



ifempower

Final Study Including Policy Recommendations



Final Study Including Policy Recommendations

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Executive Summary

1. This intellectual output is the final study of the ifempower project that synthesizes the main findings of the project. We provide an assessment about the major project activities of ifempower: development and testing of a curriculum and a teaching material; intensive study programs in the forms of on-line winter and spring schools; the mentorship program; functioning of female entrepreneurship support points and the online toolkit. The final study also identifies good practices via channelling feedbacks from stakeholders (students, teachers and business partners). In addition, it provides policy recommendations related to the major project activities in order to ensure the transferability of the ifempower project outputs to other institutions and countries.

2. Partners within ifempower project developed and tested a two-semester-long teaching module on female entrepreneurship between 2019 and 2021 at four universities. Instructors as well as students perceived that the curriculum and the teaching material of the 'The entrepreneurial woman of the 21st Century – Creating and starting a new venture by women' course functioned adequately. Accordingly, further improvement can be achieved less in the content but rather in the smart application of the ifempower teaching materials. Based on feedbacks from instructors and students particularly helpful teaching tools were those practice-oriented activities that actively involved students, increased interactions and facilitated debates, and brainstorming on entrepreneurial ideas.

The forced online context of the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances constrained the online adaptation of the teaching material that worked well. Still, real-life case studies, group works and other interactive tools can contribute to an even better assessment of the course using the ifempower curriculum and teaching material. Instructors face a continuous task in fusing local and international examples, case studies on local female entrepreneurship and role models with the curriculum. Organising direct meeting opportunities with entrepreneurial women is crucial in the smart application of the teaching material.

3. Intensive study programmes were offered for twelve female students during winter and spring schools at five participating universities. The programme offered training and workshops for the participants to work on and introduce their business plans at multiplier events, enhanced networking with media representatives, experts, business angels and investors. Special attention was paid to the practical skills needed for launching an enterprise, selling an idea, and attracting investors.

The overall assessment of the intensive study programs from students, instructors and participating stakeholders was convincingly positive. The identified challenges and areas for improvement are not about the substantive materials. The online context, however, implied some specific challenges in terms of the longevity of some sessions, managing personal interactions

and especially networking opportunities. In addition, treatment of the heterogeneous background of participating students proved to be a significant challenge – although it can also be a major source of entrepreneurial innovation.

4. The most challenging part of the ifempower project was the set-up of mentorship programs. This innovative idea could potentially be an excellent tool to achieve educational goals in the frame of practice-oriented learning. When a meaningful mentor-mentee cooperation could be established, the program proved to be inspiring for female university students and brought about great achievement in young women's real-life business knowledge and skills and greatly promoted entrepreneurial attitudes. The pandemic context, however, was a sweeping blow for mentor-mentee interactions. The first trust-building stage of mentorship was heavily undermined in the online context between previously unknown mentors and mentees. Accordingly, the true virtues of the mentorship programs could be achieved only in few cases where a trust-based relation was established between mentors and mentees as partners.

Mentorship programs were initiated at ifempower partner universities (Bifröst University, CUB, Sapientia and SFU) with the aim of providing knowledge and practical advice, personal advice from senior entrepreneurs, lecturers, and experts to students interested in establishing small businesses. The start of the mentorship program coincided with the onset of the pandemic period and universities experienced major difficulties in reaching and involving students to online mentorship. Involving mentors on a volunteer basis proved to be also a major challenge, at least in some of the countries of ifempower partners. At the same time, when a smoothly operating mentor-mentee relationship was established, participating students reflected that mentorship gave them a unique and outstanding benefit in shaping their own business ideas, inspiration and motivation.

5. From 2019 Female Entrepreneurship Support Points provided consultations for female university students on starting and running a business, relying on practicing entrepreneurs and mentors. This was a difficult initiative for several partners: operating an entrepreneurship support point was unusual for universities with limited experience in entrepreneurial relations, while business development agencies found it hard to reach university students. The pandemic situation forced all consultation activities to online platforms, where developing interactions based on trust between consultants and students as potential entrepreneurs proved challenging.

Challenges were harsher where partners entered into highly competitive markets of entrepreneurial support. Partners where smooth cooperation between universities and business development agencies existed proved to be more successful. The approach of online group consultations was an intuitively developed but successful practice that contributed to the creation of a safe digital space for female university students to openly share their business ideas. Despite all the difficulties this initiative can be considered beneficial. Young women valued the consultation opportunities, relying on experts to share and develop their business ideas. Some

business development agencies could use the opportunity generated by ifempower to expand their scope to young women as potential entrepreneurs.

6. An important and innovative component of the ifempower project was creating of the free-of-charge online toolkit for educational purposes. The online toolkit provides interactive content for potential female entrepreneurs at three stages of their entrepreneurial career: the business plan phase, the business development phase and the business sustainability phase. The toolkit reflects the broader perspective of the ifempower project: integrating entrepreneurial skills and knowledge with a gender-sensitive perspective through interactive practice-oriented learning.

Although the toolkit has a strong content built upon previous ifempower intellectual outputs, and is available in all seven languages of ifempower project partners, it has been used below its true potential by the end of the project period. At the same time, communication and dissemination results of the project indicate remarkable achievements, especially through the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, You Tube and LinkedIn) channels. These dissemination achievements provide a promising base for the future use and the sustainability of the project.

7. The integrative idea of gender-sensitive entrepreneurial studies with an emphasis on special challenges of female students as potential entrepreneurs was justified. The use of practice-oriented teaching methods, closely linking higher education with the real world of entrepreneurship was highly appreciated. The most remarkable achievement of the project was the novel teaching material proven to be transferable to other institutional and country contexts with only minor adaptation. The pandemic circumstances and the forced online transition caused major difficulties with mentorship programs and entrepreneurial support points, but when a smooth mentor-mentee collaboration was established, motivated mentees perceived mentorship as an exceptional and inspiring opportunity.

We recommend the widespread implementation of key success factors of the ifempower project – such as the gender perspective, the use of case studies, and the practical entrepreneurial approach – in higher education. Universities and entrepreneurial support providers are recommended to develop and maintain robust local and national networks of professionals and potential entrepreneurs, where personal connections could be cultivated and which would be able to function virtually if necessary. Policy makers should incentivize cooperation between stakeholders and the inclusion of gender aspects into study programs and entrepreneurial support services.

1. Introduction: main objectives and assessment methodology

The objective of this final study of the ifempower project (intellectual output 8, hereinafter: IO8) is to synthesize the main findings of the project. IO8 provides an assessment about the achievements of the major project activities of ifempower: development and testing of a curriculum and a teaching material; intensive study programs in forms of on-line winter and spring schools; the mentorship program; functioning of female entrepreneurship support points and the online toolkit. The final study identifies good practices via channelling feedbacks from major stakeholders of the project (students, teachers and business partners). In addition, this intellectual output also provides policy recommendations related to the major project activities in order to ensure the transferability of the ifempower project outputs to other institutions and countries.

The substantive base of assessment in this final study is defined by the Application Form (hereinafter: AF): major sources are constituted by feedbacks collected from students, teachers, mentors, mentees and other stakeholders who were involved in the implementation of some project element of the ifempower. The target audience is constituted by a broader range of stakeholders: universities and other higher education institutions, university teachers and students potentially involved in entrepreneurship studies, entrepreneurship support organisations, public and private agencies and business partners involved in entrepreneurs' mentorship, entrepreneurship development researchers, national and EU level policy makers in the areas of higher education and entrepreneurial development. A specific aspect of the ifempower was the gender perspective: the focus on female students as potential female entrepreneurs participating in mentorship and entrepreneurship sensitive to specific opportunities and challenges of female actors. Still, the explicit integration of the gender perspective provides relevant policy findings to higher education and entrepreneurship support practitioners and policy makers in general (i.e. not exclusively to female actors).

Inputs for the final study assessment are provided by previous intellectual outputs, existing feedbacks from instructors, students and other relevant stakeholders. In addition, after a careful check of the existing feedback materials, a small number of semi-structured interviews were prepared related to some project activities. These interviews were important in some project components where the pandemic context implied special difficulties (i.e., operation of mentorship and entrepreneurship support points in online setting) and served as additional input materials to the preparation of the final study.

Preliminary findings of this final study were presented at the Final Multiplier Event of the ifempower project (12 July 2021). This version of the final study reflects the remarks and suggestions of the participating stakeholders and project partners. Accordingly, some additions and modifications were made.

2. Curriculum and teaching material

Partners of ifempower developed and tested a two-semester-long teaching module on female entrepreneurship between 2019 and 2021. The curriculum and the teaching materials have been used at four universities: Bifröst University, Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB), Sapientia University of Cluj-Napoca (Sapientia), and the Sigmund Freud University (SFU) of Vienna. This section presents an assessment based on feedback on the quality and application of the curriculum, course materials, learning outcomes, teaching activities, and provides suggestions for future development of the curriculum and the teaching material. Due to the specific circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, all courses that were initially developed to classical offline teaching with regular personal face-to-face interactions were eventually delivered online.

We have used three types of data sources for the assessment of the curriculum and the teaching material:

1. Written feedback on experiences of teaching the courses provided by instructors.
2. A survey distributed to instructors (university lecturers/guest lecturers) who delivered the course(s). Altogether, ten instructors answered the survey.
3. Students' survey evaluations on courses (based on the standard course evaluations of the partner universities), supplemented with their oral feedback collected by instructors of the courses.

2.1. Instructors' assessment

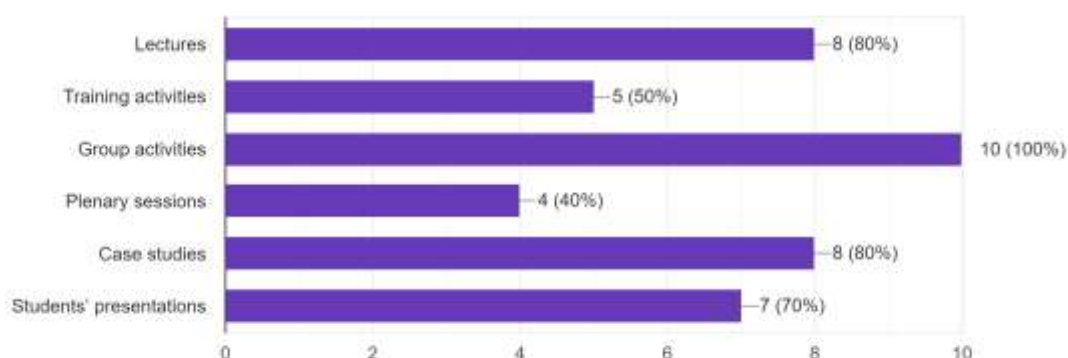
The overall assessment of the curriculum and the teaching material reflects that instructors found learning objectives, the content as well as the tools, methods, resources, and other supplies of the teaching material appropriate and useful. Most of the instructors agreed that the course entitled 'The entrepreneurial woman of the 21st Century – Creating and starting a new venture by women' (EWC) enables female students to improve their knowledge and skills for starting an entrepreneurial venture successfully, including the development of entrepreneurial mindset, problem-solving skills and critical thinking.

Some lecturers' feedback also underlines that the course is "well structured, well thought out, can be used well". In addition, most of the respondents expressed that the teaching materials could improve students' critical reflection of the challenges and opportunities of women entrepreneurs. Two specific impacts were highlighted, expressing that the universities already benefited from developing and implementing the curriculum and course material: (1) partner universities have gained a high-quality educational material to be used long-term, and (2) due to the practice-oriented teaching methods, universities could improve their network with local entrepreneurial stakeholders.

Instructors as survey respondents reported that they have actively used most of the tools, resources and materials provided in the framework of the teaching material. Recurrently mentioned positive features were that the course was "interactive, entertaining, involves students' and keeps attention," and applied "interactive and involving teaching methods".

2.1. Which of the following tools, resources, materials you applied in your course?

10 responses



The most popular interactive and involving tools were the group activities and case studies. It was pointed out that particularly helpful teaching tools were those practice-oriented activities that involved students actively, increased interactions and facilitated debates, brainstorming on entrepreneurial ideas. Instructors also appreciated that the curriculum and teaching material provided substantive knowledge on the gender aspects of entrepreneurship. This way they could exhibit real-life examples of women's entrepreneurial world and generate discussions on challenges, difficulties the students potentially face on the way of becoming entrepreneurs.

The provided video materials were mentioned as especially useful ones as they could be easily adapted to country-specific teaching contexts and they raised new themes such as the cases of mompreneurs that have not been discussed with the students before. In addition, instructors reported that video materials were particularly helpful during the online teaching period (constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic). Moreover, video materials provided case studies on role models and this way indirectly but strongly contributed to entrepreneurial motivations.

Survey responses also show that the course materials, tools and content benefited students in several ways. First, it was stated by a representative of SFU that implementing the course at the university was already benefited its educational profile ("its mere existence is a major benefit at SFU"). Second, most of the responses focused on the benefits coming from the particular perspective the course offer, which is the gender aspects of entrepreneurship. In addition, respondents underlined that "the focus on increasing women entrepreneurs is specifically important" and that "female students could meet the gender aspects of entrepreneurship, which supports their readiness for counteracting the challenges, difficulties on the way of becoming entrepreneurs." The third cluster of perceived positive aspects was the soft skills development, the applied methods and tools provided by the teaching material, especially the skills for developing an entrepreneurial mindset which is a must to start an enterprise.

2.2. Students' background and assessment

Students attended the courses have a varied background. At the Corvinus University of Budapest, participating students studied economics before and were MA students in business development. Accordingly, they were familiar with basic business models and concepts. However, they were less familiar with the societal and gender aspects of entrepreneurship and the situation of women

entrepreneurs in terms of opportunity and status. At Sapiientia, students have been recruited with different disciplinary backgrounds with various levels of knowledge and interest (for instance, students studying sociology or human resources were familiar with gender-related issues). At SFU, students had no previous knowledge in economics, but most of them have been knowledgeable in gender and work-life balance aspects.

Female students of CUB expressed that they particularly appreciated group exercises, the opportunities to practice presentation skills in front of a group and the exercises for ideation, having discussion and feedback on their ideas. The course also received excellent grades (4.63 and 4.82 for perceived usefulness and 4.84 and 4.62 'for enjoying the course' in the two semesters, respectively) from students participating in the regular student assessment process of the university.

At Sapiientia, all participants rated the course very positively. In a detailed assessment, the course was described as "very new, very fresh, colourful and direct, and useful even for those who had no plan to become an entrepreneur right away." Students' feedback underlined that the course offered valuable information on how to start a new enterprise as well as the practical side of running a business (including administration). Students got an opportunity to have a deeper insight into the entrepreneurial world and perceived that the course shaped their business ideas in a fruitful manner. They considered it especially useful to have the opportunity to meet the feminine business actors and to be informed of the specific challenges women entrepreneurs face in the region. Sapiientia students appreciated the presentations of the invited entrepreneurs the most, from whom they heard real experiences, everyday stories of both the successes and failures. In addition, the course also had a community building effect: as students with different disciplinary backgrounds attended the course, they could meet new people and get to know the views of those studying other disciplines.

Assessment of SFU students shows that participating students appreciated both the content on how to start an enterprise (i.e., business plan writing) as well as exercises and tasks supporting them for feeling more confident and overcoming fears in starting a new venture on their own. SFU students also mentioned that the course provided space and time for thinking about future goals and directions in a systematic way. According to their opinion, an important delivery of the course has been that they have become more aware of the multiple challenges an entrepreneur may face.

2.3. Challenges and areas for improvement

Besides the overall positive evaluation of the curriculum and teaching materials, some challenges and areas for improvement can be identified. A significant challenge of implementing the curriculum and the teaching material derived from the pandemic situation. In all universities, teaching was moved to the online space; therefore, the elaborated teaching materials had to be adapted to the online context. A general experience of instructors is that in online teaching to encourage and facilitate interactivity (i.e., encouraging teamwork, involving all the students) was particularly difficult. Although this experience can be generalized (i.e., valid for the unexpected shift to online teaching in general), in the ifempower module teaching it has been especially relevant as the curriculum and the teaching material implied an emphasis on interactive teaching methods.

In general, instructors suggested focusing on students' skills development: communication skills, self-confidence, self-awareness, the ability for group work, language skills, competitive mindset,

ability to recognise opportunity, knowledge on the business models, leadership, assertiveness, making business plans and market analysis. These skills and competences are among the core components of the curriculum and the teaching material, meaning that the expected improvement of the teaching is not in the content but rather in the practical application of the teaching material. Another set of suggestions focused on business practice development: accordingly, exercises can be developed to improve the practice in making business plans.

Several instructors underlined the challenge that due to the practice-oriented logic and organisation of the ifempower modules, the course materials are needed to be continuously updated with local, national examples and best practices, including the inclusion of practising female entrepreneurs. Still, most instructors agreed that fusing local and international examples, case studies on local female entrepreneurship and role models are a continuous task. Besides, organising direct meeting opportunities with entrepreneurial women as local heroes is crucial in the smart application of the teaching material.

The heterogeneous background of students can be another challenge in the use of the curriculum and the teaching material: while some students start the ifempower modules with advanced knowledge in economics and business studies or gender studies, other students have no prior knowledge in these study areas. Although this challenge cannot be solved by the curriculum and the teaching material, an intensive week preparatory course that provides basic knowledge of elementary business concepts could be a useful option to achieve an equal business knowledge base among participating students. At the same time, instructors' assessment also reflected that heterogeneity is not only a challenge but also a potential source of entrepreneurial innovation when proper skills are gained.

In sum, instructors as well as students perceived that the curriculum and the teaching material of the 'The entrepreneurial woman of the 21st Century – Creating and starting a new venture by women' course functioned adequately. Accordingly, further improvement is not in the content but rather in the smart application of the ifempower course materials. The forced online context of the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances constrained the online adaptation of the teaching material that worked well. Still, real life case studies, group works and other interactive tools can contribute to an even better assessment of the course using the ifempower curriculum and teaching material.

3. Intensive study programs: online Winter and Spring schools

"It was great, inspiring, confirming; I also gained new knowledge."

"It was a lifetime experience to participate."

(participants at the spring schools)

Intensive study programmes were offered for selected female students during winter and spring schools as a complementary module to the academic courses, the mentoring programme and the entrepreneurial support points at the local universities. In each semester twelve female students from five universities participated in the event.

This intensive training consisted of thematic days. The programme offered training and workshops for the participants to work on and introduce their business plans at multiplier events, enhanced networking with media representatives, experts, business angels and investors. On the one hand, there was special attention on the practical skills needed for launching an enterprise, selling an idea, attracting investors. On the other hand, gender-specific self-awareness was a significant segment of all the learning activities. The intensive programme included sessions on applying design thinking and gender-specific self-awareness techniques, which provided the participant to identify personal and social obstacles, and in this way, improving their entrepreneurial mindset from this perspective as well. The programme also encouraged participants to use digital media for their planned business; therefore, a special emphasis was put on communicating their business ideas and improving their networking via various digital communication channels.

The initial plan was to organize a seven-day-long intensive programme, but it was changed to a five-day-long online workshop via Google Classroom and ZOOM due to the pandemic circumstances.

The evaluation of the Intensive study programs is based on the following data collection methods:

1. Collection of students' feedback by the end of the intensive weeks;
2. Participants' survey evaluations on the Spring School;
3. Relevant parts of interviews conducted with experts, stakeholders sharing experiences and opinions on intensive weeks.

3.1. General assessment of intensive study programs

Feedback from students shows that the weeks were well structured, the atmosphere was friendly and open-minded, and professionals and experts were supporting during the whole event. It was a special event for the students because they were able to reach experts and women entrepreneurs and ask questions and feedback from them. Many of them highlighted that when deciding on participating in the one-week long event, it was a critical factor that they could meet with real women entrepreneurs who already achieved something, receive feedback from them and listening to their stories of establishing a business. For many of the students, these weeks provided the first occasion to participate in an entrepreneurial event. However, in an interview

with one of the stakeholders, it was also pointed out that these events primarily serve the interests of those students who are at the beginning in creating a business plan and did not have any background in studying business.

3.2. Crucial factors of success of the intensive study programs

Participants highly appreciated those events when they could participate in group discussions, team works, workshops, and simulation exercises. They benefited the most from working on their concrete business plans in teams and receiving feedback on how plans can be improved. The pitching sessions were mentioned to be one of the most valuable sessions, as it was understood to improve both their communication skills on the personnel level and their resources for networking (typical quotations from participants: “It was totally needed and useful.”, “It was good seeing how forward the other ideas went through the week.”). Although from the organising side these sessions and exercises were said to be the most challenging part, they helped the participants clarify their business plans, learn how to communicate their plans effectively, and picture themselves as entrepreneurs in the future. It was also a challenge that students had to communicate and present their ideas in a foreign language, although they could do it in a safe environment.

In connection with the importance of meeting with practising female entrepreneurs, participants underlined how much they appreciated the safe space for sharing their dreams and plans, fears and doubts. The sessions on self-awareness were similarly highlighted as being useful and inspiring. Students perceived that self-awareness sessions helped them in building (or to start building) self-confidence (a typical quotation in this respect: “not to be afraid, if someone asks me something regarding my business”) and to be able to see as one of the participants exhibited, “what my priorities are and where I want to arrive over time.” In addition to understanding the role of self-awareness in starting a business, they also mentioned that these sessions were inspiring; although frequently moved them out of their comfort zone, they also enjoyed them a lot.

The schools aimed to support building a strong international network among young women with similar interests and stakeholders with long experience in the field of entrepreneurship. The COVID-19 constrained online way of organising the intensive study programmes certainly hindered the community building and establishing networking channels for future collaborations. Despite these difficulties, participants internalized the importance of building an extensive entrepreneurial network. They highlighted that they perceived as a strong and meaningful message from the organisers that they were not alone when planning to start a business. Students also found inspiring to listen to other female students’ plans and gather new ideas. They were strengthened in their intentions to belong to a community and to co-work with someone for establishing their business (“I got very close to a couple of people, it seems unbelievable that such open conversations took place online.”). An important value-added of these international study programs was that participating students could build an international community of young potential women entrepreneurs.

3.3. Challenges and areas for improvement

While the overall assessment of the intensive study programs was convincingly positive, students, instructors and participating stakeholders also identified some areas for improvement. Some critical remarks of participants reflected the challenge of heterogeneity of students in terms of

prior knowledge and some comments reflected the difficulties of intensive study weeks in on-line settings. Nevertheless, most of the suggestions for improving the intensive study programs are related to community building and networking. The following major suggestions and ideas were raised by participants and professionals attending the events:

1. The online version of the intensive week needs revision in terms of the longevity of some sessions (i.e., longer sessions in online settings are much less effective than in an offline context). In addition, mainly again because of the online context, the session on 'Psychological development and working on awareness' needs some specific revision to online circumstances: some participants found extremely difficult to have deep, sincere discussions about joys, and hardships of being a female entrepreneur online with practically unknown people.
2. Both instructors and student participants perceived the challenge coming from the heterogeneous background of participating students. Although such type of knowledge heterogeneity cannot be avoided, conscious efforts must be made to tackle the challenge. Levelling basic knowledge is important also from the perspective of more experienced students – otherwise these events will not be attractive enough to attend for students who are more experienced in business and entrepreneurship studies.
3. Appointment and involvement of student ambassadors for the next intensive study programs may be helpful in general; in addition, it can also contribute to the better treatment of the heterogeneity challenge.
4. A specific session could be added on building social media channels for the enterprise – for instance in the form of creating a LinkedIn profile.
5. Participants also raised the idea of creating an ifempower alumni: connecting the students, experts, instructors and organizers attending the Winter School and the Spring School may contribute as a starting point of networking – this is particularly important under pandemic circumstances and on-line teaching.
6. In addition, students can receive specific support to learn and potentially also join already established, existing networks, working hubs, conferences (i.e., Women Leadership Forum).

In sum, instructors as well as students and other participating stakeholders perceived that ifempower intensive study programs were fairly successful. The identified challenges and areas for improvement are not about the substantive materials. The online context, however, implied some specific challenges in terms of the longevity of some sessions, managing personal interactions and especially networking opportunities. In addition, treatment of the heterogeneous background of participating students proved to be a significant challenge – although this can also be a major source of entrepreneurial innovation as well.

4. Mentorship programs

"I think this program is really useful. I would recommend it to all the women at the university. I am happy to have this opportunity, which is maybe a start of something new."

The most challenging part of the ifempower project was the set-up of mentorship programs. This innovative idea could potentially be an excellent tool to achieve educational goals in the frame of practice-oriented learning. When a meaningful mentor-mentee cooperation could be established, the program proved to be inspiring for female university students and brought about great achievement in young women's real life business knowledge and skills and greatly promoted entrepreneurial attitudes. The pandemic context, however, was a sweeping blow for mentor-mentee interactions. The first trust-building stage of mentorship was heavily undermined in the online context between previously unknown mentors and mentees. Accordingly, the true virtues of the mentorship programs could be achieved only in few cases where a trust-based relation was established between mentors and mentees as partners.

Mentorship programs were established at ifempower partner universities (Bifröst University, CUB, Sapientia and SFU) with the aim of providing knowledge and practical advice, personal advice from senior entrepreneurs, lecturers, and experts to students interested in establishing small businesses. The program was carefully elaborated. A database of available mentors has been created at each university, providing a base for students to sign up for mentoring. The mentorship process was planned in a way that it consisted of a maximum of 12 sessions lasting for 1,5 hours which could be adapted to students' needs and mentors' availability. The universities used a handbook (ifempower Handbook for Mentorship Program Empowering Female Entrepreneurs/Intellectual Output 4) that provided the methodology and innovative solutions for setting up the mentorship program with a possible adaptation to the national circumstances.

4.1. The pandemic context and other challenges for the mentorship programs

The establishment of the mentorship programmes in most universities coincided with when university education had to be moved to the online space. The online way of communication made it extremely difficult to involve the targeted number of mentors and students. It was strikingly difficult to persuade students to sign up for this possibility as they already had a busy schedule of online courses and consultations. This could largely explain why more students initially applied for participating in the mentoring program than eventually took part.

ifempower partner universities applied various processes to reach and involve students. The original idea of linking the mentorship program closely to the ifempower module courses and collecting potential mentees from ifempower students did not work in the pandemic context. As a result, partner universities attempted to use additional recruitment techniques as well: mainly via students' networks, online community platforms of the universities.

Involving mentees in the project was also very uncertain and versatile depending on universities' networks and opportunities. Typically, those students answered the call who already had a specific business idea or an existing business; they appropriately perceived the great potential virtues of the mentorship program. Accordingly, being aware of the importance of mentoring in establishing or maintaining a business, they could take advantage of this opportunity.

A significant challenge was how to involve mentors on a volunteer basis. Representatives of some partner universities have already raised at the meetings preparing the mentorship program that the recruitment of mentors is uncertain because they are not paid for their services. The same concern was raised by an interviewed mentor. An important experience of the project is that the status of volunteer mentoring is fundamentally different in countries of the project partners: in some countries (e.g. Germany) volunteer mentoring is natural, while in other countries (e.g. Hungary) is unusual, at best exceptional. One of the Hungarian mentors shared her view that she could participate in the project on a volunteer basis, limited only for the project period.

The fact that most of the mentors and mentees could not meet in person certainly had implications for the mentor-mentee relationship too. The interviewed mentors agreed that they successfully created a working relationship and cooperation with the mentees, although they could not meet in person due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Still, the online way of the meetings made the mentoring processes different and more challenging than usual. As it turned out, those mentor-mentee relationships were evaluated as the most successful both by mentors and mentees, where a physical encounter could occur. All in all, the online way of mentoring implied specific challenges of trust-building and required great flexibility from both parties.

Overall, the following important concerns are raised regarding the mentorship programs' sustainability: (i) how mentoring programs can be continued at the universities, (ii) how will mentors be compensated for their service, (iii) how mentoring can be adapted to the higher education system in a longer-term, and (iv) how the online version of mentoring can be further developed?

4.2. Experiences and factors of success of the mentorship programs

In some cases, the process of mentoring has been longer than the duration of the project. In this case, upon the agreement with the mentee, the mentor followed (or is still following) the student independently that the project ended sooner. In general, partner universities reported that those mentored who agreed to volunteer for mentoring "were already very enthusiastic, determined without thinking on time and energy waste", as one of the university instructors explained from Sapientia. Experiences of partner universities underline that the duration of a successful mentoring process is usually longer than the project period, and some of the mentors were willing to provide more extended support to mentees, despite the project not covering mentoring costs. Several mentors and mentees pointed to that an exit option should exist: both parties should be free to leave the mentoring relation in case of any problem. Mentors also stressed that they missed a truly operating cross-border working group among the mentors in the project (both on a national and international level). This way mentors could develop their professional mentoring skills, share their knowledge and relevant experiences with other mentors.

Based on student mentees' feedback, the mentoring process gave them a unique opportunity for meeting with an experienced entrepreneur "who explained all the tiny details of creating a business plan and answered all the questions explicitly related to business plans and ideas". This is demonstrated by the testimonies of some students about why they liked the work with their assigned mentors at Corvinus University of Budapest:

„My mentor explained the meaning of a business plan to me in a very direct way, while helping to understand the main purpose. Easy conversations, flexibility, always had the opportunity to ask further questions.” (Student A)

„I really liked her attitude towards the mentoring programme. She is a very interesting and smiley individual who I am happy to work with. The conversations were always very friendly. We have always contacted each other in case of rescheduling, no issue due to timing.” (Student B)

As we can see, not only the professional expertise but also the safe and supporting atmosphere and the flexibility of mentors have been conceived as part of the good practices of mentorship. Students at the Corvinus University of Budapest were also aware of the uniqueness of these mentoring opportunities: mentors encouraged and motivated students to take active steps towards establishing their business ideas. Some mechanisms of inspirations students gained by the mentoring program:

“She not only hears my questions or interprets my problems, but also feels them. For this reason, I was encouraged to I go beyond my preconceived notions and step outside of my thought mechanism. That was a wonderful constructive way for self-development!”

“To not be afraid to try it and believe in myself and my goals without any doubt.”

“Not give up, fight for you dreams! Dig deeper in the topic, work with it, all the sacrificed time will show a return.”

4.3. Areas and suggestions for improvement

Although in some cases mentorship relations operated successfully, we have also identified significant challenges and areas of improvement. This implies the following suggestions:

- In an online context the start of the mentorship is particularly difficult between mentors and mentees previously unknown to each other. Accordingly, a specific investment of trust-building is necessary to ensure safe and supportive environment for a well-working mentorship relation.
- Mentors must be ensured to have their own training opportunities. In addition to formal training, and a truly operating national and international network platform could also contribute to the self-development of mentors.
- An organized meet-up to match mentors and mentees at the national level could be useful.
- An important task in promoting mentorship is raising awareness about the unique virtues of the mentorship opportunities. A good practice of it could be channelling results and experiences of mentorship programmes into dissemination (i.e., presentation on what student mentees achieved due to receiving mentoring at the local university events).
- As volunteer mentoring is far from being self-evident in several EU countries, we have to find out how mentors can be compensated to overcome the shortages of the available mentors.

In sum, the ifempower mentorship program suffered heavily from the pandemic context and the constrained online form of mentoring implied unexpected, and in a few cases, insurmountable challenges in several cases. Still, the benefits of a well-working mentor-mentee relation is obvious and participating students as mentees received unique support and inspiration from their mentor.

5. Entrepreneurship support points

The Female Entrepreneurship Support Points (hereinafter: entrepreneurship support points) are services available for personal or online consultations for female university students on starting and running a business. These points operate as info points helping the students in daily issues that inevitably arise when starting and running a business (such as information on self-employment opportunities, legislation, legal forms, procedures, sources), and connect students with practicing entrepreneurs as well as mentors participating in the ifempower mentorship programme. ifempower project partners established the support points from 2019. Initially, these points were planned to offer services in person; however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic context, all partners had to offer consultations online. Under these some circumstances, some partners could not reach the targeted number of students, but others could achieve the original targets with additional investment in time, resources and via innovative use of consultation instruments.

5.1. Challenges of attracting visitors to entrepreneurship support points

According to the experiences of the Sigmund Freud University (SFU) in Vienna, the following reasons contributed to the lack of interest towards their support point. Since March 2020, the university operated in an online mode, therefore many international students decided to remain in their home countries. In the COVID-19 period students as potential female entrepreneurs also suffered from income losses that implied a postponement of their plans to start a business. In addition, both the state and the city of Vienna is particularly generous in entrepreneurial support: free consultations, numerous incubation centres and accelerator programmes are provided. Moreover, SFU students can also turn to the Entrepreneurial Centre of the neighbouring University of Economics. Students are familiar with these opportunities, and they used to rely on workshops, online trainings, talks, and student entrepreneurs' network. Thus the novice on-line entrepreneurial support point of SFU faced apparently insurmountable competitive challenges in the pandemic context.

Two other partners, Steinbeis and SPI, reported slightly different reasons for reaching only few students. These project partner institutions are not universities, and they experienced difficulties to reach university students, despite an extensive promotion of the ifempower project and organizing multiplier events. Although they established meaningful relations with nearby universities, they faced the competitive challenge of the already existing entrepreneurial support programs for students provided by the universities. This problem of student access appeared to be striking despite Steinbeis also runs an entrepreneurship support point which offers free consultation services, and those who are interested in it can choose from a group of 72 certified consultants. Moreover, in the case of Steinbeis, university students as potential female entrepreneurs receive comprehensive and target-oriented support from well-established institutions through publicly funded programs of Baden-Württemberg region.

5.2. Factors of success of attracting entrepreneurship support point visitors

In this section we summarize the experiences of those support points where stakeholders could reach students and meaningful consultations were completed. Andalusia Empreende and Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB) teams provided detailed reports in this respect, and two additional interviews were conducted with experts working in establishing and operating the support points at Andalusia Empreende and CUB.

Andalusia Empreende representatives found that they had no major difficulty in establishing the support point within the framework of the ifempower project as they are experienced in providing this kind of service. Moreover, the project implied an additional motivation to their team: “it was an excellent opportunity for the organisation to participate in the project” and establishing the support point contributed to the successful implementation of the main goals of ifempower. In this perspective, the project provided many instances to expand knowledge on potential female entrepreneurs’ peculiar needs. Accordingly, Andalusia Empreende could learn specific tools to apply when developing young women’s entrepreneurial skills, and now, at the end of the project, the organisation is better equipped to establish female entrepreneurial support policy. As the interviewee pointed out: “At Andalucía Empreende we have a high-performance team specialised in female entrepreneurship called ‘ConEllas’. Ifempower has served as a window to resources that have helped them to do a better job in supporting women entrepreneurs.” A significant benefit for the organisation is that by participating in this project, Andalucía Empreende could reinforce its position among other entities in the field of entrepreneurship on a national level and also internationally, as ideas for new projects are already planned to be initiated with some of the current project partners.

At Corvinus University of Budapest, the support point could not be opened as it was planned due to the distance learning at the university. Not only consultations but all the promotional activities had to be shifted to online format. CUB also experienced similar difficulties than other university partners in reaching students as students were physically absent from the university. Under these difficult circumstances, the team of CUB was constrained to create a new plan and inventing new tools for reaching students. Originally, the team intended to expand the entrepreneurial information point set up from a previous initiative, called CUBator. Because of the pandemic context the CUB team eventually could not rely on this consultation point and online social media channels became the primary channels for the entrepreneurial support of female university students. Despite these difficulties, the planned number of students has been finally reached, reflecting the strong need for freely available consultations for young female potential entrepreneurs.

Overall, the CUB team interviewee assessed the implementation of the online consultation in the framework of the ifempower project as a success. At the same time, the interviewee underlined that setting up and maintaining the consultation “point” in online context required much more work (time and effort) than had been originally expected. Consultants and instructors had to develop or at list needed to improve specific skills to be able to provide consultations; also because of the online way of providing consultation, new substantive entrepreneurial challenges arose. Accordingly, the consultation team was constrained to apply new consultation methods and techniques with the students, and consultants had to adapt new practices and skills.

An important observation of the CUB support point consultation team member was that online consultation still required establishing a safe space for the students. At the beginning, generating the safe space turned out to be difficult because of the female students’ routinely less

‘courageous’ way of participation in online discussions. As the interviewee said: “We realised very early that we cannot reach our target group (women interested in starting a business) „in the street”. Asking for business or management consultation is a matter of trust. A management consultant (in the case of CUB the university staff offering the service) can conduct an analysis to give the female students a well-thought-out recommendation on their business idea or model. However, without trust we cannot even start the meaningful part of the consultation, because the female students will not share their ideas or business plans with an unknown person.”

These experiences demonstrate that female students needed specific support to participate in online consultations compared to sharing a business plan in classical offline personal interactions. Briefly, building trust in the digital space between students and the consultants proved to be crucial and challenging. Indeed, consultants could effectively use their already existing network with students, so they primarily reached those students already known from previous courses (however, it limited the diversity of the students). Moreover, the online platform required additional effort to keep young female potential entrepreneurs on track. Some of the CUB entrepreneurial support point team members explicitly admitted that the challenges of the online shift were particularly frustrating to them.

In order to overcome the challenge of building trust in online space an innovative idea, the offer of group consultations was developed. This initiative proved to be successful and group consultations indeed became more popular than the individual ones. The CUB entrepreneurial support point interviewee explained: “Students asked for group consultations and we had the impression that they were more relaxed and open when other female students also participated in the discussions. They also had the opportunity to learn from each other, asking questions and getting feedback from each other as well.” Eventually, this idea of group consultations was a crucial factor in the achievement of the CUB support point target of visitors.

5.3. Areas for improvement

These mixed experiences elaborated in the assessment above pointed to some areas for improvement in the operation of entrepreneurship support points at universities. A major suggestion reflects the special challenge of the pandemic context: there is a need of training opportunities for consultants to develop skills, learn new methodologies applicable at online consultations. The main reason of it is that several consultants (usually university lecturers) are not prepared for the role of an online business consultant.

Another suggestion is the maintenance of an online platform (i.e., after the end of the ifempower project as well) and a related organisation of targeted meetings for consultants to exchange ideas and best practices accumulated during the project. In addition, a convincing idea should be developed to integrate entrepreneurship support services in a university framework. Finally, the sustainability of entrepreneurial support points at universities requires a smooth and carefully elaborated mode of cooperation between universities and entrepreneurial support agencies – especially where the environment of entrepreneurial support is strikingly competitive.

5.4. Overall assessment

In sum, the operation of entrepreneurship support points was a difficult part of the ifempower project. On the one hand, such type of service is a novice and unusual idea at universities with

limited experiences in cooperation with entrepreneurial actors and agencies. On the other hand, reaching university students proved to be a special challenge for business development agencies. In addition, the pandemic context constrained a shift of consultation to online setting. Under these circumstances creating a safe, trust-based space of interaction between consultants and female university students as potential entrepreneurs proved to be particularly difficult.

The challenges were more obvious in the case of partners operating in a highly competitive environment of entrepreneurial support. Those partners proved to be more successful where already existed a smooth cooperation between university partners and business development agencies and where partners could gain some specific additional motivation from the ifempower project (see the case of Andalucía Emrende). In addition, the approach of group consultations (see the case of the Corvinus University of Budapest) was an intuitively developed but very successful practice that contributed to the creation of a safe space for female university students to openly share their business ideas.

Despite all of the difficulties mentioned above implementing entrepreneurship support points can be assessed as a good initiative of the ifempower project. Young women highly valued the opportunity of consultations, sharing and developing their novice ideas on their potential ventures to outside, expert ears and opinions. In addition, some business development agencies could use the opportunity generated by ifempower to expand their policy scope towards young women as potential entrepreneurs.

6. On-line toolkit and dissemination

This section of the final study provides an assessment about the two main components of the ifempower project operating through the project website. One component is the online toolkit of the project; other component of the assessment reflects the main experiences concerning the broader use of the <https://ifempower.eu/> website.

6.1. On-line toolkit

An important and innovative component of the ifempower project was creating the free-of-charge online toolkit for educational purposes. The online toolkit provides interactive content for potential female entrepreneurs. The teaching material developed in the framework of the ifempower (Intellectual Output 3) provides the primary substantive material of the online toolkit, being adapted to e-learning purposes and integrated with all other previous outputs of the ifempower project. The original idea of the ifempower was that the online toolkit operated as a complementary e-learning support of the (personal interaction-based) entrepreneurship support points.

Participants potentially using the e-learning course materials are female entrepreneurs who can be in different stages of their entrepreneurial career: one course is provided for the business plan phase, a second course covers the business development phase while the target group of the third course is constituted from those women entrepreneurs who are already in the business sustainability phase. The content of the online toolkit courses reflects the broader perspective of the ifempower project: online courses intended to equip female entrepreneurs and potential female entrepreneurs with necessary entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through interactive practice-oriented learning. In addition, e-learning materials also exhibit the gender-sensitive perspective of ifempower: the online toolkit prepares users to cope with the specific problems of women in entrepreneurship. An additional aim of the toolkit is to develop the digital skills of potential female entrepreneurs.

Each of the courses consists of several components, which are the presentation (materials), quiz (which can be used during the classroom teaching as well), relevant videos (partly prepared by the ifempower project members, partly external case studies), and also informs users about relevant support point or mentor available and advised on the particular subject. In addition, the toolkit itself enables visitors to find good practices or suggestions to solve their specific problems. A major strength of the toolkit is that it presents real cases of women entrepreneurs in order to motivate other women as potential entrepreneurs. Moreover, the organisational link with the entrepreneurship support points informs interested users about the entrepreneurship support point that is close to their location.

An important feature of the ifempower website is that the toolkit integrates the use of the teaching material with other project materials of the ifempower. Accordingly, it also presents the study on female entrepreneurs, interviews, surveys and the collection of good entrepreneurial practices, the mentorship handbook, and the handbook for female entrepreneurship support. The e-learning platform, where visitors can find the toolkit, has its own web address and it is linked to ifempower website and other partners' website.

The toolkit is available in seven languages (English, German, Hungarian, Icelandic, Romanian, Portuguese, Spanish) on an open-source platform in the ifempower project partner's countries and beyond. Hence, the online toolkit can be used from any country and by a much larger group

of users, not necessarily students who attended the project events, such as university courses or intensive week programmes. Also, it can be used by the partner universities during the classroom, e.g. to use the quizzes or the business simulator available in the toolkit. In the future, the platform potentially will be improved with new content.

The central location of the online toolkit is available on the ifempower website, and it is also linked to other partners' websites to be accessed easily. In addition, the accessibility of the toolkit is further improved by interlinking it with BPI France universities, its dissemination on the WEGate website (The European Gateway for Women's Entrepreneurship), the online toolkit is registered at the "e-learning materials and tools" page. The information of the online toolkit, and its access was shared at multiplier organizations and events.

By 30 August 2021 the online toolkit was viewed by 333 visitors. The first course (business plan phase) attracted the strongest interest, in English (64 visitors), Hungarian (47 visitors) and Spanish (31 visitors).

These data of the online toolkit does not entirely fulfil the expectations about the target number of users, and they indicate that the online toolkit use has been below its true potential. The pandemic circumstances can explain it: as entrepreneurship support points have not been fully operating, natural visitors of entrepreneurship support points have not automatically arrived to use the online toolkit.

6.2. Dissemination

Communication and dissemination activities of the ifempower project through the ifempower website have achieved remarkable results. The project reached audience well beyond the geographical scope of the participating project partners. The example of the composition of visitors at the final multiplier event of the project (12 July 2021) convincingly demonstrates this: 65 visitors participated at this online event from 17 countries.

During the project period most visitors of the ifempower website were from the countries participating at the ifempower project. Visitors of Spain (26%), Hungary (17%) and Portugal (16%) showed the strongest interest towards the ifempower website followed by visitors from Austria, Romania, Germany and Iceland. Among the top ten countries of ifempower visitors also appeared people from Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States.

During the project period continuous updates have been implemented to the website to inform about the news and events of ifempower. By the end of June 2021 the website had 37 posts on the News & Events sections, and 17 posts on the Inspirational Stories section.

As mentioned above, the website disseminated the teaching material of the courses developed within the ifempower framework through the online toolkit. In addition, it informed about other major events such as the intensive study weeks (ifempower Winter and Spring schools).

The most powerful dissemination tool of ifempower was the use of social media channels. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn channels reached a considerable number of visitors. Impressive figures (e.g. 494 likes of the project facebook site) of the social media use indicators of the project have been also supported by outstanding followers of Twitters at several project partners (especially Andalucía Emprende).

In sum, the rather successful dissemination of ifempower provides a promising base for the future use and the sustainability of the project.

7. Conclusions and main policy recommendations

7.1. Conclusions

The results of this final study of the ifempower can be used by various sort of stakeholders: university teachers and students potentially involved in entrepreneurship studies, entrepreneurship support organisations, public and private agencies and business partners involved in entrepreneurs' mentorship, entrepreneurship development researchers, national and EU level policy makers in the areas of higher education and entrepreneurial development.

Overall the project produced valuable intellectual outputs. The integrative idea of gender-sensitive entrepreneurial studies with an emphasis on special challenges of female students as potential entrepreneurs was justified. Using practice-oriented teaching methods, closely linking higher education with the real world of entrepreneurship was highly appreciated by most of the stakeholders.

In some respects, however, the ifempower project still could not achieve its true potential. There was one major cause of it: pandemic circumstances implied various sort of pressures on project partners. Each of the project activities that were originally planned to be carried out through personal interactions had to be accomplished in online setting. Accordingly, there was a forced adaptation of the project outputs to online circumstances. In addition, pandemic circumstances caused a delay in several events of the project; for instance, concerning intensive study programs, Summer and Winter schools were replaced by Winter and Spring schools. Still, project partners could transfer teaching activities to an online environment rather successfully. The developed Erasmus+ curriculum and the teaching material proved to be flexible enough to be used at different types of universities. Feedbacks about intensive study programs reflect that the used materials and the applied methods were appropriate at Winter and Spring schools. Thus in the case of teaching activities, the project had a remarkable achievement: newly developed materials of the ifempower project are transferable to other institutional and country contexts and they require only minor adaptation.

Project partners experienced more difficulties with mentorship programs and entrepreneurial support points. These project activities were also constrained to operate in the online space and in the case of mentorship and entrepreneurial consultancy the lack of previous offline personal interactions could be a blocking factor. Trust-building is crucial in the first stage of mentorship and in this respect personal physical encounters' impact cannot be replicated in online meeting context. However, when a smooth mentor-mentee collaboration is established, motivated mentees perceive this mentorship as an exceptional and inspiring opportunity. Experiences of entrepreneurship support points also demonstrate that female students needed specific support to participate in online consultations compared to sharing a business plan in classical offline personal interactions. The approach of group consultations (instead of individual entrepreneurial support meetings) proved to be an effective instrument in trust-building.

While the ifempower project dissemination activities could reach broader groups of stakeholders mainly through the social media channels, by the end of the project period the use of online toolkit has remained below its true potential. Still, these dissemination achievements provide a promising base for the future use and the sustainability of the project. The overall assessment of the ifempower is that the project had valuable achievements – despite the unusual difficulties implied first and foremost by the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances.

7.2. Policy recommendations

Based on the ifempower project achievements we offer the following policy recommendations:

1. Educational policy recommendations

a) for universities and training centres

- The success of the case study based tools and methods of the ifempower curriculum has demonstrated that these could be widely applicable and useful in (business) higher education. We recommend the widespread use of entrepreneurial case studies (including audiovisual material).
- The practical focus on developing and presenting business ideas and business plans was among the most successful elements of ifempower study programs. It is recommended to add some elements of these to any higher education programs which have possible entrepreneurial applications, through adopting the ifempower curriculum or an alternative tailored to the local context.

b) for agencies supporting female entrepreneurship

- Reaching university students as potential entrepreneurs can be challenging for agencies outside higher education. We recommend the cultivation of long-term partnerships between higher education institutions and supporting agencies involving both training and consultation services, as well as joint events.
- The success of the gender specific self-awareness and social awareness elements of the ifempower curriculum highlight the importance of these aspects in supporting (potential) female entrepreneurs. Agencies should take care to incorporate these aspects into their activities either through partnerships with local universities or through adopting parts of the ifempower curriculum themselves.

c) for policy makers at local, regional, national and European level

- Although consulting and mentorship based on personal connections seem to be the most effective ways of introducing young people into the entrepreneurial world, these may be strongly limited by the availability of local entrepreneurs. As universities might not have the funding necessary to attract practitioners to these programs, policy makers could step in by attaching positive incentives to mentorship activities, motivating more entrepreneurs to pass on their knowledge.

2. Entrepreneurship support policy recommendations

a) for universities and training centres

- The use of group consultation sessions for aspiring female entrepreneurs is highly recommended, as it yielded great results at some ifempower partners. Group sessions can be especially useful in alleviating the issues arising from more impersonal, online consultations.
- Involving potential mentors (practicing professionals) in teaching could facilitate the development of personal connections and trust between prospective mentors and mentees, which has proven to be a key factor of success in mentoring. This involvement should be formalized with proper remuneration attached in countries where pro bono mentorship is not the norm.

b) for agencies supporting female entrepreneurship

- The challenges faced by the entrepreneurship support points and mentorship programs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the technical fragility of the entrepreneurship support ecosystem. Training programs for mentors and consultants should be introduced equipping them with the skills necessary to perform their roles online in case of future constraints to in-person meetings.
- The costs of learning and applying new mentorship and consulting skills and methods should be reduced by the introduction of community learning. This would require the joint maintenance of a long-term (virtual and possibly personal) platform for those involved in entrepreneurship support activities, where participants could raise issues and share insights.

c) for policy makers at local, regional, national and European level

- Meet-ups involving prospective future mentors and mentees at the regional or local level could be organised or supported by government institutions. These events should encourage the participation of individuals not coming from business / social elites, contributing not just to gender equality, but a higher level competition of ideas overall.

3. Gender equality policy recommendations

a) for universities and training centres

- Universities should strive to include examples of female entrepreneurs in their curricula, even for courses not dealing specifically with gender issues. While the ifempower project focused on female students, it should be normal for students of any gender to know – and possibly see as role models – female entrepreneurs.

b) for agencies supporting female entrepreneurship

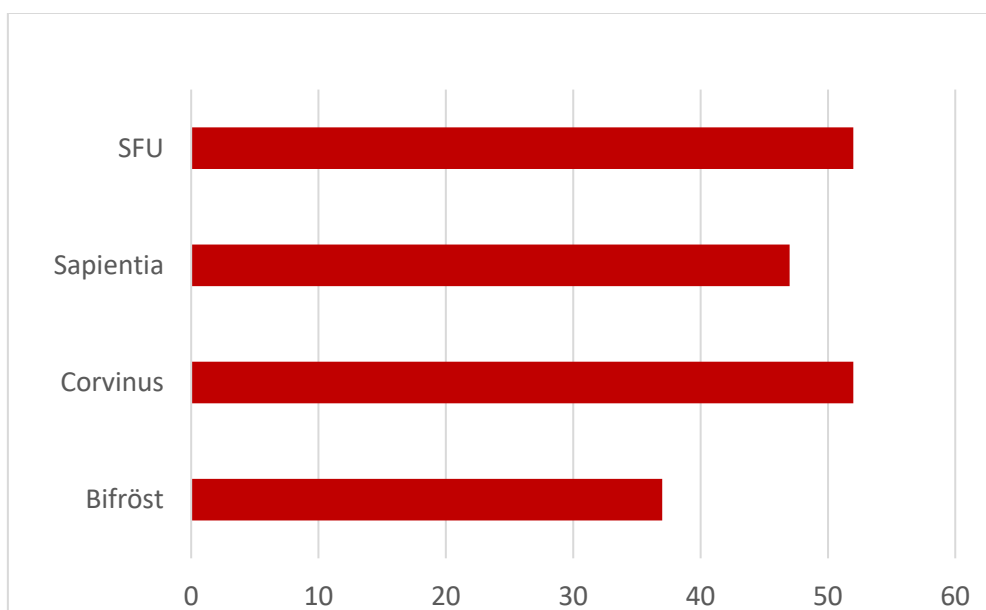
- A trust-based personal connection between mentor and mentee or consultant and those seeking advice is key to the success of these services. Potential young female entrepreneurs involved in ifempower often found it important to develop connections with mentors who are similar to themselves and understand their struggles. Therefore it is recommended for agencies to have qualified female consultants / mentors involved if they are to successfully reach potential female entrepreneurs.

c) for policy makers at local, regional, national and European level

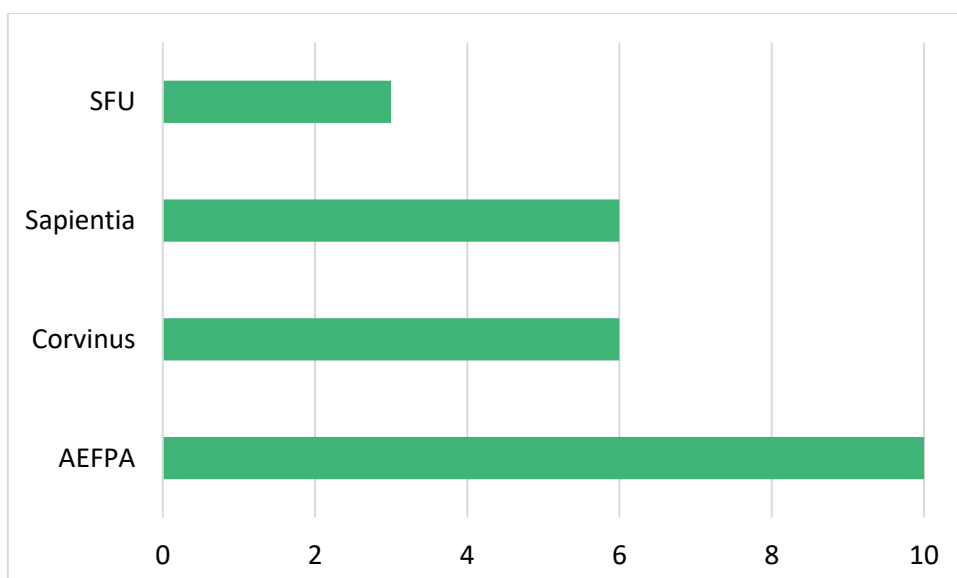
- Instructors' and organisers' experiences in teaching the ifempower curriculum highlight the continuous work associated with finding local female entrepreneurs and involving them as role models, mentors and consultants (especially where gender equality in entrepreneurship is lacking). While this work likely has significant positive effects on gender equality, it is not necessarily valued accordingly within organisations in higher education or entrepreneurial services. Policy makers at all levels could introduce incentives for the inclusion of female entrepreneurship aspects in higher education and entrepreneurial support services.

8. Annexes

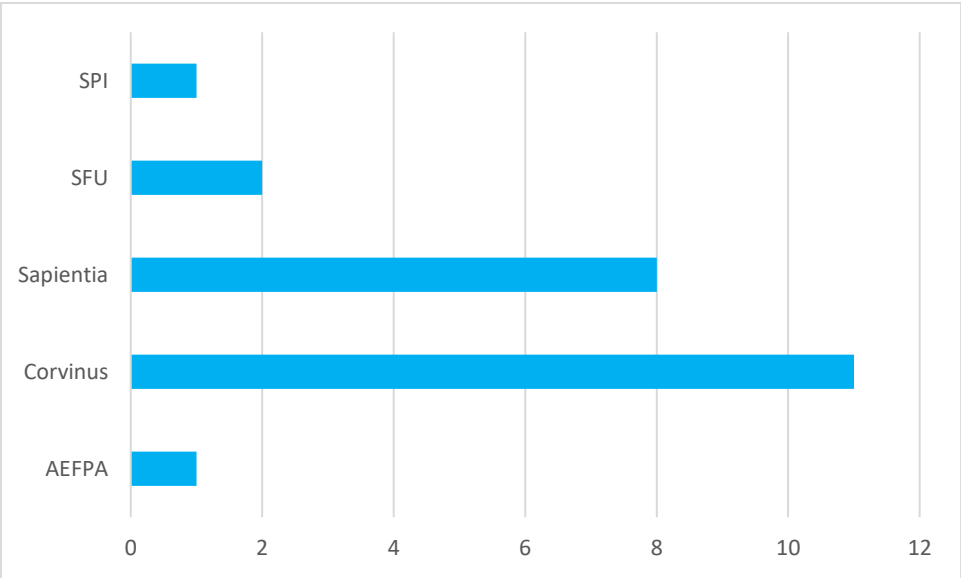
8.1. Annex I – Number of involved students at the ifempower courses in 2020



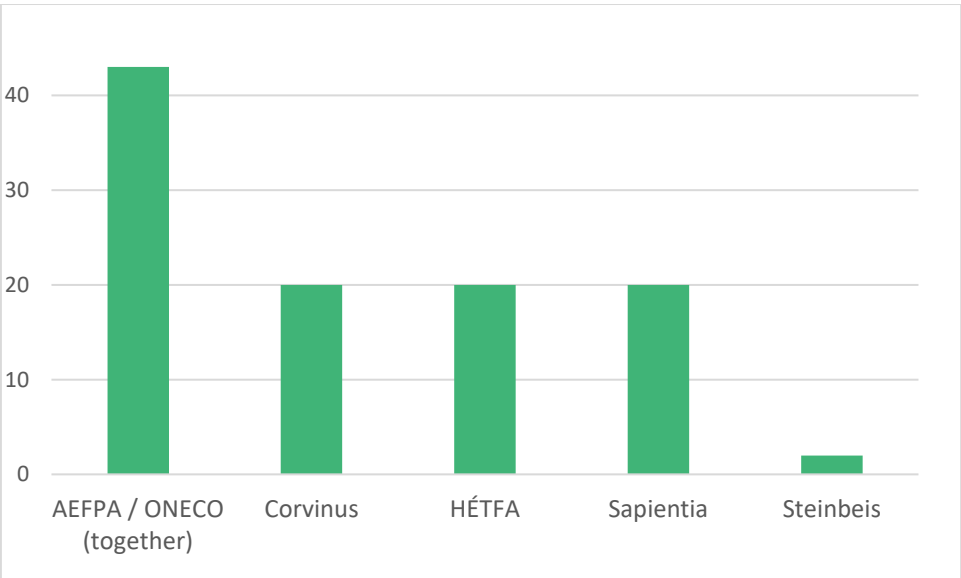
8.2. Annex II – Number of involved students at the ifempower Winter and Spring Schools



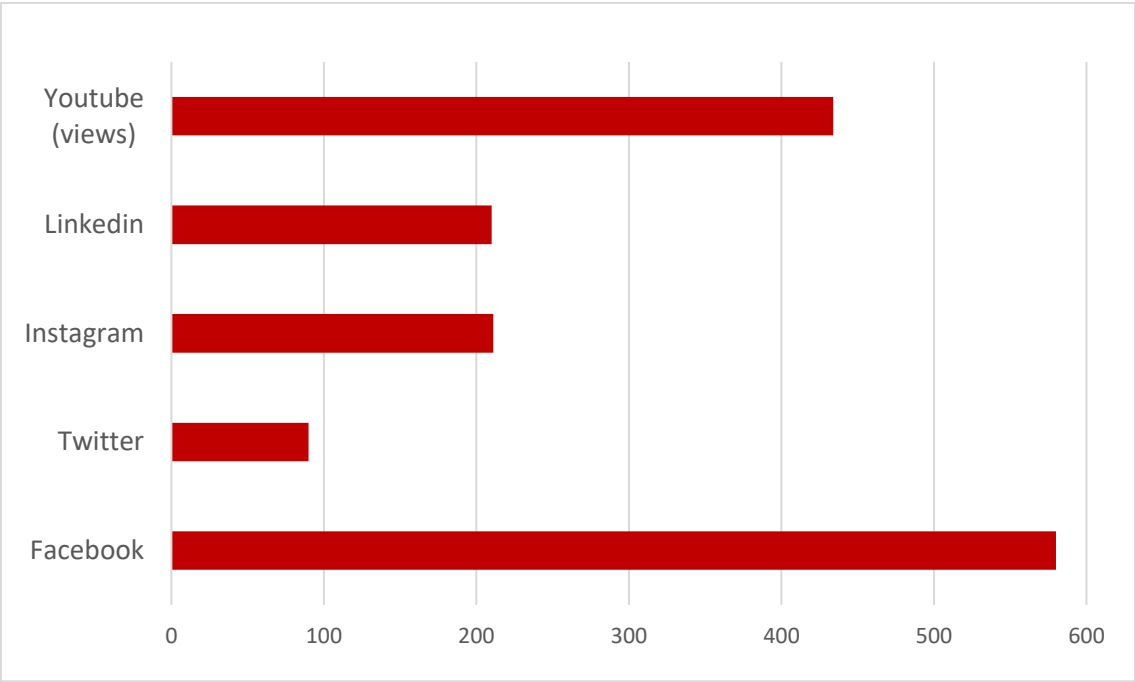
8.3. Annex III – Number of involved successful mentors and entrepreneurs in the mentorship program



8.4. Annex IV – Number of visitors of Entrepreneurship Support Points



8.5. Annex V – Followers of the ifempower project in social media during the project period



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