Empowerher - second article

The end of November marks the official conclusion of EmpowerHER, an international initiative funded under the European Union's Erasmus+ programme. Over its duration, the project has focused on addressing the persistent gender imbalance within the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Although the promotion of entrepreneurial education remains a clear EU priority to combat youth unemployment and social exclusion, these critical competences are still not fully integrated into standard school curricula across many countries. Consequently, the proportion of female entrepreneurs continues to lag significantly behind that of their male counterparts. EmpowerHER was established to bridge this gap by equipping young women with both entrepreneurial and transversal skills, fostering a sense of initiative, active citizenship, and self-belief.

A central objective of the project was to reach young females aged 16 to 21, with particular emphasis on those from vulnerable or marginalized backgrounds, including individuals living in rural areas, those with a migrant background, or early school leavers. By effectively utilizing non-academic and out-of-school time, the initiative provided structured support to help these young women enrich their practical skills and consider entrepreneurial pathways. To achieve this, the project introduced innovative methodologies into youth work, integrating digital tools such as a Virtual Reality Escape Room Game alongside practical learning experiences like Entrepreneurship Summer Bootcamps. Furthermore, through storytelling, podcasts, and pitching competitions, participants were directly connected with mentors, potential investors, and collaborators who could guide their progression.

The impact of EmpowerHER extends beyond its primary participants to a wider network of stakeholders who contribute to sustainable community development. Youth workers, trainers, and volunteers were empowered through specialized capacity-building programs to serve as qualified entrepreneurial mentors. The project built active synergies with teachers, VET educators, adult trainers, schools, and non-governmental organizations. By engaging broader societal actors, including local council members, career counsellors, social enterprises, and parents, EmpowerHER established a collaborative foundation designed to support young women as they become active agents of social and economic change long after the project's formal conclusion.

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