of social, political and economic life. Among others, Diotima is a certified Centre for Counselling & Supportive Services, which plans and implements interventions and counselling activities for the support and empowerment of women in general and for the support of diversified groups of women (e.g. unemployed women, single mothers, victims of violence and trafficking, immigrants etc), as well as interventions for women’s self-employment/entrepreneurship, skills upgrading, referrals to relevant services and organisations, etc.

http://www.diotima.org.gr

XEN (YWCA-Young Women Christian Association)
XEN works continuously to inform and raise awareness of issues that affect women and the societies in which they live. It organises action programmes and services which give women the opportunity to acquire necessary skills and competences to enter or re-enter the job market. Special focus is given to migrant women for whom – among others – Greek language classes are provided.

http://www.xen.gr/
### Synyparxis (network of social solidarity and psychological support)

NGO providing psychological support and empowerment to those who need it but cannot afford it, i.e. unemployed, semi-employed, uninsured, without distinction of origin, gender, class, religion, age, sexual orientation, political beliefs, physical abilities, etc.

http://syn-yparxi.gr/en/

### Elpida-Zoi

Created to offer charitable work to women and juvenile children who seek help for psychological and physical abuse in their everyday life.

http://elpidazoi.gr

### Home - Start Hellas

A programme addressing families who face difficulties or are under pressure and have at least one child of preschool age, aiming at the improvement of confidence and self-reliance of the families.

http://en.homestart.org.gr/

### Human People

A charity organisation whose goal is to show general empathy and support for people in need, and to find and repair spaces suitable for housing the homeless, families in need and individuals in cooperation with local municipalities.

http://www.anthropinoi-anthropoi.gr/

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### Lithuania

### Kaunas Women - Employment Information Centre

A non-governmental organisation, working with women and for women. The Centre was opened for society in December, 1994 by initiative of Kaunas City Municipality and United Nations Labour Organization.

Savanorių 1, Kaunas town, Lithuania
Phone: +370 612 45945
Email: jurate@muic.lt
www.muic.lt

### European Innovation Centre (EInC)

Established in 1996, EInC is a non-profit vocational training institution, seeking to support social welfare and sustainable development, through initiation and implementation of social innovations.

Savanorių 1, Kaunas town, Lithuania
Phone: 8-37 206575
Email: info@einc.lt
www.einc.lt
## Taurage Women Employment Information Centre

One of the priorities of the TMUIC is to increase employment of the population, especially women, thereby reducing social exclusion and poverty, taking into account local needs and opportunities.

V. Kudirkos g. 9, LT-72217 Tauragė, Lithuania
Phone: +370 446 61565
Email: taurage@moterscentras.w3.lt
http://moterscentras.lt/

## Caunas Women Aid Women

Non-governmental organisation offering psychological support for women in crisis.

V. Sladkevičiaus g. 5-3, Kaunas, Lithuania
Phone: +370 618 40044, +370 618 05005
Email: info@moters-pagalba.lt
ausrine@moters-pagalba.lt
www.moters-pagalba.lt

## Alytus Women Crisis Centre


Topolių 10-18, 63342, Alytus, Lithuania
Phone: +370 611 54342
Email: ammkc@aktv.lt
http://lmlo.lt/apie/lmlo-narės/alytaus-miesto-moteru-kriziu-centras/

## Kretinga Women Information and Education Centre

Mission to improve economic and social wellbeing of women in the Kretinga region by promoting gender equality principles, supporting business initiatives, organising educational activities.

Vilniaus g. 18, LT-97104 Kretinga, Lithuania
Phone: +30 445 78024, +30 605 82331
Email: kretingosmoterys@gmail.com
www.kmimc.lt

## Kaunas County Women Crisis Centre

Preventing violence against women, human trafficking, organize and participate in various human right action.

A. Juozapavičiaus pr. 77, Kaunas, Lithuania
Phone/fax: +370 340027, +370 679 31930
Email: kriziucentras@kamkc.ll

## Kretinga Women Information and Education Centre

Mission to improve economic and social wellbeing of women in the Kretinga region by promoting gender equality principles, supporting business initiatives, organising educational activities.

Vilniaus g. 18, LT-97104 Kretinga, Lithuania
Phone: +30 445 78024, +30 605 82331
Email: kretingosmoterys@gmail.com
www.kmimc.lt
Marijampole Regional Women Activity Centre
Psychological, legal aid and consulting for vulnerable women. Activities to prevent domestic violence, unemployment and social exclusion. Education and trainings for women's employability, self-esteem and skills development.

Kęstučio g 3, LT 68308 Marijampolė, Lithuania
Phone: +370 343 59525, +370 633 55007
Email: mvc.mot@gmail.com
http://marmvc.webs.com/