Discovery Impact Report

Deliverable 2.2 Discovery Impact Report

Prepared by: Sploro

Description

Deliverable 2.2 Documentation including relevant statistics and findings of the open calls. This will outline the actions taken, and outcomes achieved in relation to the promotional strategies during the first period of the project.

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Table 1. Project information

PROJECT TITLE	Acceleration programme empowering women-led deep tech startups in Widening Area countries
PROJECT ACRONYM	EmpoWomen
GRANT AGREEMENT NO	101120693
TYPE OF ACTION	HORIZON-CSA
TOPIC	HORIZON-EIC-2022-STARTUPEU-01
START DATE OF THE PROJECT	1 November 2023
DURATION OF THE PROJECT	24 months
NAME OF THE DELIVERABLE	Discovery Impact Report
NUMBER OF DELIVERABLE	D2.2
RELATED TASK NUMBER AND NAME	Task 2.2. Discovery Phase
DELIVERABLE DISSEMINATION LEVEL	PU - Public
DELIVERABLE DUE DATE	June 30, 2024
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TASK LEADER/MAIN AUTHOR	Alberto Sierra (SPLORO)
CONTRIBUTORS	Tatiana Skydan (TECHUA)
REVIEWER(S)	Virginia Gómez (SPLORO), Tatiana Skydan (TECHUA), Timi Ilze (SWG)

Table 2. History of Changes

Version	Submission date	Comments	Author
v0.1	03.04.2024	First draft of D2.3	Alberto Sierra (SPLORO)
v0.2	30.05.2024	First version shared with partners	Alberto Sierra (SPLORO)
v0.3	06.06.2024	Partners contributions	Tatiana Skydan (TECHUA), Timi Ilze (SWG)
v0.4	13.06.2024	Internal Review	Virginia Gómez (SPLORO)
v0.5	20.06.2024	Partners Review	Tatiana Skydan (TECHUA), Timi Ilze (SWG),
VF	26.06.204	Final version	Alberto Sierra (SPLORO)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This deliverable (D2.2), titled "Discovery Impact Report" presents a comprehensive overview of the actions taken, relevant statistics, and key outcomes achieved during the first open call of the EmpoWomen project. The document is structured to provide a clear and detailed account of the open call process, the promotional strategies employed, and the subsequent results and insights gained.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Introduction (Section 2)**: This section provides the background and objectives of the open calls, setting the context for the document and outlining its purpose.
- **Open Call Process (Section 3)**: This section details the steps involved in launching the open calls, including preparation, announcement, application submission, evaluation, and notification. It ensures transparency and clarity in the process.
- **Promotional Strategies (Section 4)**: This section offers an in-depth description of the promotional strategies used to reach potential participants, including the channels used, specific actions taken, and the timeline of these activities.
- **Statistics and Findings (Section 5)**: This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the responses to the open calls, including key statistics such as the number of applications received, type of companies, and engagement metrics.
- **Outcomes Achieved (Section 6)**: This section summarises the main outcomes from the open calls, highlighting both quantitative and qualitative results. It includes case studies and success stories to illustrate the impact of the promotional efforts.
- **Lessons Learned (Section 7)**: This section shares insights gained from the promotional strategies and open call process, along with recommendations for future efforts. It also discusses adjustments made during the project period based on feedback and findings.
- **Conclusions (Section 8)**: This section recaps the key points and outcomes, offering final thoughts on the effectiveness of the promotional strategies and open call process.

D2.2 serves as a crucial component in assessing the efficacy of our promotional strategies and the overall success of the first open call. It provides valuable insights and actionable recommendations that will inform future project phases and promotional activities. Through this deliverable, we aim to ensure ongoing improvement and greater impact in achieving our project objectives.

2. INTRODUCTION

The EmpoWomen project, funded by the European Union through its Horizon Europe Research and Innovation program, aims to address, and overcome the obstacles faced by women in the fields of Research, Development, and Innovation (R&D&I). The project's goal is to enhance equality in deep-tech entrepreneurship by providing targeted support to women-led companies.

EmpoWOMEN offers a unique program designed to scale up women-led companies, focusing on female founders and entrepreneurs leading deep-tech startups from widening-area countries. This initiative seeks to cultivate tomorrow's women tech leaders and position women at the forefront of the deep-tech sector globally. The EmpoWOMEN initiative spans two years (November 2023 - October 2025) and comprises an exclusive acceleration and mentoring program, including equity-free funding totalling 1.125 million euros, prizes, and services for the selected 25 women-led deep-tech companies.

This innovative programme is coordinated by Sploro and counts with the support of TechUkraine, Business Angels Europe, and Startup Wise Guys, alongside eight national startup associations.

Selected startups will participate in a 6-month program offering a comprehensive acceleration and investment readiness support service provided by Startup Wise Guys (SWG) and Business Angels Europe (BAE). This will include webinars, events, specialised training, and mentoring from Business Angels, combined with Demo Days and direct connections with Angel Investors and Venture Capitalists (VCs), offering significant potential for accessing investment opportunities.

Objective of the Open Calls:

The primary objective of the EmpoWOMEN program is to enhance the growth and investment opportunities for women-led digital and deep-tech startups from widening countries. This will be achieved through a tailored acceleration program aimed at developing these founders into tomorrow's female tech leaders and positioning women at the forefront of deep tech in Europe.

The open calls within the EmpoWOMEN project aim to select 25 exceptional startups to join the program. The support provided through this program will enable these startups to enhance their skills, establish long-lasting business relationships, scale internationally, and access new markets and investments. Additionally, the selected startups will receive promotion within the EU and global startup and innovation ecosystems.

3. OPEN CALL 1 PROCESS

The first open call for the EmpoWOMEN project ran for two months, from January 8, 2024, to March 8, 2024. During this period, we received an impressive 170 proposals, with 150 of these coming from over 24 eligible countries and regions. 46 proposals were deemed non-eligible. More information on statistical data can be found in section 5. Statistics and Findings.

Following a rigorous remote evaluation process conducted by a panel of independent experts, 22 applications were shortlisted and invited to the interview stage. After careful consideration and interviews, 11 startups were ultimately selected to participate in the program. These selected startups will now benefit from a comprehensive support structure designed to accelerate their growth and integration into the global deep-tech ecosystem.

Table 3 OC1 Overview

EmpoWomen OC#1	Value
Call Reference Nº	101120693
Call Budget	527,500.00 €
Budget Awarded	527,500.00 €
Call Publication Date	08-01-2024
Call Closure Date	08-03-2024
URL to F&T Portal	LINK
Nº of Received Proposals	170
Nº of Selected Proposals	11

3.1 Application Process

The application process for the EmpoWOMEN program was designed to be clear, transparent, and accessible to women-led deep-tech startups across widening-area countries. The open call was widely promoted through various channels, including the Funding and Tenders Portal, social media, email campaigns, partnerships with startup associations, and events. The goal was to reach a broad audience of eligible applicants and encourage them to apply.

The application window was open from January 8, 2024, to March 8, 2024. Applicants were required to complete an online application form through the SPLORO platform, providing detailed information about their startups.

SPLORO, with the support of all partners, prepared all the open call documents (D2.1), ensuring clarity and comprehensiveness. This documentation includes guidelines, online form, leaflets, and open call announcement for distribution. D2.1 content was then widely published through all channels, including two public info-days, to ensure that all potential applicants were well-informed about the rules, conditions, and eligibility criteria.

3.2 OC#1 Evaluation Process

After the successful closure of the open call, the OC#1 evaluation process was initiated and managed by SPLORO. This process ensured a fair and thorough assessment of all applications, following these key steps:

3.2.1 STEP 1: Eligibility Check

The first step in the evaluation process was an eligibility check to assess if the proposals met the administrative conditions required to apply to the EmpoWOMEN program. Every application underwent this initial screening to verify compliance with the basic eligibility criteria. Of the 170 applications received, 46 were deemed non-eligible, leaving 124 applications to move forward.

3.2.2 STEP 2: Experts Remote Evaluation

Proposals that passed the eligibility check proceeded to the remote evaluation stage. During this phase, each application was reviewed by two external and independent evaluators, selected for their expertise in entrepreneurship, investment, and innovation. Each proposal was evaluated by one business and one technical-oriented expert. The evaluators assessed the proposals based on three key criteria:

- Excellence: The novelty, innovation, and technological viability of the project.
- Impact: The potential societal, economic, and market impact of the project.
- Implementation: The feasibility of the project plan, including team capability and resource allocation.

A total of 124 applications passed the eligibility check and were evaluated remotely by 2 evaluators.

3.2.3 STEP 3: Normalisation

To ensure fairness and consistency in scoring, each proposal was evaluated by two independent evaluators. These evaluators scored the proposals independently, without knowledge of the other's assessment, to prevent bias. The normalisation process, which is a mathematical process, involved several steps, as detailed

in the guidelines for applicants, to balance the distribution of scores and minimize biases and distortions between evaluators. After this process, all proposals were ranked based on their normalized scores.

3.2.4 STEP 4: Online Interview

The 22 top-ranked projects from the remote evaluation were invited to participate in an online interview. This interview stage aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the project concepts, team skills, and competencies. Each interview was conducted by at least two external evaluators and included a consortium partner to ensure the startups' fit with the program and maintain fairness in the evaluation process.

3.2.5 STEP 4: Final Selection

At the conclusion of the evaluation process, all proposals were ranked based on their overall scores from both the remote evaluation and the interview stages. The highest-scoring proposals were invited to sign the sub-grant agreement and participate in the EmpoWOMEN program. All applicants were informed about the outcomes of the evaluation.

3.3 OC#1 Results

The first open call generated significant interest and engagement from women-led deep-tech startups across Europe. Here are the key results from OC#1:

Table 4 OC1 Results

EmpoWomen OC#1	Value
Total applications received	170
Eligible applications	124
Non-eligible applications	46
Applications shortlisted for interviews	22
Startups selected after interviews	11

3.4 OC#1 Selected Startups

3.4.1 ASTROTEQ.AI

Startup Name	Astrotectonic Spolka z ograniczona odpowiedzialnoscia
Country	POLAND
PIC Number	888086411
Website	https://astroteq.ai/

Astroteq.ai offers an AI-driven earthquake forecasting system, providing alerts 14, 3, and 1 day(s) prior to earthquakes, unlike traditional last-minute warnings. It integrates hardware and software to predict earthquakes by analyzing various data channels for enhanced accuracy. This innovation empowers governments, businesses, and insurers to proactively safeguard lives and assets. This paradigm shift grants critical preparation time, allowing authorities to activate emergency protocols, evacuate vulnerable areas, and secure critical infrastructure. Businesses and insurers, armed with this foresight, can take proactive measures to protect lives and valuable assets. The heart of AstroTeq.ai lies in its continuous research and development. Scientists, engineers, and data analysts.

3.4.2 GMZ ENERJI SISTEMLERI SANAYI VE TICARET LIMITED SIRKETI

Startup Name	GMZ Enerji Sistemleri Sanayi ve Ticaret Limited Sirketi
Country	TÜRKIYE
PIC Number	879115948
Website	https://gmzenerji.com/en/

As GMZ Enerji, we develop innovative solutions for electrolyzer and fuel cell systems, which are hydrogen energy technologies. The heart of both systems is membranes. These membranes contain high technology and have high added value. Although high cost is one of the biggest problems in commercial membranes prepared by normal casting method, performance, strength and production sustainability are the features

that need to be improved. The nanofiber membranes we developed with machine learning and artificial intelligence-based performance optimization solutions and produced using the electrospinning method have up to 10 times higher performance and lower costs. Additionally, their negative environmental effects are minimized due to their non-fluorinated structure. Electrospinning device subcomponents that enable the production of nanofiber membranes with desired properties are also among our products.

3.4.3 GO ANTIMICROBIAL TECHNOLOGIES, LDA

Startup Name	GO Antimicrobial Technologies, Lda
Country	PORTUGAL
PIC Number	878699818
Website	http://www.gotechantimicrobial.com/

GOTECH Antimicrobial is a Portuguese MedTech startup founded by 2 women, and develops advanced and disruptive disinfection systems to solve medical device-related infection. Given the severe impact on society (15% patient mortality rate) and healthcare systems' economy (~37k€/infection in US), we are addressing hemodialysis catheter-related infections (CRIs) with our first product, the GOcap®: a light-activated graphene-based cap for catheter disinfection. Unlike other solutions, GOcap® reusability and long-term antimicrobial action will prevent infection, reduce costs, avoid disposal of millions of plastic caps, extend catheters lifespan, without contributing to antibiotic resistance, while improving patients' quality of life. Core activities focus on rolling-out our flagship product from R&D and IP protection to market assessment and regulatory affairs, building a product pipeline, while providing R&D services/consultancy throughout biomaterials and medical devices life cycle.

3.4.4 HUGUP SP. Z O.O.

Startup Name	HUGUP SP. Z O.O.
Country	POLAND

PIC Number	889155448
Website	https://www.hugup.com/

HUGUP is a deep tech startup revolutionizing pregnancy wellness with its advanced support wear, addressing the widespread yet underserved issue of lumbopelvic pain affecting two-thirds of pregnant women. By merging cutting-edge scientific research in orthopaedics, physiotherapy, and biomechanics with innovative, flexible materials, HUGUP has developed a unique, holistic support garment. Designed for daily, comfortable wear, it distributes belly weight evenly, improving posture and alleviating pain. Pre-launch testing validated HUGUP's effectiveness over competitors, demonstrating its potential to significantly improve pregnant individuals' quality of life. Aiming for a profound societal impact, HUGUP combines deep tech innovation with practical application, ensuring safety, comfort, and empowerment for expectant mothers.

3.4.5 HEILO SP. Z O.O.

Startup Name	Heilo sp. z o.o.
Country	POLAND
PIC Number	883190239
Website	https://heilo.eu/en/

Heilo, an impact startup, addresses infant exposure to air pollution while commuting with its advanced baby pram and stroller cover. The integrated air purifying system filters pollutants, ensuring a safe environment. Developed collaboratively with scientists, engineers, physicians and parents Heilo's solution combines electronic air purification and smart sensor technology, capturing 95% of contaminants with minimal noise. The multifunctional design fits 95% of prams, offering comprehensive protection. Intellectual property protection includes an utility model patent for air-cleaning modules and EU Industrial Design and Trademark protection. Heilo aligns with trends in children's health and environmental concerns. WHO statistics highlight global child exposure to polluted air (93% of children in the world breathe polluted air!). The startup leverages the growing baby tech industry and increased health consciousness.

3.4.6 IPLEXMED, LDA

Startup Name	IPLEXMED, Lda
Country	PORTUGAL
PIC Number	889428018
Website	http://www.iplexmed.com/

IPLEXMED's solution, NEXAGUARD, delivers unprecedented detection of multiple infectious agents and antimicrobial resistance from a non-invasive sample, at the point-of-care (ER) and at-home, in a fast, single run. This is crucial for chronic respiratory diseases patients (CRDs), 1 Bn sufferers with 3 Mn premature deaths/y due to respiratory infections, often antimicrobial resistant. Current tools for infectious agents detection are timely, expensive and not suitable for at-home. NEXAGUARD provides lab-grade fast personalized diagnostic results on-site, reducing diagnosis time from 2-7 days to 20min, supporting decentralized, timely personalized diagnostics and saving 40% on healthcare costs on unnecessary hospitalizations and/or drug prescriptions. We pave the way for ER/at-home lab-grade diagnosis contributing to decrease the 112 Mn disability-adjusted life years caused by CRDs. IPLEXMED’s technology will favor entrance in a 12 Bn market by 2025, and will also target other markets.

3.4.7 IQ BIOZOOM SP. Z O.O.

Startup Name	IQ Biozoom sp. z o.o.
Country	POLAND
PIC Number	878616495
Website	https://iqbiozoom.com/

IQ Biozoom is a pioneering company dedicated to improving the management of personal health through non-invasive, pain-free diagnostic home tests. They focus on the development of biosensing technology for

real-time diagnostic tests, with their flagship product being a revolutionary medical device designed for non-invasive and pain-free glucose, cortisol and lactate monitoring. IQ BioZoom tests are instantaneous, precise (laboratory quality in home conditions), non-invasive (without the need for puncturing/drawing blood), and the device is universal (one analyzer allows for the measurement of many biomarkers), reusable, while production costs are low. The advantages of the IQ BioZoom device and tests stem from the application of new technology owned by the Company. Founded in Poland, the company has gained international attention, including TOP 10 of the EIT Health InnoStars Awards and being selected as Hello Tomorrow Deep Tech Pioneers in 2023.

3.4.8 INNOSENSUS

INNOSENSUS

Startup Name	Innosensus
Country	LITHUANIA
PIC Number	884862907
Website	https://www.innosensus.com/

It is estimated that 1 of 7 Europeans do not tolerate gluten. These gluten intolerant people day by day meets with unpleasant symptoms, such as indigestion, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, skin rashes, tooth erosion, fatigue, joint pain, etc., because even the smallest amount of gluten causes the disease to get worse. Problem: Today there is no rapid and effective way to detect the presence of gluten in the food. Solution: Innosensus is creating a personal gluten biosensor, which quickly detects the presence of gluten in the food, and helps to prevent unpleasant symptoms for gluten intolerant people & with celiace disease. Gluten indicator would open the possibility for our target group to monitor of gluten daily: to have lunch or dinner in the public places, to enjoy food with maximum protection for themselves & feel less stress when eating outside the home. Innosensus gluten biosensor will be 10 times faster than other existing methods to test food for gluten

3.4.9 P-AGRO MINERALS

Startup Name	P-Agro Minerals

Country	LATVIA
PIC Number	878817285
Website	https://www.linkedin.com/company/p-agro-minerals

P-Agro Minerals manufactures an environmentally friendly innovative material called Letonite, specifically designed to facilitate polluting nutrient - phosphorus (P) removal from wastewater and after using recovered P as fertiliser. P-Agro offers two products in the market - Letonite wastewater filter for nutrient recovery and Letonite fertiliser. P-Agro Minerals tackle the pressing water treatment industry issue to purify municipal and industrial wastewaters from P to regulatory standards. Wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) are actively seeking solutions that can be integrated into their existing treatment processes. P-Agro Minerals is in EIT RawMaterials Accelerator stage 2-3, which ensures to finalise the Letonite wastewater filter technology validation activities in WWTP and prepare for demonstration activity in year 2025, a phase that includes active participation from industry stakeholders and prospective customers.

3.4.10 PINKY TECH SRL

Startup Name	Pinky Tech SRL
Country	MOLDOVA
PIC Number	877340751
Website	http://www.pinkycs.com/

Over 50% of cyberattacks target SMEs, either directly or through Supply Chain Attacks, while these family-owned business have no knowledge, no awareness of potential threats. Each day, these smaller companies experience financial losses, damage to their reputation, and legal battles as a result of these attacks, with estimated losses per one attack – EUR 35’000. Pinky CyberSafe® is a SaaS Platform tailored specifically to fit SMEs requirements: lack of knowledge in cybersecurity, limited resources and need for robust cybersecurity. Pinky® aims to become one-stop AI-driven solution that will encompass tools and procedures that will shield these unprotected customers from potential threats while also increasing their cybersecurity awareness. We make cybersecurity accessible for SMEs due to our streamlined UI/UX design that simplifies the process and ML algorithms that make it smart covering SMEs need for skilled IT security professionals.

3.4.11 TÍTULO ALTERNATIVO, LDA

Startup Name	TÍTULO ALTERNATIVO, LDA
Country	PORTUGAL
PIC Number	890276962
Website	https://www.thenewsroom.ai/

The Newsroom addresses the issues of misinformation and filter bubbles in news consumption and production. It consists of an AI-powered technology that analyzes thousands of news articles daily, identifies and summarizes consensus and different perspectives from various sources in multiple languages. It has been trained for three years on over 4 million news articles, in 6 languages. The platform offers a mobile app for readers, guiding them from common ground to diverse viewpoints, and a News AI co-pilot for journalists to assist in research, contextualization, and fact-checking. This comprehensive approach aims to enhance the quality and balance of both news production and consumption.

4. PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

4.1 Promotional Strategy

To ensure the success of the EmpoWomen project's open call, a comprehensive promotional strategy was implemented focusing on reaching a diverse and extensive audience of women-led deep-tech startups across the targeted regions. The strategy was designed to maximize visibility and engagement through a multi-faceted approach.

4.1.1 Target Audience

Five main target audiences were identified:

1. Female entrepreneurs and women-led startups
2. Startup support & Investors, including incubators, accelerators, business support organizations, business angels, venture capitalists, corporate VCs.
3. Innovation & Startup Ecosystems, including startup associations and startup networks in widening areas.

4. Policymakers & Society, including innovation ministries, digital agencies, entrepreneurship initiatives by European Commission, and European society as a whole.
5. Tech Media, including tech journalists and editors of media outlets covering news in the field of technologies, innovations, and entrepreneurship.

4.1.2 Tailored Messages

Messages were crafted to resonate with the specific needs and interests of each target audience:

Table 5 Target Audiences & Key Messages

Female Entrepreneurs and women-led startups
Message: Empower **Women** in Deep Tech. **Content Example:** *Are you a woman in the deep-tech sector looking for support and opportunities? EmpoWomen is here to help you break through barriers. With equity-free funding, specialist training, and direct connections with top investors, we're committed to fostering equality and innovation in deep-tech entrepreneurship. Join us and take your startup to the next level!* **Message:** Exclusive Support. **Content Example:** *EmpoWomen offers a unique support package specifically for women-led startups. Our programme includes non-repayable funding, exclusive prizes, and comprehensive services tailored to your company's needs. Apply now and let's grow your business together.*
Startup Support & Investors
Message: Exclusive Support **Content Example:** *"EmpoWomen is offering something unique for women-led startups in the deep-tech sector: equity-free funding, specialized training, and direct investor connections. We provide the resources and network to help these startups thrive. Join us in supporting the next wave of innovation."*
Innovation & Startup Ecosystems
Message: Global Impact **Content Example:** *"**EmpoWomen** is **making** a global impact by empowering women-led companies in the deep-tech sector. Our support helps **these** companies lead and innovate, contributing significantly to the growth of the startup ecosystem in Europe and beyond."* **Message:** Strategic Partnerships **Content Example:** *"**EmpoWomen** is **strengthened** by partnerships with key organizations like Sploro, TechUkraine, Startup Wise Guys, and Business Angels Europe. Funded by the European Union, this initiative is set to transform the innovation landscape."*
Policymakers & Society
Message: Empower Women in Deep Tech **Content Example:** *"EmpoWomen is dedicated to fostering equality in the deep-tech sector by addressing the unique barriers women face in R&D&I. Support our initiative to drive social change and innovation through empowered female entrepreneurs."* **Message:** Global Impact **Content Example:** *"Supporting women-led companies through the EmpoWomen initiative not only promotes gender equality but also strengthens the deep-tech sector's growth in Europe and globally. Join us in making a lasting impact on society and the economy."*

Tech Media
Message: Empower Women in Deep Tech Content Example: *"EmpoWomen is breaking new ground in deep-tech entrepreneurship by removing barriers for women. With equity-free funding, specialist training, and direct investor connections, we're fostering innovation and equality. Help us share this important story."*

4.1.3 Leveraging Consortium Networks & National Contact Points:

The consortium partners, including Sploro, TechUkraine, Business Angels Europe, and Startup Wise Guys, utilized their extensive networks and influence within the startup ecosystem to amplify the reach of the open call. National startup associations such as Startin Latvia, SAPIE (Slovakia), ASOCIACION CANARIA DE STARTUPS, National Startup Association of Georgia, CRO STARTUP, Startup Tunisia Smart Capital, Startup Moldova, and BESCO (Bulgaria) supported in promoting the open call within their respective regions. National Contact Points (NCPs) are instrumental in localizing the promotional efforts. They are facilitating that the open call reached the intended audience in eligible countries.

4.1.4 Visiting Tech Events and Conferences

Participation of consortium partners in relevant industry events, conferences, and startup meetups to promote the Open Calls and engage potential applicants. These events facilitated networking, provided visibility, and shared updates of the programme, success stories and insights directly with the target audience.

4.1.5 Online Activities

Interactive online webinars and info-days were organized to provide potential applicants with detailed information about the application process, eligibility criteria, and benefits of the programme. These sessions also included Q&A segments to address any queries from the participants.

4.1.6 Media Outreach & Content Marketing

A series of informative publications, articles, and blog posts with compelling visuals were published to raise awareness about the program and its objectives. These pieces were designed to educate potential applicants about the deep-tech sector's opportunities and the specific support EmpoWomen offers. Particularly, three press releases and around 50 news articles were published in leading industry publications and online platforms to announce the open call and highlight the program's benefits. This media coverage helped to establish credibility and attract attention from a broader audience.

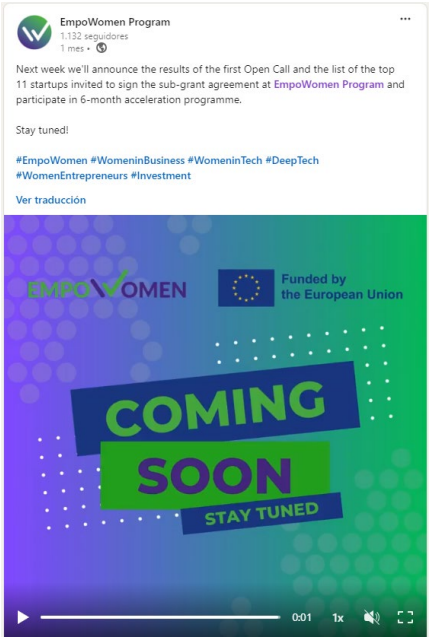
At the current stage, the following types of content were used for quality communication and promotional campaigns:

4.1.6.1 Social Media Visuals

FIGURE. 1 Social Media Visuals

4.1.6.2 Videos

Self-produced video teasing an announcement of the first Open Call results [LINK]:



4.1.6.3 INFOGRAPHICS

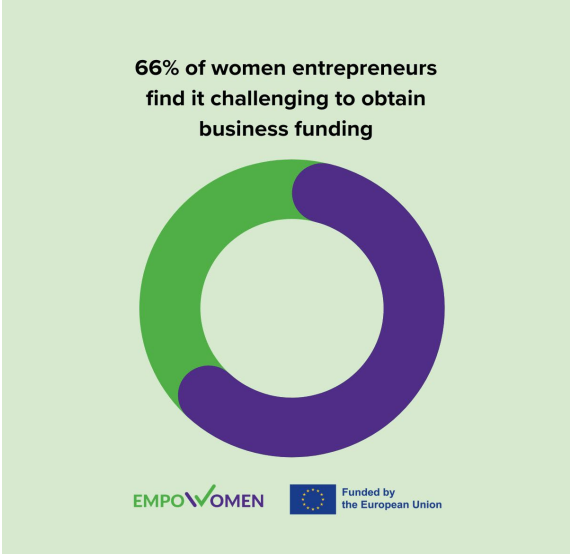


FIGURE. 2 Infographics

4.1.6.4 BLOG-POSTS

FIGURE. 3 Blog posts

4.1.6.5 PRESENTATIONS

FIGURE. 4 Presentations

4.1.6.6 FLYERS

The printed flyer is being distributed at the events and conferences attended by the partners.

FIGURE. 5 Flyers

4.2 Detailed Analysis of the promotional activities & Channels

The promotional strategy for the Open Calls and the EmpoWomen programme overall is built on developing and implementing an all-encompassing dissemination and communication plan, ensuring the broadest possible outreach of the project's Open Call and other activities at the pan-European level focusing on widening areas. This involved utilizing communication channels, measures, and tools that are being continually updated and synchronized with the ongoing project activities; coordinating joint events with relevant initiatives and promoting the project to ensure its value proposition reaches the appropriate audience. To attract qualified applicants and generate awareness for the Open Call Promotional Strategy were planned and executed the following channels and activities:

4.2.1 Website

The proejct website was launched on December 2023. During the first Open Call it was visited 7,000 times.

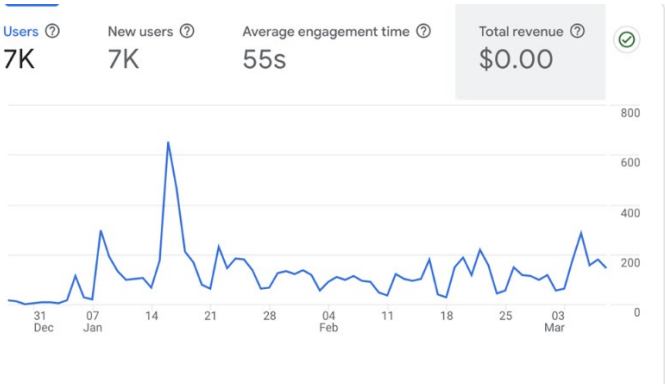
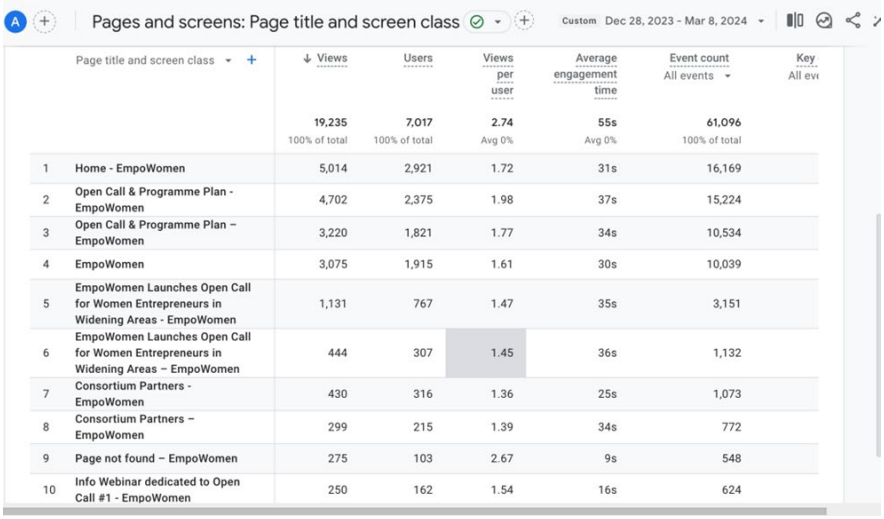


FIGURE. 6 Website Metrics

The visitors mostly spent time for getting information about conditions of the programme and the Open Call instructions:



	Page title and screen class	Views	Users	Views per user	Average engagement time	Event count All events	Key All ev
		19,235 100% of total	7,017 100% of total	2.74 Avg 0%	55s Avg 0%	61,096 100% of total	
1	Home - EmpoWomen	5,014	2,921	1.72	31s	16,169	
2	Open Call & Programme Plan - EmpoWomen	4,702	2,375	1.98	37s	15,224	
3	Open Call & Programme Plan – EmpoWomen	3,220	1,821	1.77	34s	10,534	
4	EmpoWomen	3,075	1,915	1.61	30s	10,039	
5	EmpoWomen Launches Open Call for Women Entrepreneurs in Widening Areas - EmpoWomen	1,131	767	1.47	35s	3,151	
6	EmpoWomen Launches Open Call for Women Entrepreneurs in Widening Areas – EmpoWomen	444	307	1.45	36s	1,132	
7	Consortium Partners - EmpoWomen	430	316	1.36	25s	1,073	
8	Consortium Partners – EmpoWomen	299	215	1.39	34s	772	
9	Page not found – EmpoWomen	275	103	2.67	9s	548	
10	Info Webinar dedicated to Open Call #1 - EmpoWomen	250	162	1.54	16s	624	

FIGURE. 7 Website Demographics

The majority of visitants came directly to the website www.empowomen.eu (4,088 visitors) or from the social media links (1,558). Organic search results with 924 visitors. Referral links – 396. Email campaign brought 236 visitors.

Traffic acquisition: Session primary channel group (Default Channel Group) — Custom Dec 28, 2023 - Mar 8, 2024

Search... Rows per page: 10 1-6 of 6

	Session primary...Channel Group)	Users	Sessions	Engaged sessions	Average engagement time per session	Engaged sessions per user	Events per session	Engagement rate	Event c All even
		7,017 100% of total	11,929 100% of total	6,536 100% of total	32s Avg 0%	0.93 Avg 0%	5.12 Avg 0%	54.79% Avg 0%	100%
1	Direct	4,088	6,318	3,236	31s	0.79	4.93	51.22%	
2	Organic Social	1,558	2,438	1,339	25s	0.86	4.85	54.92%	
3	Organic Search	924	1,949	1,241	40s	1.34	5.87	63.67%	
4	Referral	396	656	387	35s	0.98	4.94	58.99%	
5	Email	236	593	334	41s	1.42	5.37	56.32%	
6	Unassigned	53	58	19	23s	0.36	3.88	32.76%	

FIGURE. 8 Website Traffic Acquisition

4.2.2 Pre-registration

A pre-registration site was available before the call opened. Those who had interest in participating in the 1st Open Call registered here: https://bit.ly/EmpoWOMEN. A total number of 379 individuals were registered in the link. When the Open Call opened all these pre-registrations were automatically converted into draft application forms in the Sploro's platform. Pre-registered applicants were advised to complete and submit their application. This form was available on the official website www.empowomen.eu and it was communicated via the social media of EmpoWomen (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn), and on the LinkedIn of Sploro.

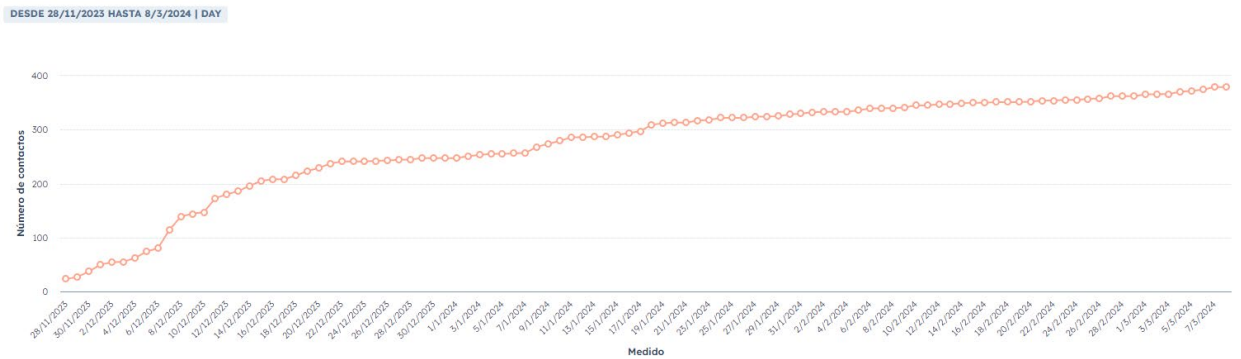


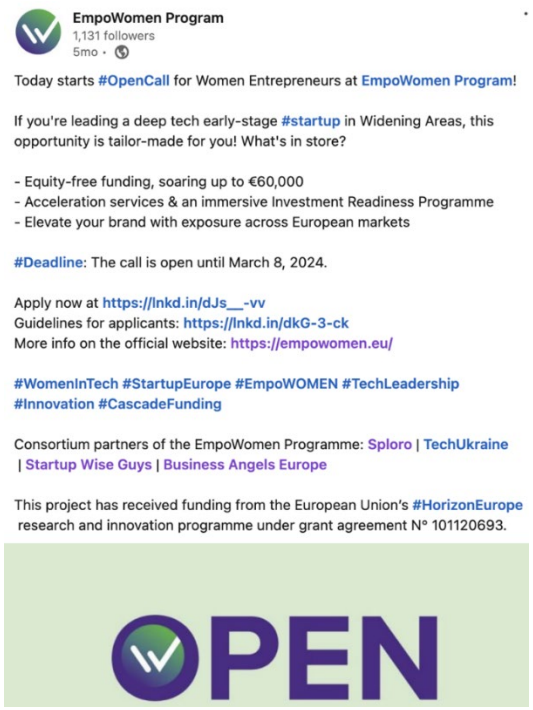
FIGURE. 9 Pre-registration stats

4.2.3 Open call Launch Announcement

a compelling announcement detailing the launch of the Open Call and its dissemination through various channels, including the programme's website, social media, and newsletters.

FIGURE. 10 OC#1 Launch Announcement

Blog article at official website www.empowomen.eu from 8.01.2024



LinkedIn Post from 8.01.2024

EmpoWomen Newsletter #1 from 15.01.2024

4.2.4 Social Media Campaign

Across Twitter (X), Facebook, and LinkedIn with engaging content, using relevant hashtags (#EmpoWomen, #women, #womenintech, #womenentrepreneurs, #deeptech) to maximize reach and encourage partners, influencers, and followers to share the posts.

The most efficient social media for the programme is Linkedin. In May 2024, it accounts 1,106 followers. Facebook page has 60 followers. Twitter – 18 followers.

In general, consortium partners use their pre-existing organizational channels, which already have an audience and followers (in total there are +67.600 LinkedIn, +13.000 Twitter, +67.000 Facebook, +6.000 Instagram) to push project messaging.

In the period from November 21, 2023 till March 8, 2024 (the deadline for the first Open Call) 20 publications were made to promote the first Open Call on LinkedIn. The organic content engagement was between 260 and 2600 impressions per post.

Table 6 Linkedin Posts

Post Date (MM-DD-YYYY)	Impressions	Clicks
11/27/2023	585	110
12/4/2023	635	66
12/14/2023	264	3
12/22/2023	715	26
12/28/2023	604	54
1/5/2024	917	71
1/8/2024	2,644	163
1/11/2024	291	24
1/16/2024	509	17
1/22/2024	1,244	128
1/26/2024	532	28
2/2/2024	895	32
2/9/2024	899	33

Post Date (MM-DD-YYYY)	Impressions	Clicks
2/15/2024	730	80
2/16/2024	645	28
2/23/2024	909	41
2/27/2024	887	262
3/1/2024	545	30
3/7/2024	944	72
3/8/2024	771	16

The total number of impressions on LinkedIn in the period M1-M6 is **35,796,** with the organic engagement rate 8,669. The total number of reactions to the publications – 944. Comments – 48. Reposts – 65.

4.2.5 Targeted Email Campaigns

Designed to reach out to potential applicants, stakeholders, and partners, clearly outlining the open call details, eligibility criteria, deadlines, application process, and instructions.

4.2.5.1 Corporate Newsletters

Project partners shared newsletter promoting EmpoWomen Programme and the upcoming first Open Call.

Table 7 Newsletters Distributed

DATE	PARTNER	INFO	EMAILS SENT	OPENS	CLICKS
DECEMBER 2023	TECHUA	OPEN CALL	2.079	704	30
DECEMBER 2023	BAE	OPEN CALL	932	406	15
JANUARY 2024	SPLORO	OPEN CALL	249	182	104
JANUARY 2024	SPLORO	INFO-DAY STARTUP EUROPE	345	176	30
JANUARY 2024	SWG	INFO OPEN CALL	3.258	912	97
JANUARY 2024	BAE	EVALUATORS	927	433	43
FEBRUARY 2024	SPLORO	WEBINAR OC#1	329	174	80
MARCH 2024	SWG	INFO OPEN CALL	3.258	944	121

4.2.5.2 PROJECT NEWSLETTERS

On January 15, 2024, EmpoWomen Newsletter#1 “Empowering Women In Deep Tech Innovation” was sent. It was promoting the first Open Call lasting from January 8 till March 8, 2024, and two online events, organized by Sploro: STARTUP EUROPE: Accelerating Deep Tech Startups in Europe (January 17, 2024) and EMPOWOMEN WEBINAR Open Call #1 (February 15, 2024). Database included emails of 289 recipients from those who pre-registered to the programme and partners’ network. Statistics of the EmpoWomen Newsletter#1:

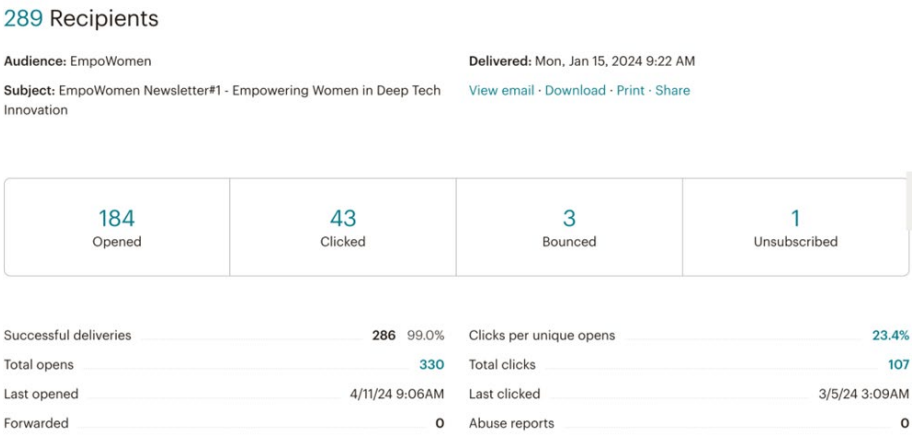


FIGURE. 11 Newsletter Stats

4.2.5.3 NEWSLETTER#2

On May 8, 2024, EmpoWomen Newsletter #2 “11 Startups Selected” was sent. It was sharing the results of the first Open Call and introducing the first cohort of 11 selected startups. Database included 368 emails. Statistics of the EmpoWomen Newsletter#2:

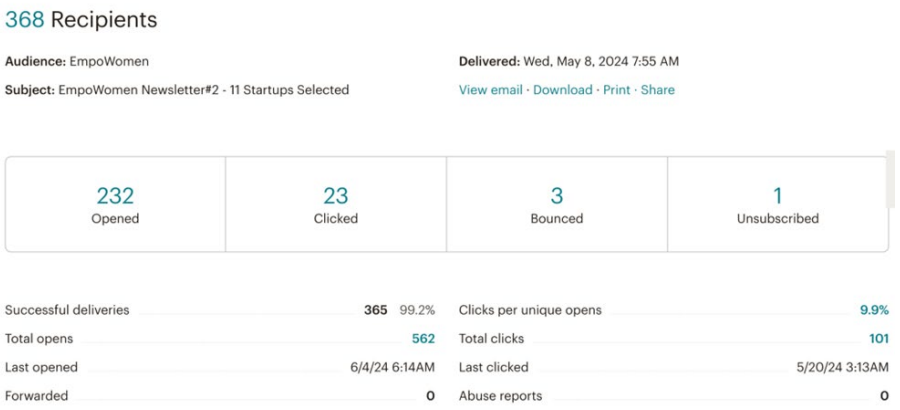


FIGURE. 12 Newsletter Stats

These email campaigns brought 236 visitors to the EmpoWomen website. At the moment, the email base of the newsletter has 380 subscribers. To subscribe to the newsletter, users can leave their e-mail address on the EmpoWomen website.

4.2.6 Press Releases

In the period M1-M6 three press releases were sent to the relevant EU and national media platforms, and to partners. The first press release announced kick-off of the project, described goals of the programme and introduced consortium partners. The second one brought the results of the first Open Call and explained the evaluation process. The third press release presented the list of the 11 selected startups.

As a result, 47 articles mentioning EmpoWomen project were published, including 17 media platforms of the EU projects such as EEN, NRW.Europe, Digital Skills and Jobs, and local EU platforms of such countries as Malta, Spain, Latvia, Turkiye, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Portugal, Italy, Greece.

Table 8 Publications about the project

#	NAME	DATE	LINK	ORGANISATION TYPE	COVERAGE
1	SPLORO	2023.11.22	LINK	Project Partner	EU
2	TechUkraine	2023.11.22	LINK	Project Partner	EU
3	Navarra Capital	2023.11.23	LINK	Regional Media	Spain
4	STIRI FONDURI EUROPENE	2023.11.27	LINK	National Media	Romania
5	Finantare.ro	2023.11.27	LINK	National Media	Romania
6	FEMEVAL	2023.11.30	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Spain
7	EEN Región de Murcia	2023.12.01	LINK	EEN	Spain
8	INNOBASQUE	2023.12.01	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Spain
9	EURAXESS in Malta	2023.12.01	LINK	Euraxess	Malta
10	SITES Ireland	2023.12.01	LINK	National Media	Ireland
11	Europos horizontas	2023.12.01	LINK	NCP	Latvia
12	TÜBİTAK	2023.12.06	LINK	NCP	Turkey

#	NAME	DATE	LINK	ORGANISATION TYPE	COVERAGE
13	Startup Lithuania	2023.12.06	LINK	National Startup Association	Lithuania
14	KOCAELI TR	2023.12.12	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Turkey
15	Scientific and Innovation Partnership Assistance Center Armenia	2023.12.15	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Armenia
16	Labs of Latvia	2024.01.03	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Latvia
17	PBKIK	2024.01.05	LINK	National Media	Hungary
18	Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	2024.01.08	LINK	University	Spain
19	Grupo DLGS Portugal	2024.01.08	LINK	Corporate	Portugal
20	EEN Latvia	2024.01.08	LINK	EEN	Latvia
21	StartGreen	2024.01.08	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Germany
22	Ymner	2024.01.08	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Sweden
23	Slovenia Rámcový program	2024.01.08	LINK	NCP	Slovenia
24	Dotace EU	2024.01.08	LINK	NCP	Czech Republic
25	Startup Portal Serbia	2024.01.08	LINK	National Startup Association	Serbia
26	FundsforCompanies	2024.01.08	LINK	Business Support Organisation	USA
27	The European Centre for Women and Technology (ECWT)	2024.01.08	LINK	Business Support Organisation	EU
28	EEN Slovakia	2024.01.08	LINK	EEN	Slovakia
29	NRW	2024.01.08	LINK	EEN	Germany
30	Navigator Consulting	2024.01.09	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Spain
31	Câmara Municipal de Vila Franca de Xira - Portugal	2024.01.10	LINK	Chamber of Commerce	Portugal
32	Obzor Europa Croatia	2024.01.10	LINK	Innovation Agency	Croatia

#	NAME	DATE	LINK	ORGANISATION TYPE	COVERAGE
33	Plataforma Ambiente Portugal	2024.01.12	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Portugal
35	El Observatorio de la I+D+i de Canarias	2024.01.21	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Spain
36	Serbia Center for Information and Development	2024.01.23	LINK	Innovation Agency	Serbia
37	Parque Científico y Tecnológico de Castilla-La Mancha	2024.01.30	LINK	Innovation Agency	Spain
38	Emprenemjunts	2024.02.02	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Spain
39	Greek digital	2024.02.08	LINK	Innovation Agency	Greece
40	Repubblica Digitale Italy	2024.02.08	LINK	Innovation Agency	Italy
41	EU Digital Skills and Jobs Platform	2024.02.08	LINK	European Commission	EU
42	Federación Provincial de la Pequeña y Mediana Empresa del Metal y Nuevas Tecnologías de las Palmas	2024.02.09	LINK	Business Association	Spain
43	INNOBASQUE	2024.02.09	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Spain
44	IAPMEI	2024.02.15	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Portugal
45	START Esposende	2024.02.20	LINK	Investment Agency	Portugal
46	Labs of Latvia	2024.02.23	LINK	Business Support Organisation	Latvia
47	Comissão Europeia aprovou o Programa temático Inovação e Transição Digital	2024.03.06	LINK	Innovation Agency	Portugal

4.2.7 Webinars

Through three conducted webinars in the open call period, detailed information about the programme, application process, and eligibility criteria was effectively communicated. This ensured that interested applicants received comprehensive insights and clear understanding of what the programme entails.

Table 9 Info days and Webinars

#	NAME	DATE	LINK	BANNER
1	Webinar #1 organized by SPLORO – STARTUP EUROPE	17.01.2024	LINK	
At this webinar were presented the following opportunities for deep tech startups in Europe were presented: EmpoWomen / D2SCALE / Ready2Scale.				
2	5.02.2024 Webinar #2 organized by SPLORO – EmpoWomen Webinar	15.02.2024	LINK	
Agenda Highlights: - Overview of the EmpoWomen Project: learn about the vision, mission, and objectives of EmpoWomen. - Open Call Details: get an in-depth understanding of the open call, eligibility criteria, and application process. - Programme Insights: discover the exciting components of the EmpoWomen programme and how it can benefit you. - Q&A Session: get clarity on any queries you may have. Recording of the webinar: LINK				

4.2.8 Participation in EU tech events

To promote the EmpoWomen Programme consortium partners attended high-level conferences and tech events and have been networking with similar projects and international initiatives. For dissemination activities were designed and printed 750 flyers promoting Open Calls and the goals of the programme.

FIGURE. 13 Events Flyer

Table 10 Events Participation

EVENT NAME	DATE	LOCATION	PURPOSE	PARTNER
WebSummit 2023	November 2023	Lisbon, Portugal	Startups Scouting	SPLORO
Mobile World Congress in Barcelona / 4Y4N	February 2024	Barcelona, Spain	Startups Scouting	SPLORO, SWG
EIC Summit 2024	March 2024	Brussels, Belgium	Project Dissemination	SPLORO

4.2.9 Promotional and network activities provided by Associated Partners

EmpoWomen's Associated partners supported in promoting the Open Call within their respective regions and executed these activities:

Table 11 Activities with Associated Partners

PARTNER	ACTIVITIES	STAKEHOLDERS REACHED
Besco - Bulgaria	• Shared updates of the programme on their social media • Sharing printed materials promoting Open Call	11,000

PARTNER	ACTIVITIES	STAKEHOLDERS REACHED
Asociación Merge - Canary Islands	• Shared updates of the programme on their social media • Presented EmpoWomen programme for students and deep-tech startups of University of Palma	930
Cro Startup - Croatia	• Presented EmpoWomen programme at monthly meetings of Cro Startup, • Featured the programme in the newsletter in February 2024 • Shared the news about the programme with Whatsapp community of Cro Startup (200 pax)	3,000
Startin Latvia	• Shared updates of the programme on their social media • Shared the news about the programme with Whatsapp community of Startin Latvia (300 pax)	5,500
Startup Moldova	• Presented EmpoWomen programme at two events • Shared updates of the programme on their social media	5,000
Sapie - Slovakia	• Shared updates of the programme on their social media	2,000
Startup Tunisia	• No activities	0
Startup Georgia	• No activities	0

5. STATISTICS AND FINDINGS

The 1st open call of the EmpoWOMEN project garnered significant attention and participation from women-led deep-tech startups across Europe, reflecting the program's broad reach and appeal. This section provides a detailed overview of the response to the open call, presents key statistics, and analyses the findings.

5.1 Submission Progress

This following graph delves into the daily distribution of proposal submissions throughout the open call period, providing insights into the submission trends and patterns observed. Spanning from January 15, 2024, to March 8, 2024, the figure captures the flow of submissions over time, shedding light on the dynamics of applicant engagement.

The data analysis reveals a nuanced picture of proposal submissions, marked by distinct trends and fluctuations. Initially, submissions were sporadic, with minimal activity recorded in the early days of February and scattered submissions in January. However, as the open call deadline approached, a noticeable surge in submissions was observed. Notably, March 7, 2024, and March 8, 2024, emerged as peak submission days, witnessing a significant influx of proposals.

This pattern suggests a dual dynamic within the applicant pool, with early adopters engaging in the initial stages of the open call period and a surge of submissions from procrastinators as the deadline neared. Moreover, the consistent flow of submissions throughout February and early March underscores the sustained interest in the EmpoWOMEN program. These insights underscore the significance of timing and promotional strategies in driving applicant engagement and participation.

Finally, the observed peak submission days on March 7th and March 8th highlight the critical role of effective promotion and communication strategies in maximizing applicant engagement. As evidenced by the surge in submissions towards the deadline, targeted outreach efforts and timely reminders likely played a pivotal role in driving applicant participation.

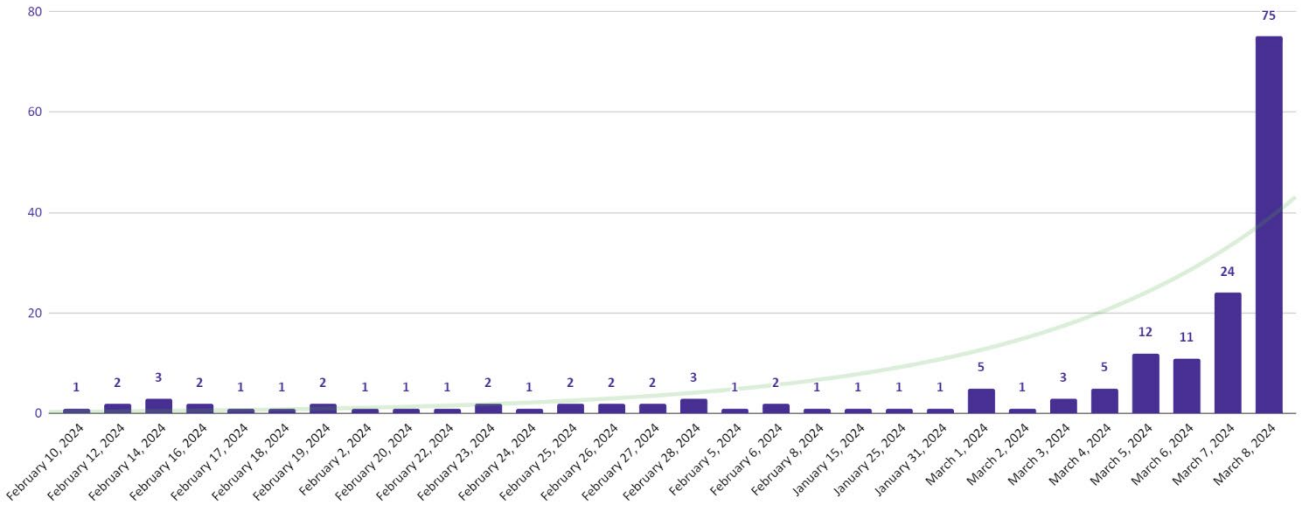


FIGURE. 14 Submission Progress

5.2 Total Applications per Country

The EmpoWOMEN open call was met with a substantial response, attracting 170 applications from women-led deep-tech startups across various targeted regions. The distribution of submissions revealed both the strengths of the promotional efforts and areas needing further attention. While the engagement was notably high in certain countries, there were significant disparities in participation rates across different regions. This analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the general trends observed, and a detailed breakdown of submissions by widening area, outermost regions, and associated countries.

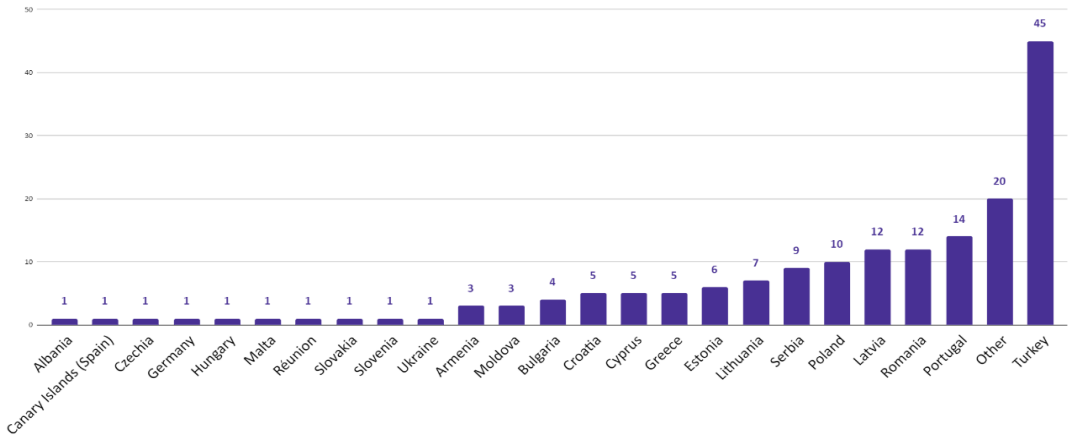


FIGURE. 15 Applications per country

5.2.1 Analysis By Widening Area Countries/Regions

The response from the widening area countries was robust, with all 15 targeted countries[1] submitting applications. Noteworthy contributions came from Portugal (14), Romania (12), Latvia (12), and Poland (10), indicating strong engagement and vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystems in these nations. The significant participation from Latvia can be attributed to the presence of "Startin Latvia," a national startup association that is an associated partner of the consortium, which likely enhanced local outreach and support. Similarly, the engagement from Slovakia, represented by SAPIE (Slovenska Aliancia Pre Inovativnu Ekonomiku), though modest, indicates a positive impact of local advocacy and support networks. The total of 85 applications from widening area countries highlights the effectiveness of the outreach strategies and the existing interest in deep-tech innovation among women entrepreneurs in these regions.

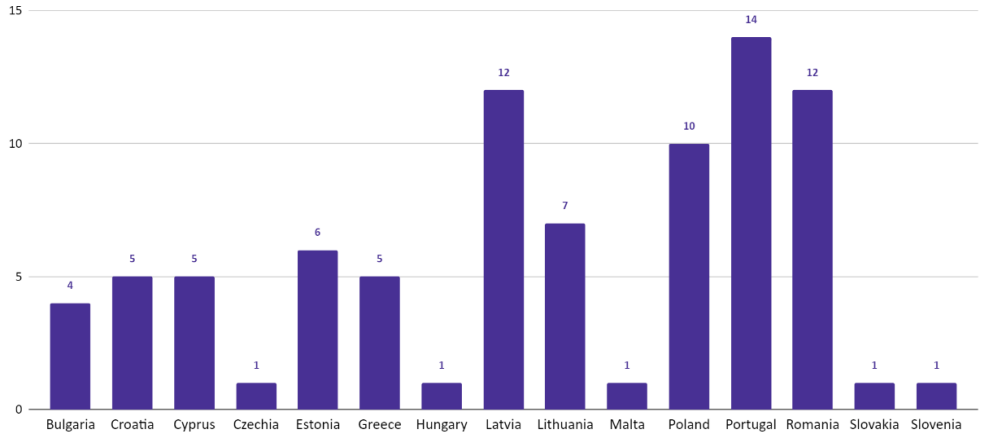


FIGURE. 16 Widening Area Region Analysis

[1] Widening Area Countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia

5.2.2 Analysis By Outermost Regions

The outermost regions[2] were significantly underrepresented, with only two submissions from the Canary Islands and Réunion. The Canary Islands submission can be linked to the involvement of the "Asociacion Canaria de Startups Empresas de Base Tecnologica e Inversores Angeles," an associated partner of the consortium, which suggests that even with such support, additional targeted efforts may be needed to increase participation from these regions. Despite the targeted outreach, the response from these regions was minimal, indicating potential barriers such as limited awareness of the program, accessibility issues, or challenges in perceiving the relevance of the program to their specific contexts. This low participation suggests a need for more focused and possibly bespoke promotional efforts to better engage these regions in future calls. Enhanced communication and support structures will be established in OC#2, tailored to the unique circumstances of these regions to help to increase participation rates.

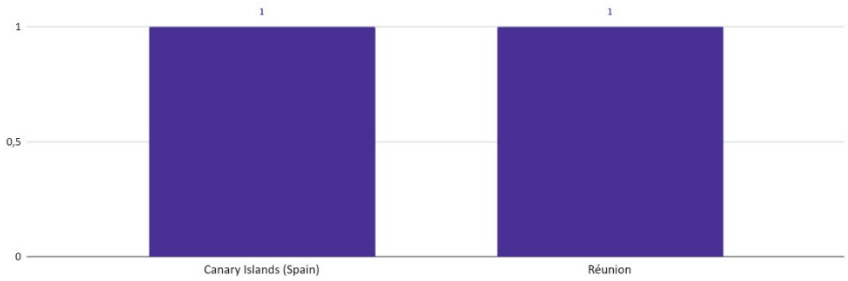


FIGURE. 17 Outermost Regions Analysis

5.2.3 Analysis By Associated Countries

Among the associated countries[3], Turkey stood out with 45 applications, showcasing a high level of interest and engagement in the deep-tech sector. Other associated countries like Albania, Armenia, Moldova, and Serbia also showed commendable participation, with a total of 17 applications. This indicates a growing interest and emerging entrepreneurial activity in these regions.

[2] Outermost Regions: Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Réunion, Martinique, Mayotte and SaintMartin (France), Canary Islands (Spain), Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Réunion, Martinique, Mayotte and Saint-Martin (France).
[3] Associated Countries: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, North Macedonia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

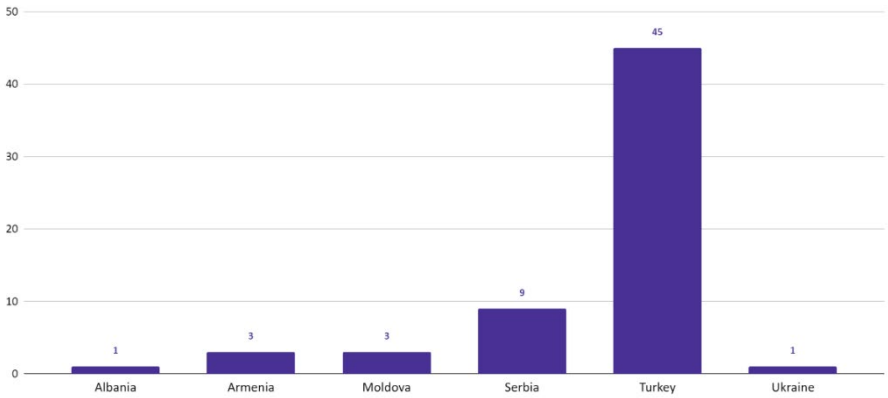


FIGURE. 18 Associated Countries Analysis

5.3 Startup Profile

The EmpoWOMEN project, designed to empower women-led deep-tech startups from widening-area countries, aims to provide comprehensive support to early-stage companies. These startups, defined as SMEs operating for no more than six years and having raised limited funding (up to 1 million EUR), are engaged in developing advanced and disruptive technologies. This section provides a detailed analysis of the startups that applied to the EmpoWOMEN open call, focusing on their technological focus, year of foundation, geographic distribution, intellectual property status, number of employees, and technology readiness levels.

5.3.1 Technology Focus

The startups applying to the EmpoWOMEN open call represent a diverse array of deep-tech sectors as it can be observed in FIGURE: 19. The predominant focus areas include Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (20.53%), Biotechnology and Life Sciences (14.58%), and Sustainable Energy and Clean Technologies (8.21%). This aligns well with the project's target of attracting companies engaged in the development of advanced and disruptive technologies. Other notable sectors include the Internet of Things (4.93%), Semantic Web (5.34%), and Cybersecurity and Data Protection (4.11%). The wide range of technologies covered indicates that the program has successfully reached a broad spectrum of deep tech startups, demonstrating its appeal across various innovative fields.

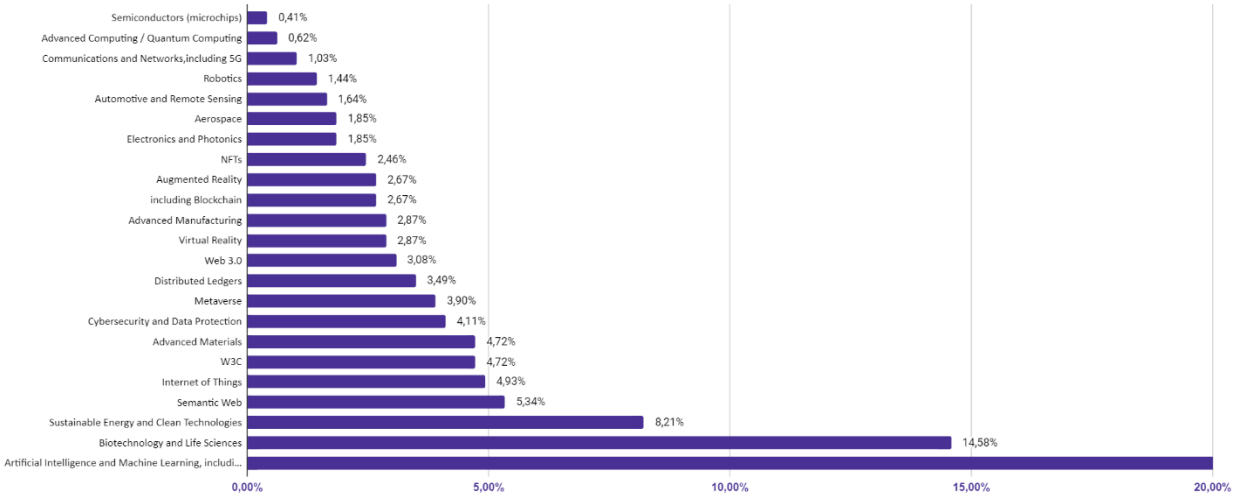


FIGURE. 19 Technology Focus Stats

5.3.2 Year of Foundation

Most of the startups are early stage, with the majority founded in recent years. Specifically, 29.63% of the startups were founded in 2023, 20.99% in 2022, and 20.37% in 2021, see FIGURE: 20 . This suggests that the majority of applicants are indeed early-stage startups, as defined by the project's criteria (established and operating for not more than 6 years). The data shows that 93.83% of the startups were founded from 2017 onwards, confirming that the open call successfully targeted and attracted early-stage companies.

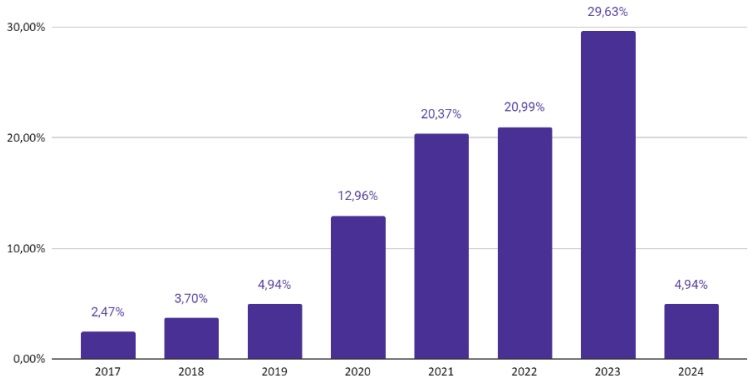


FIGURE. 20 Year of Foundation Stats

5.3.3 Intellectual Property (IP) Status

The IP status of the startups reveals that nearly half (46%) have fully owned or exclusive licenses, indicating a strong position in terms of intellectual property rights, as represented in FIGURE: 21 . However, 14% of the startups are still negotiating access to IPR, and another 14% have unclear IP statuses, which could pose challenges in their commercialisation efforts. This diversity in IP status underscores the need for tailored support within the EmpoWOMEN program to help startups secure and manage their intellectual property effectively.

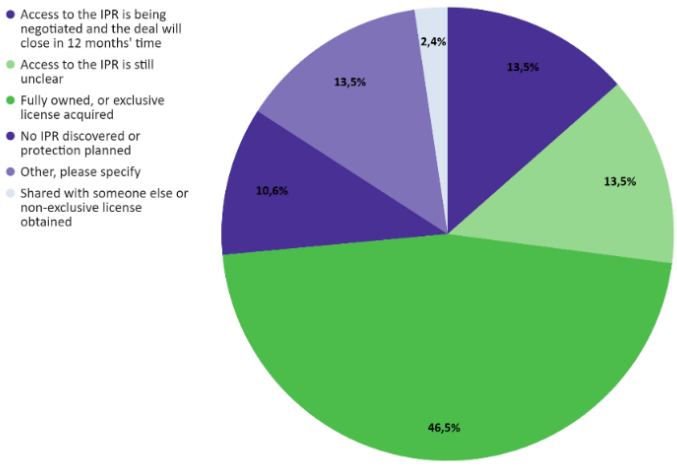


FIGURE. 21 IP Stats

5.3.4 Number of Employees

The majority of the startups are small in size, with 25.88% having 3 employees, 12.94% having 2 employees, and 12.94% having 4 employees. The 76.47% of the applications have 6 or less employees, as represented in FIGURE: 22. This aligns with the definition of SMEs and highlights the early-stage nature of these companies. The data shows that the program has successfully attracted startups that are in the initial phases of their growth, providing an excellent opportunity for impactful support through the EmpoWOMEN program. The presence of startups with very small teams further emphasizes the importance of the support and resources provided by the program.

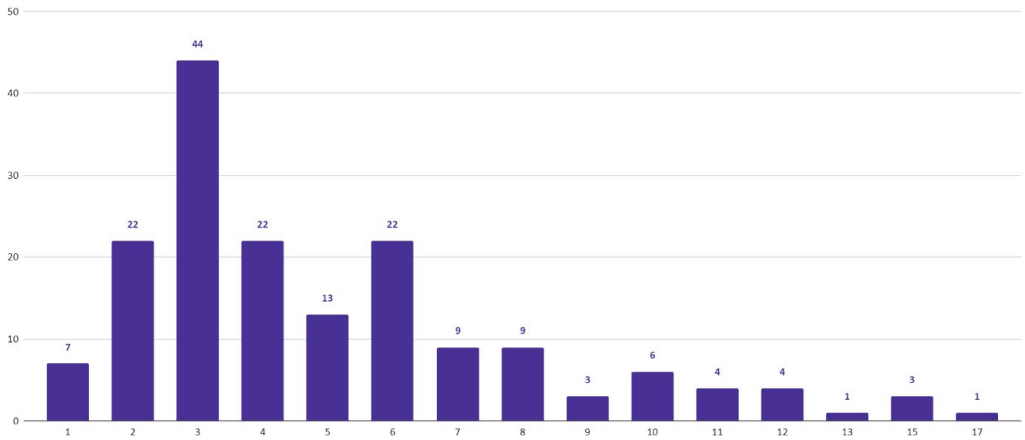


FIGURE. 22 Size of the company stats

5.3.5 TRL Level

Most of the startups are at lower TRLs, with 33% at TRL4 or lower, 18% at TRL5, 18% at TRL6, and 24% at TRL7. Only a small fraction (7%) has reached TRL8 or TRL9, see FIGURE: 23. This indicates that the majority of applicants are still in the development phase, requiring significant support to reach higher levels of

technology readiness and commercialization. The program's focus on early-stage startups is thus well-matched with the needs of the applicants.

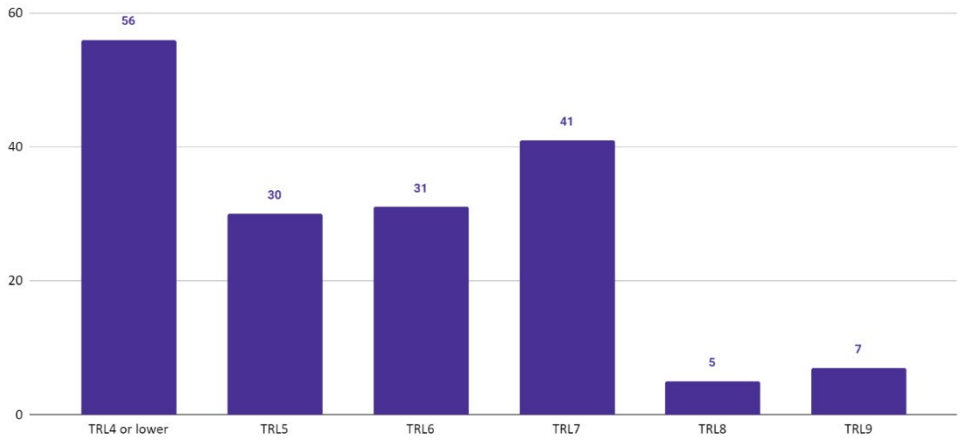


FIGURE. 23 TRL Stats

5.3.6 Applicants vs Selected Companies

5.3.6.1 Countries

As detailed in the analysis of the open call, the applicant pool is highly diverse, representing many different countries. The highest numbers come from Turkey and Romania, followed by a variety of smaller or less-represented countries. This widespread interest indicates effective dissemination strategies during the open call, resulting in a broad range of applications from different locations.

The application and selection data reveal significant differences in the diversity of countries among applicants and those selected. The selected startups are concentrated in fewer countries, primarily Poland and Portugal, which account for 7 out of the 11 selected startups. The remaining startups come from Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, and Turkey, each contributing one startup. This shows that the startups selected for further stages are predominantly founded in a smaller subset of countries compared to the diverse origins of the applicants.

The data shows a clear disparity between the diversity of applicants' countries and the countries where the selected startups are founded. While the applicant pool is broadly representative of many countries, the selected startups are primarily concentrated in Poland and Portugal, with these two countries alone accounting for more than half of the selections.

This concentration suggests that startups founded in Poland and Portugal may have certain advantages, such as more robust startup ecosystems, better access to resources, or stronger support networks, making them more competitive in the application and selection process. In contrast, despite the high number of applicants from countries like Turkey and Romania, only one startup from Turkey and none from Romania were selected, indicating that startups from these regions may face more challenges in meeting the selection

criteria or competition standards. This could point to the need for more support and development in the startup ecosystems of less-represented countries to level the playing field and increase their representation in future selections.

5.3.6.2 Startup Profile

5.3.6.2.1 DEEPTECH TECHNOLOGY

The analysis reveals a strategic shift in focus within the deep-tech sectors. Initially, the applicant pool showcased a diverse array of deep-tech fields, with AI and ML (20.53%), Biotech and Life Sciences (14.58%), and Sustainable Energy and Clean Technologies (8.21%) being the most prominent. This diversity shows that the open call successfully attracted a broad range of deep-tech startups, aligning with its goal of fostering innovation across various advanced technologies.

In contrast, the selected startups exhibit a refined emphasis, with Biotech and Life Sciences and Advanced Materials each comprising 23% of the cohort. This shift underscores a strategic preference for startups engaged in sectors poised to make significant technological breakthroughs, aligning closely with the deep-tech landscape where advancements are critical for addressing complex global challenges.

The retention of AI and ML technologies at 18% among the selected startups underscores their enduring significance in the deep-tech landscape. AI and ML are fundamental to numerous technological advancements, enabling innovations in data analysis, automation, and intelligent systems.

5.3.6.2.2 YEAR OF FOUNDATION

The analysis of the year of foundation among applicants and selected startups reveals significant insights into the stage of development targeted by our program. Among the applicants, the majority were founded from 2017 onwards, with specific concentrations in recent years: 29.63% in 2023, 20.99% in 2022, and 20.37% in 2021. This distribution indicates a strong representation of early-stage startups, aligning closely with the program's criteria. In comparison, the selected startups also predominantly reflect early-stage ventures, with 90.91% established from 2021 onwards. This preference for startups founded in recent years mirrors the applicant pool, highlighting the program's emphasis on supporting emerging businesses in their initial growth phases.

5.3.6.2.3 IP STATUS

The comparison of Intellectual Property (IP) status between the 170 applicants and the 11 selected startups reveals distinct patterns in IP readiness and management. Among the applicants, a significant portion (46%) possess fully owned or exclusive licenses, indicating proactive steps in securing their intellectual property rights. Another 14% are currently negotiating access to IPR, which suggests ongoing efforts to establish or

finalize IP arrangements. Additionally, 14% have unclear IP statuses, potentially indicating a need for further clarification or development in IP strategy.

In contrast, the selected startups demonstrate a higher concentration (73%) of fully owned or exclusive licenses, suggesting stronger proposals from startups with established IP positions. This could imply that robust IP management was a contributing factor in the selection process, reflecting readiness for commercialization and reduced legal risks. Moreover, while 18% of selected startups are negotiating access to IPR, indicating ongoing developments, only 9% have unclear IP statuses, indicating a generally clearer IP landscape among the selected cohort.

5.3.6.2.4 EMPLOYEES

The selection of startups in terms of employee size shows both alignment and some variation compared to the applicants. Among the applicants, a significant majority (76,47%) have 6 or fewer employees, indicating that the applicant pool predominantly consists of small-sized startups and underscores their early-stage growth phase.

In contrast, the selected startups exhibit a varied distribution in employee numbers. Notably, the majority of selected startups also have relatively small teams, with 63,64% having 6 or fewer employees. This aligns closely with the applicant pool, indicating a preference for smaller teams that are characteristic of early-stage businesses. However, the selection also includes startups with larger teams, such as one startup with 10 or 12 employees.

This selection pattern suggests that while the EmpoWOMEN program predominantly supports startups with smaller teams, which mirrors the composition of the applicant pool, it also considers startups with larger organisational structures, potentially reflecting an emphasis on scalability and growth potential.

5.3.6.2.5 TRL

Initially, the majority of the applicant startups are at lower TRLs, indicating they are in the early stages of development. Specifically, 33% are at TRL4 or lower, 18% at TRL5, 18% at TRL6, and 24% at TRL7. Only 7% of the applicants have reached TRL8 or TRL9, reflecting a significant need for support to advance their technologies towards commercialization.

In contrast, the selected startups show a distribution that slightly favours higher TRLs compared to the overall applicant pool. Among the selected startups, there is one at TRL4 or lower, five at TRL5, one at TRL6, three at TRL7, and one at TRL8. The increased proportion of selected startups at TRL5 (five out of eleven, or approximately 45%) compared to the applicant pool (18%) suggests the program's emphasis on supporting technologies that are moving from the proof-of-concept stage towards system validation. This focus on TRL5

startups is critical, as it represents a pivotal stage where technologies transition from lab environments to real-world applications.

Moreover, the presence of multiple startups at TRL7 (three out of eleven, or approximately 27%) among the selected cohort further highlights the program's inclination towards startups that are in the system prototype demonstration phase. These startups are on the cusp of full-scale deployment and commercialization, making them attractive candidates for support due to their proximity to market readiness.

6. OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

The EmpoWOMEN project aimed to support women-led deep-tech startups from widening-area countries through a tailored acceleration program. The first open call has successfully achieved several significant outcomes, demonstrating the efficacy of our outreach and selection processes.

- **High Participation Rate:** The open call attracted a total of 170 applications. This robust response highlights the strong interest and demand for support among women-led deep-tech startups in the targeted regions.
- **Diverse Geographic Representation**: Applications were received from over 24 eligible countries/regions, with notable participation from Turkey (45), Portugal (14), Romania (12), and Latvia (12). This wide geographic spread indicates successful outreach efforts and the project's appeal across multiple countries.
- **Supporting Early-Stage Deep-Tech Startups:** The high percentage of early-stage startups and the variety of deep-tech sectors represented confirm that the open call effectively targeted the right profile of startups. This sets a strong foundation for the acceleration program to make a significant impact.
- **Open call processes:** With a 11 startups selected for the program, the initiative is set to provide specialised support, including acceleration, mentoring, and investment readiness services. The presence of consortium partners during the evaluation process ensured that the selected startups are well-suited for the program. The structured evaluation process, which included eligibility checks, remote evaluations, and interviews, ensured that the best candidates were selected.

The outcomes from the first open call of the EmpoWOMEN project indicate a successful start toward achieving our objectives. The high participation rate, diverse geographic representation, focus on early-stage deep-tech startups, and rigorous evaluation process all point to a well-executed open call. Moving forward, the program is well-placed to provide significant support to the selected startups, helping them to scale, access new markets, and secure investment. The strong foundation laid by this first open call sets a positive precedent for future calls and the overall success of the EmpoWOMEN initiative.

7. LESSONS LEARNT

- **Enhancing Promotional Activities and Collaboration:** One key lesson from the first open call is the need to enhance promotional activities in underrepresented geographical areas. To increase the number of applications from these regions, it is essential to intensify promotional efforts during the call period. This can be achieved by organising webinars and info-sessions tailored to the specific needs and contexts of these countries. Additionally, collaboration with local and regional authorities, such as the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and National Contact Points (NCPs), can significantly boost engagement.
- **Evaluating and Expanding Partner Networks:** Another important lesson is the need to critically evaluate the effectiveness of our associated partners in promoting the open call in advance. It is crucial to assess current partnerships and seek new partners where necessary. Informing all partners about the results of the first call and confirming their commitment to the second call will ensure better alignment and preparedness. Additionally, creating a comprehensive list of partners and leveraging consortium networks can amplify our promotional efforts and broaden our reach, ensuring a more diverse and competitive pool of applicants.
- **Implementing Targeted Marketing early in time:** An essential strategy for increasing the number and quality of applications is to start communication efforts early, even before the call is officially open. This way, we can build anticipation and provide startups with ample time to prepare their applications. Early engagement efforts can include pre-announcements, teaser campaigns, and preliminary information sessions. These activities help in creating a preliminary community that encourages more startups to consider applying.
- **Application process:** One key lesson from the first open call is the importance of a clear and user-friendly application form. To attract more qualitative applicants, the form should be designed to be intuitive and straightforward. We recommend simplifying the language used in the form, providing clear instructions for each section, and ensuring that all necessary information is easily accessible. Additionally, implementing a FAQ section can help applicants understand the requirements and process better, reducing potential confusion and errors.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The first open call of the EmpoWOMEN project has been a deep success, yielding significant outcomes and providing valuable lessons for future endeavours. The robust participation rate of 170 applications from over 24 eligible countries/regions underscores the effectiveness of our comprehensive outreach strategies and the critical role of our consortium partners, including national startup associations. The rigorous multi-step evaluation process ensured the selection of 11 high-quality, early-stage deep-tech startups, aligning well with our project's objectives.

Key lessons learned include the importance of clear and accessible documentation, the need for ongoing support, and the benefits of maintaining promotional momentum throughout the application period. The diversity of technological innovations and geographic representation among the applicants enriches the project's potential impact on the deep-tech ecosystem.