SUMMARY OF THE NEEDS ANALYSIS

A brief overview of the needs analysis's method and results.

The Erasmus+ project DIGIGEN focuses on designing an up-skilling programme for guidance professionals. Guidance professionals (career counsellors and HR practitioners) are to be qualified in creating their counselling approach to support women in planning their entry, entering, and remaining in management positions by making use of the digital transformation. Therefore, in the first phase of DIGIGEN, a needs analysis was elaborated based on a half-structured interview with guidance professionals and a half-structured questionnaire with female leaders. The results gave a good insight into the needs of, on the one hand, guidance professionals (*direct target group*) and, on the other hand, (future) female leaders (*indirect target group*).

METHOD

Data were collected regarding the following aspects: digital leadership, female empowerment, and specific counselling approaches. In particular, aspects such as changes in leadership due to digitalisation, laws/programs to promote female leadership, digital competencies for leaders, qualification measures to learn digital skills, and counselling approaches for digital female leaders were bespoken.

Data from the direct target group (guidance professionals) was gathered in 20-30 minutes half-structured interviews. Data from the indirect target group (female leaders) was gathered in 5-10 minutes open-ended and exploratory paper-pencil questionnaires. The responses could be either in English or in the respondent's mother language but must then be transcribed and edited in English.

The method used for the interview and questionnaire evaluation is a qualitative content analysis, according to Kuckartz (2018). This content-structured qualitative content analysis focuses on forming and identifying categories and subcategories. The data material is coded according to these categories. In total, 1229 text passages were extracted and coded.

For the interviews, a total of 401 passages (c) from 51 interviews (n) gave insight into the opinions of guidance professionals (*Germany: n=18/c=122; Hungary: n=11/c=124; the Netherlands: n=22/c=155*). For the questionnaires, a total of 828 passages (c) from 104 interviews (n) reflect the statements of female leaders (*Germany: n=25 / c=186; Hungary: n=43 / c=398; the Netherlands: n=36 / c=246*).

Kuckartz, U. (2018): Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Methoden, Praxis, Computerunterstützung. 4. edition. Weinheim.

RESULTS

Clustered by the main aspects of the DIGIGEN project, the main results are the following:

DIGITAL LEADERSHIP: There is an awareness of the changes impacted by digitalisation. Impacts such as increased complexity, enhanced and accelerated processes, and increased efficiency were reported *(both)*. *Female leaders* focus primarily on digital tools and indicate heightened stress/harassment, while *guidance professionals* focus mainly on skills and competencies. The competencies mentioned are digital affinity, confident use of technology, digital coordination and interaction, and mediation skills. *Both* groups see more differences in age than in gender regarding digital competencies.

FEMALE EMPOWERMENT: Most participants know about laws supporting female leadership and female careers in the respective country *(both)*. However, the awareness of specific support programmes is low. If such programmes were mentioned, they were primarily local or company-specific *(both)*. *Guidance professionals* see no differences between men and women but observe that prejudices are being brought on the subject. *Female leaders* see slightly more difference in gender in the sense that women focus more on interaction and explaining, whereas male leaders are more open to digital solutions and techniques.

COUNSELLING APPROACH: Participants wish for an individual, tool-specific, and hands-on counselling approach *(both)*. Furthermore, *female leaders* prefer women-to-women mentoring, while *guidance professionals* see great potential in the usage of methods of positive psychology in their counselling. Counselling should provide training for self-management and soft skills *(female leaders)* and software applications and digital tools *(both)*.

CONCLUSION

Guidance professionals and female leaders see opportunities in digitalisation, but also considerable efforts to keep pace with the rapid changes. Concrete evidence on promoting female leadership, particularly in digitalisation, has been vague and unspecific so far. Nevertheless, the expectations of an up-skilling programme are distinctly formulated: elements of individual and personal (online and/or offline) interaction are desired on both sides. A mix of an understanding of organisations, digital communication and interaction on a personal level is essential, rather than the IT-specific knowledge of a single software program or IT platform. The results indicate that support programs for women in leadership should vigorously pursue systems thinking-driven skill acquisition as an outcome.

Co-funded by
the European Union