



DIGI *Kommune*

FEMALE ARTISTS & CREATIVES ONLINE

Executive Summary

DIGIKOMMUNE: IO1



INTRODUCTION

The DigiKommune project aims to provide female artists and creatives with training which will provide them with the skills necessary to sustain their businesses online through virtualisation and digital competence. DigiKommune is a 24 month project and was launched in June 2021. It is supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission and is being implemented by five partner organisations from Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and the UK.

Globally, the arts and cultural industries have been greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, with the sector experiencing a huge decline in revenue during lockdowns and many people facing redundancy as a consequence. In particular, female artists and creatives have experienced a loss of business and income during the pandemic. Women in the industry faced a ‘double disadvantage’ due to harmful gender stereotypes and biases. For example, many women faced additional caring responsibilities during the pandemic whilst schools closed and people were asked to work from home.

Another consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic is that business owners have been forced to move their activities online (due to closures of exhibitions, theatres, shops and all non-essential activities). The need to adapt to the online market in a short space of time has left many female creatives and artists economically inactive, with livelihoods threatened. As many businesses in the arts and cultural sector consist of sole traders or SMEs, many do not have the skills, time and money to successfully move their work online (virtualisation).

The research that contributed to the creation of the DigiKommune European Covid-19 Skills Portfolio and the national Covid-19 skills portfolios from each partner country, provides a snapshot of the impact of Covid-19 upon the arts sector and the gender dynamics relating to female artists and creatives. It also provides a summary of the skills that female artists and creatives need to successfully virtualise their businesses.



COVID-19 AND THE ARTS

In March 2020 Covid-19 was officially labeled a ‘global pandemic’ and countries across the world went into lockdown in order to help prevent the spread of Covid-19. This resulted in the temporary (often resulting in permanent) closure of businesses.

For example, in the Netherlands there was a 35% reduction in revenue within the cultural sector in 2020 in comparison to 2019. Similarly, research conducted by GUS in Poland stated that 64.9% of cultural businesses expressed that Covid-19 had a negative impact on their business in the last quarter of 2020. Additionally, in the UK approximately 70% of workers in the arts and entertainment sector were furloughed under the Government’s coronavirus job retention scheme. Similarly, in Italy the arts, entertainment, recreation and other service activities experienced the largest decline in growth rate during the first quarter of 2020, alongside wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation and food service activities.’

Both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in all partner countries indicated that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact on female artists and creatives as well as the sector as a whole. Each partner country conducted an online survey with a minimum of 10 participants as well as focus groups or interviews with a minimum of five female artists and creatives. In all partner countries, at least half of all participants of the online survey stated that their businesses had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.



THE CONTEXT OF FEMALE ARTISTS AND CREATIVES

The research from all partner countries has indicated that there are gender disparities within the arts sector and women in the industry generally face additional difficulties due to their gender. For example, evidence suggests that women experience a 'glass ceiling' effect in the arts and cultural sector as men represent a disproportionate amount of managerial and leadership positions in the sector in comparison to women. In the Netherlands, the majority of art students within higher education are women yet the majority of those employed in the sector are men.

Additionally, research from 2016 in Poland suggests that women in culture, entertainment and recreation received 89% of the salaries of their male counterparts. As stated, there is a lack of women in leadership positions within various aspects of the industry. For example, in the UK only 16% of filmmakers are women and 28% of all television episodes are written by men. Similarly, in Italy women are underrepresented in key creative roles.

The research has highlighted that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated previously existing gender issues as women were burdened with additional caring responsibilities. This was reflected within conversations in focus groups as many women expressed that they did not have the time or ability to virtualise due to the pandemic and caring for their children whilst schools were closed.

SKILLS FOR VIRTUALISATION

In the desk research phase of the project, it was made evident that art and cultural businesses that were able to continue to make revenue during the pandemic, were those that adapted to online delivery. For example, according to DEN Dutch museums saw an increased engagement from international visitors during 2020 due to successful virtualisation.

In Poland, StartUP provides entrepreneurship training relating to social media marketing and planning for creatives. This training reflects a demand from female artists and creatives for training relating to information and data literacy. This was also a common theme within conversations across focus groups, specifically regarding social media and digital language.

Additionally, in Italy, Her Clique is an online platform dedicated to the enhancement and promotion of female artists. The intent is to promote female art by making it more accessible and visible online. This highlights the importance of virtualisation for female artists particularly relating to skills such as collaboration and communication.

As part of the quantitative research (from focus groups and online surveys), female artists and creatives expressed their opinions on the skills necessary to virtualise. In no particular order, the following hard and soft skills were considered as most important for the virtualisation process across the research carried out in the partner countries. The list is representative of the needs of the target group on an international scale.

- Communication
- Safety
- Problem solving
- Information and data literacy
- Collaboration
- Communication and cooperation
- Self-efficacy
- Proactivity
- Agility
- Digital content creation

CONCLUSION

All of the research conducted within each partner country as part of the skills portfolio provides the basis for the continuation of the DigiKommune project. It provides the background information for the development of the future training programmes and activities and it will be used to influence the content of the training for female artists and creatives.

As each partner conducted online surveys and focus groups with female artists and creatives, we have a general understanding of the skills gap faced by female creatives. Therefore, the future training will be tailored to meet the needs and demands of female artists and creatives.



PARTNERS

COORDINATOR



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Fundacja ARTeria (Poland)
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