Discovery Impact Report v2

Deliverable 2.5 - Discovery Impact Report v2

Prepared by: Sploro

Description

Documentation including relevant statistics and findings of the 2nd open call. This will outline the actions taken, and outcomes achieved in relation to the promotional strategies during the second period of the project.

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Funded by the European Union

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 v2
NUMBER OF DELIVERABLE	D2.5
RELATED TASK NUMBER AND NAME	Task 2.2. Discovery Phase
DELIVERABLE DISSEMINATION LEVEL	PU - Public
DELIVERABLE DUE DATE	April 30, 2025
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TASK LEADER/MAIN AUTHOR	Marta Fernández Bernabeu (SPLORO)
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Table 2. History of Changes

Version	Submission date	Comments	Author
v0.1	20.02.2025	First version of deliverable	Marta Hernández (Sploro)
v0.2	25.03.2025	Second version of deliverable	Marta Fernández (Sploro)
v0.3	17.04.2025	Inputs in the dissemination and communication part	Nataly Veremeeva (TechUA)
VF	22.04.2025	Final version of deliverable	Marta Fernández (Sploro)

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the outcomes, insights, and statistical analysis from the Second Open Call of the EmpoWomen programme, a Horizon Europe initiative aimed at accelerating women-led deep-tech startups in Widening Area countries. The Second Open Call represented a significant advancement in terms of visibility, outreach, and participation, building on the experience of the first call and resulting in a record 617 applications, of which 251 were formally submitted. Following a rigorous, transparent evaluation process conducted by independent experts, 14 high-potential projects were ultimately selected for funding.

The primary purpose of this document, Deliverable D2.5, is to provide a comprehensive overview of the promotional activities undertaken, application and evaluation procedures, and the qualitative and quantitative results achieved during this second call. It illustrates how the promotional strategies evolved, the response from the ecosystem, and the impact made in supporting early-stage, women-led innovations across Europe and associated regions.

Key findings demonstrate a 48% increase in submitted applications compared to the previous call, enhanced participation from underrepresented and widening regions, and an encouraging diversity in technological focus areas—especially Artificial Intelligence, Biotechnology, and Clean Technologies. The selected startups are predominantly early-stage ventures with small teams, many of them founded in the past two years, reflecting EmpoWomen's strong appeal to nascent innovators.

The report also details the extensive promotional efforts including social media campaigns, participation in major tech events, InfoDays, webinars, and strategic use of consortium networks and National Contact Points. These initiatives were crucial in expanding the geographic and demographic reach of the call, with notable improvements in participation from countries previously underrepresented.

Finally, the report highlights lessons learnt, such as the importance of sustained, tailored outreach and the need for additional support for micro-teams and solo founders. It concludes by reaffirming the programme's effectiveness in identifying and empowering deep-tech startups led by women, and outlines strategies to further improve inclusivity and impact in future calls.

2. INTRODUCTION

The EmpoWomen project, funded by the European Union through its Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme, 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 programme designed to scale up women-led companies, focusing on women 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 programme, 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 (TechUA), Business Angels Europe (BAE), and Startup Wise Guys (SWG), alongside eight national startup associations.

Selected startups will participate in a 6-month programme offering a comprehensive acceleration and investment readiness support service provided by SWG and 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.

2.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE OPEN CALLS

The primary objective of the EmpoWomen programme 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 programme aimed at developing these founders into tomorrow's women 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 programme. The support provided through this programme 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 2 PROCESS

As in the previous open call, the Second Open Call was open for two months, from October 1st until December 2nd. During this time, an impressive **251 proposals were submitted** from over 29 eligible countries and regions. However, **64 proposals were found to be ineligible**. Further details on the statistical data are available in Section 5. STATISTICS AND FINDINGS.

The Second Open Call generated significant interest and engagement from women-led deep-tech startups across Europe, in number, it was higher than in the previous Open Call.

A thorough remote evaluation process, conducted by a panel of independent experts, resulted **in 28 applications** being shortlisted and **invited to the interview stage**. Following careful assessment and interviews, **14 startups were ultimately chosen to join the programme**. These startups will now gain access to a robust support framework aimed at accelerating their growth and fostering their integration into the global deep-tech ecosystem.

Table 3 Open Calls Overview

	EmpoWomen OC#1	EmpoWomen OC#2
Call Reference Nº	101120693	101120693
Call Budget	527.500€	662.500€
Budget Awarded	527.500€	662.500€
Call Publication Date	08-01-2024	01-10-2024
Call Closure Date	08-03-2024	02-12-2024
URL to F&T Portal	LINK	LINK
Nº of Applications opened	829	617
Nº of Submitted Proposals	170	251
Conversion rate	20,51%	40,68%
Nº of non-eligible	46	64
Nº of Applications on External evaluation	124	188

Nº of Over thresholds	77	139
Nº of Under thresholds	47	49
Nº of Interview	22	28
Nº of Selected Proposals	11	14
Success rate from submitted to selected	6,47%	5,57%

In the previous call the number of proposals opened was good, while the last open call saw a record number of proposals submitted in all calls. In the last call the number of proposals submitted by the closing date of the call has accelerated and increased. More information about it is included in **Section 5. STATISTICS AND FINDINGS**.

3.1 Application Process

The application process, including the platform used to receive applications, the structure of the application form, and the required additional documents remained the same as in the previous Open Call but considering one of the lessons learnt from the first open call (more information about it in Deliverable 2.2), the form was reformulated to make it clearer and more user-friendly. The language was simplified to attract more qualitative applicants. For further details check Deliverable 2.4, where the documents from the call can be found. This documentation includes guidelines, online form, leaflets, and open call announcement for distribution.

The open call was widely promoted through the project 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 October 01, 2024, to December 02, 2024. Applicants were required to complete an online application form through the SPLORO's platform, providing detailed information about their startups.

3.2 OC#2 Evaluation Process

The evaluation process was initiated right after the closure of the Second Open Call and was managed by Sploro following the same structure and steps as in previous Open Call and ensured a fair and thorough assessment of all applications, following these key steps (see Figure 1. Evaluation process):

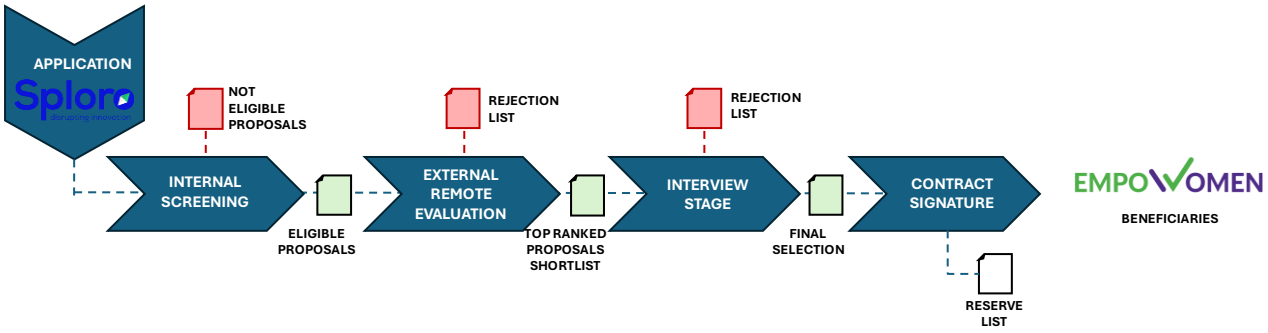


Figure 1. Evaluation process

The entire project evaluation process lasted two months, starting with the eligibility check on December 3rd and ending the external evaluation on January 10th. After the external remote evaluation, the interviews with the pre-selected projects were started, from January 20th until January 31st.

3.2.1 STEP 1: Eligibility Check

The first step in the evaluation process is the eligibility check. Reviewing which proposals meet the eligibility criteria is the first step to take. It is a good indicator that there are few ineligible proposals, as it indicates two things: firstly, that the guidelines for applicants were clear and understandable; and secondly that the target audience for the call communication campaign was the right one. From 251 applications submitted, only 64 were marked as non-eligible. The reasons were:

Table 4 Ineligibility reasons

Reason	N# of proposals marked for this reason
Not classified as SME according to EC Recommendation	1
Raised more than 1M€ in total	1
All the required fields in the online application form have been completed and all documents are uploaded	2
Submissions in any language other than English will not be eligible for evaluation	2
Proposal already funded in the Women TechEU initiative	5

Founder or co-founder is not at C-Level	9
Companies with +2 months of existence by submission, and that have been established and operating for not more than 6 years counting backwards from submission date	10
TRL above TRL7, too high to be considered early stage.	13
Not eligible country	21

3.2.2 STEP 2: Experts Remote Evaluation

Proposals that passed the eligibility check proceeded to the remote evaluation stage. To ensure total impartiality during the evaluation, each application was reviewed by two external and independent evaluators with expertise in the entrepreneurship, investment, and innovation, who were not part of the consortium, as was done during the first Open Call. As in the first open call, 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 188 applications passed the eligibility check and were evaluated remotely by 2 evaluators. During this phase, 49 were marked as under thresholds and **139 were positively evaluated**. **Meaning that more than 55% of the proposals were high level projects and were over thresholds.**

3.2.3 STEP 3: Normalisation

As in the first call, to maintain impartiality and consistency in the evaluation process, each proposal was evaluated by two independent reviewers without knowledge of each other's evaluations, to eliminate possible biases.

In addition, the same standardisation process, a mathematical procedure described in the guidelines for applicants (more information in D2.4), included several steps to ensure a balanced distribution of scores and reduce discrepancies or distortions between evaluators. Following this process, all proposals were ranked according to their standardised scores.

3.2.4 STEP 4: online interview

The process for the online interviews has been repeated in the second call as it was in the first one. This phase aimed to explore the project ideas in greater depth, while also assessing the skills and expertise of the team. Each interview was conducted by at least two external reviewers, alongside a consortium partner, to ensure that the startups aligned with the programme's objectives and to maintain an impartial evaluation process.

In the second call, a total of 28 projects that achieved the highest rankings during the remote evaluation were selected to participate in virtual interviews. And only 14 projects were finally selected.

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 programme. All applicants were informed about the outcomes of the evaluation through an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).

4. PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY

Building on the experience and lessons learned from the First EmpoWomen Open Call, a similar but **refined promotional strategy** was implemented to ensure the success of the Second Open Call. The approach maintained the core objective of reaching a diverse and extensive audience of women-led deep-tech startups across the targeted regions, while **incorporating improvements to further enhance visibility and engagement through a multi-faceted communication plan.**

4.1 Target Audience

Five main target audiences were reconfirmed, as they are the same as for the first open call (Figure 2. Target Audiences):

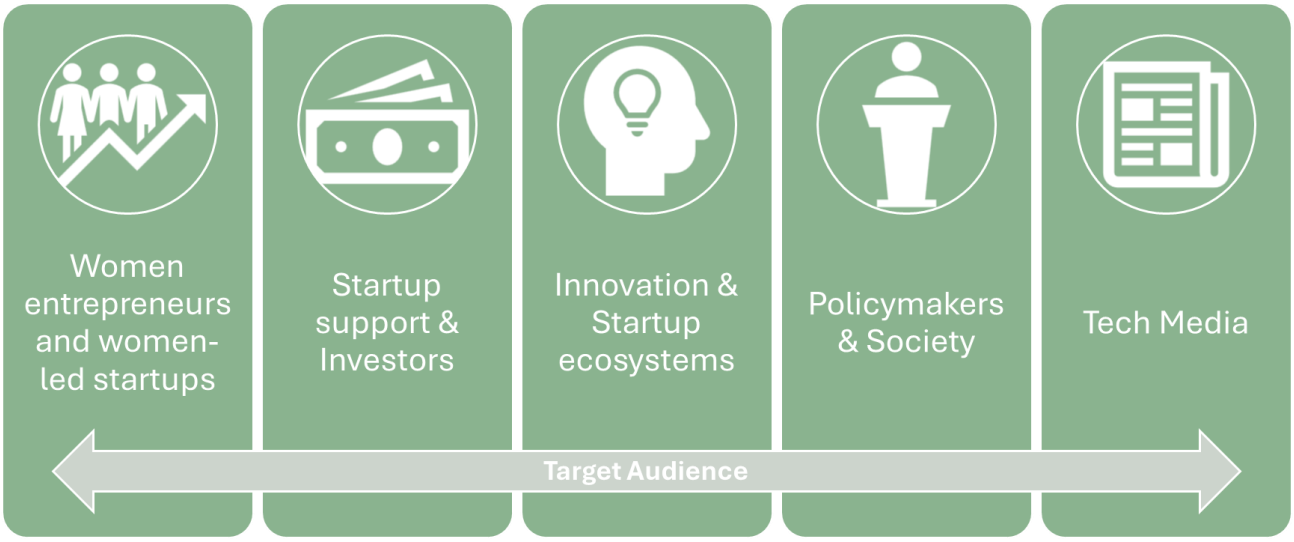


Figure 2. Target Audiences

1. **Women 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.

4.2 Tailored Messages

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

Table 5 Target Audiences & Key Messages

Women 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."*

4.3 Leveraging Consortium Networks & National Contact Points:

The extensive networks from the consortium partners were used again to amplify the reach of the 2nd Open Call. In this case, it was not as necessary as in Open Call 1, because **the startup ecosystem already knows about the project and the call.** Anyhow, the partners were using their social media, contacts and assistance to events to promote the second open call.

The associated partners and the NCPs supported in promoting the open call within their respective regions. During the Second Open Call the **main focus were the not reached countries**, so NCPs from these countries were given more attention.

4.4 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. During this period, **EmpoWomen partners attended 5 main events**:

Table 6. External events attended

Event Name	Date	Location	Purpose	Partner
SouthSummit 2024	June 5-7, 2024	Madrid, Spain	Project Dissemination	TECHUA
Valencia Digital Summit 2024	October 23-24, 2024	Valencia, Spain	Project Dissemination	TECHUA, SPLORO
WebSummit 2024	November 2024	Lisbon, Portugal	Startups Scouting	SPLORO
SLUSH	November 19-21, 2024	Helsinki, Finland	Project presentation & Promotion of the 2nd Open Call	SPLORO, SWG, TECHUA
EDIH Network Summit 2024	November 26-27, 2024	Brussles, Belgium	Project presentation and 2nd open call promotion	SPLORO

During these events, +900 printed flyers were distributed by the partners with information about the second open call.

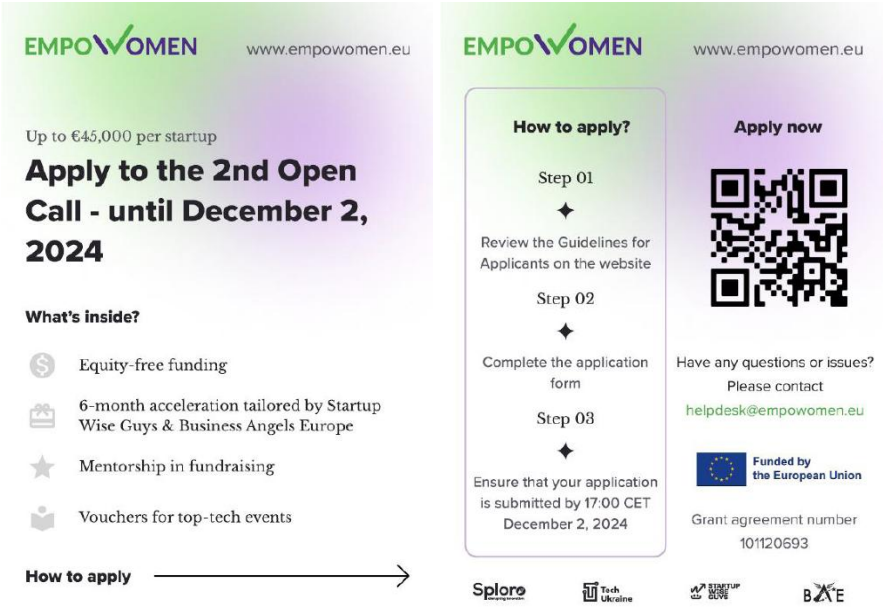


Figure 3. Flyer

4.5 Webinars and InfoDays

These events facilitated networking, provided visibility, and shared updates of the programme, success stories and insights directly with the target audience. But more details were needed to be spread, so **2 interactive online webinars and InfoDays 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.

Table 7 Info days and Webinars

#	NAME	DATE	LINK	BANNER
1	1st InfoDay organised by EmpoWomen team	17.10.2024	LINK	

#	NAME	DATE	LINK	BANNER
2	2nd InfoDay organised by EmpoWomen team	13.11.2024	LINK	

4.6 Media Outreach & Content Marketing

Following the same line of the first call, which worked excellently, a series of **informative publications, articles and blog posts with attractive visual elements were made,** in this case not so much to publicise the programme and its objectives, since the programme was already known by the ecosystem, but rather **to attract more startups and entities from the countries that were not attracted in the first call.**

The content used for quality communication and promotional campaigns included, among others, the following:

4.6.1 Social media campaigns

The social media to create engaging content were Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. During the open call promotion, relevant hashtags (#EmpoWomen, #women, #womenintech, #womenentrepreneurs, #deeptech) were used to maximize reach and encourage partners, influencers, and followers to share the posts.

The most efficient social network for the programme remains LinkedIn, which accounts, in March 2025, for 2.096 followers. Facebook page has 92 followers. Twitter count is 35 followers. And Instagram, last social media included 45 followers.

During the period of the second open call, from EmpoWomen social media, a total of 13 posts were made to promote the call on LinkedIn. The organic content engagement was between 1.704 and 225 impressions per post.

The total number of impressions on LinkedIn in the period of the second open call was 20.487, with the organic engagement rate 17,2. The total number of reactions to the publications – 495. Comments – 23. Reposts – 44.

Table 8 LinkedIn Posts

Post Date (MM-DD-YYYY)	Link	Impressions	Clicks
01.10.2024	LINK	1.704	130
04.10.2024	LINK	747	48
09.10.2024	LINK	645	30
11.10.2024	LINK	448	16
14.10.2024	LINK	1.129	483
16.10.2024	LINK	225	7
17.10.2024	LINK	608	29
25.10.2024	LINK	570	29
29.10.2024	LINK	1.538	57
08.11.2024	LINK	912	52
12.11.2024	LINK	300	15
29.11.2024	LINK	586	43
09.12.2024	LINK	1.404	104

As in the first open call, an important part was also the usage of the existing follower base of consortium partners (in total there are +67.600 LinkedIn, +13.000 Twitter, +67.000 Facebook, +6.000 Instagram), which allowed to scale and maximize the effect of social media campaigns

Figure 4. Examples of Social Media Visuals

4.6.2 Videos

Self-produced video teasing an announcement of the Second Open Call opening [LINK] and Second Open Call results [LINK].

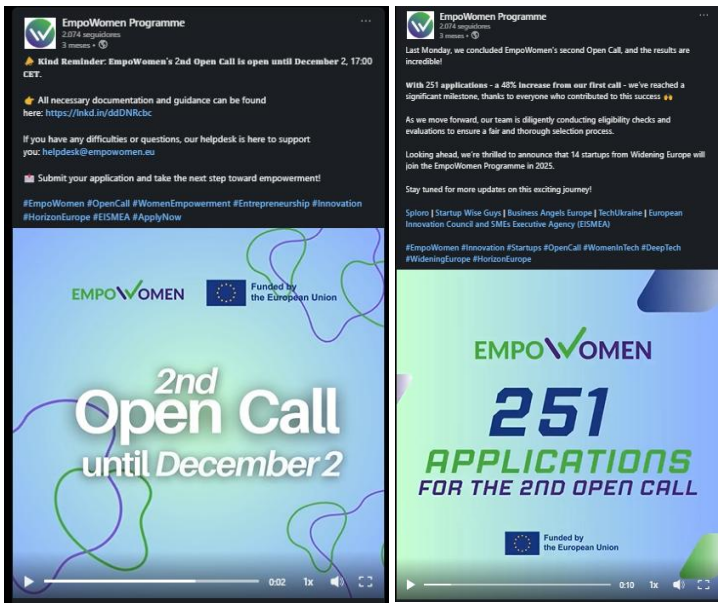


Figure 5. Videos

4.6.3 Blog-Posts, Newsletters and Press Releases

4.6.3.1 Website and Blog-posts

On the second call, two announcements were made on the website's blog. The first one informing about the opening of the call [LINK] and the second one about the results of the call once it was closed [LINK]. Subsequently, an article was published with the profiles of the 14 selected startups [LINK]. During this period (October 2024 - February 2025) there were 11K active users on the website, with 53s of average engagement time, and 43269 views. The most active was the period of the open call itself, as reflected on Figure 6. Traffic at the EmpoWomen website in M11-M13.

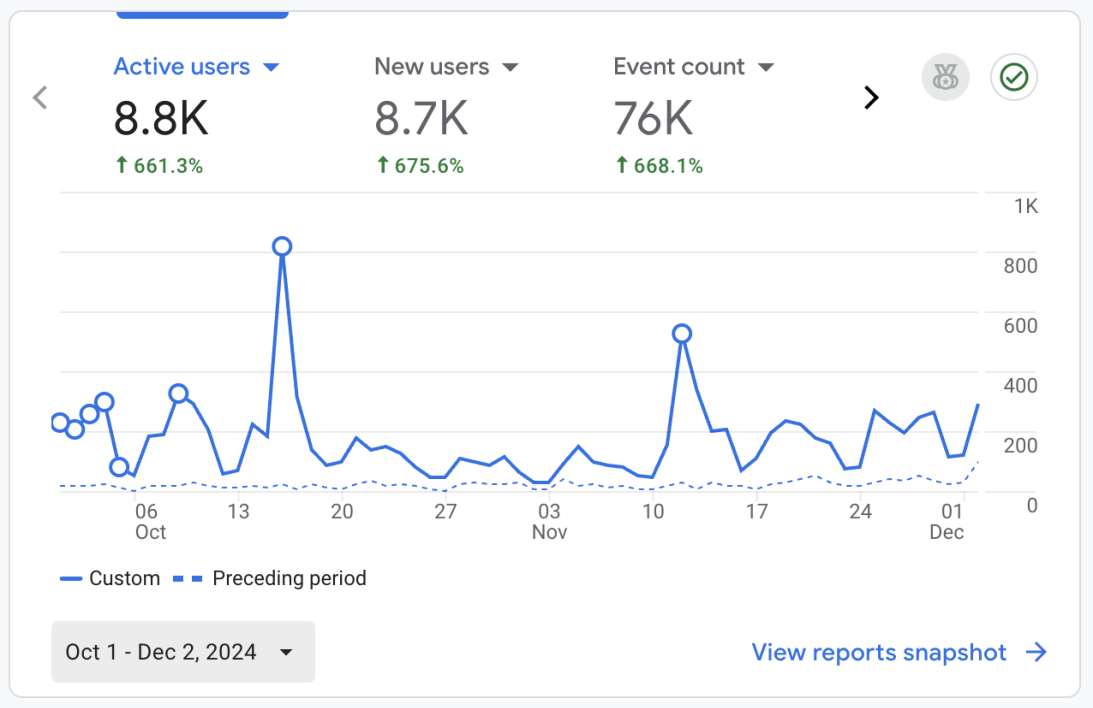


Figure 6. Traffic at the EmpoWomen website in M11-M13

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

Pages and screens: Page title and screen class — Custom Oct 1 - Dec 5, 2024

Total · Open Call & Programme Plan - EmpoWomen · Home - EmpoWomen · EmpoWomen's Official Press Release: The 2nd Open Call For Applicants - EmpoWomen · Startups - EmpoWomen

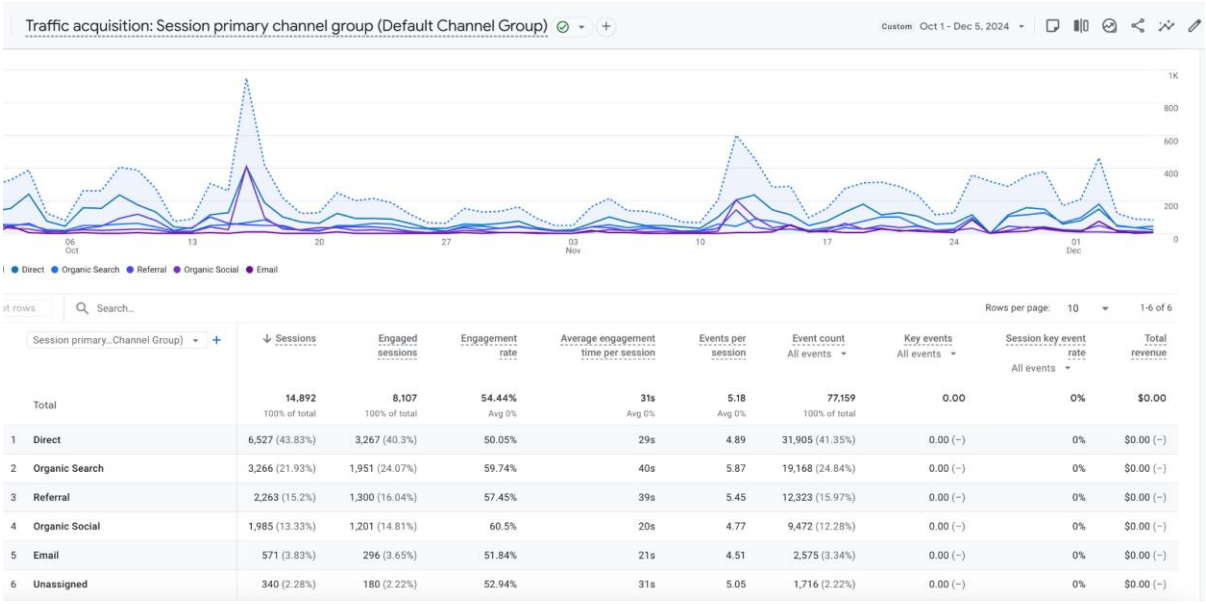
Plot rows · Search... · Rows per page: 10 · Go to

	Page title and screen class	Views	Active users	Views per active user	Average engagement time per active user	Event count All events
	Total	23,568 100% of total	8,926 100% of total	2.64 Avg 0%	53s Avg 0%	77,159 100% of total
1	Open Call & Programme Plan - EmpoWomen	10,974 (46.56%)	5,837 (65.39%)	1.88	29s	37,809 (49%)
2	Home - EmpoWomen	8,439 (35.81%)	5,046 (56.53%)	1.67	29s	26,703 (34.61%)
3	EmpoWomen's Official Press Release: The 2nd Open Call For Applicants - EmpoWomen	1,605 (6.81%)	1,075 (12.04%)	1.49	47s	4,064 (5.27%)
4	Startups - EmpoWomen	875 (3.71%)	670 (7.51%)	1.31	34s	2,432 (3.15%)
5	Consortium Partners - EmpoWomen	532 (2.26%)	415 (4.65%)	1.28	20s	1,322 (1.71%)
6	EmpoWomen Programme Launches 2nd Open Call for Evaluators - EmpoWomen	480 (2.04%)	324 (3.63%)	1.48	38s	1,295 (1.68%)
7	News - EmpoWomen	256 (1.09%)	176 (1.97%)	1.45	19s	646 (0.84%)
8	News - EmpoWomen - Page 2	54 (0.23%)	31 (0.35%)	1.74	28s	137 (0.18%)
9	Meet the First Cohort of EmpoWomen Programme - EmpoWomen	50 (0.21%)	31 (0.35%)	1.61	35s	169 (0.22%)
10	EmpoWomen Launches Open Call for Women Entrepreneurs in Widening Areas - EmpoWomen	41 (0.17%)	36 (0.4%)	1.14	28s	119 (0.15%)

Figure 7. Views by page at the EmpoWomen website in M11-M13

The majority of visitors came directly to the website www.empowomen.eu (6,527 visitors) or from the organic search (3,266). Referral links – 2,263. 1,985 from the social media links. Email campaign brought

571 visitors. These numbers prove that the brand became already recognized and the cumulative effect allowed more visitors from referral links or direct links or search.



Session primary...Channel Group)	Sessions	Engaged sessions	Engagement rate	Average engagement time per session	Events per session	Event count All events	Key events All events	Session key event rate All events	Total revenue
Total	14,892 100% of total	8,107 100% of total	54.44% Avg 0%	31s Avg 0%	5.18 Avg 0%	77,159 100% of total	0.00	0%	$0.00
1 Direct	6,527 (43.83%)	3,267 (40.3%)	50.05%	29s	4.89	31,905 (41.35%)	0.00 (–)	0%	$0.00 (–)
2 Organic Search	3,266 (21.93%)	1,951 (24.07%)	59.74%	40s	5.87	19,168 (24.84%)	0.00 (–)	0%	$0.00 (–)
3 Referral	2,263 (15.2%)	1,300 (16.04%)	57.45%	39s	5.45	12,323 (15.97%)	0.00 (–)	0%	$0.00 (–)
4 Organic Social	1,985 (13.33%)	1,201 (14.81%)	60.5%	20s	4.77	9,472 (12.28%)	0.00 (–)	0%	$0.00 (–)
5 Email	571 (3.83%)	296 (3.65%)	51.84%	21s	4.51	2,575 (3.34%)	0.00 (–)	0%	$0.00 (–)
6 Unassigned	340 (2.28%)	180 (2.22%)	52.94%	31s	5.05	1,716 (2.22%)	0.00 (–)	0%	$0.00 (–)

Figure 8. Website traffic acquisition at the EmpoWomen website in M11-M13

In the second open call **the country coverage went beyond the initial objective to spread the word in the countries of widening areas of the EU.** The website analytics shows that the website visitors came from **126 countries**, which has a very positive impact on spreading the main message of the project - that women are able and have support in starting their own projects, even in such areas as deep tech. The diagram below shows the full list of the countries that were reached by the communication efforts of the project team (Figure 9. List of countries and Figure 10. Number of visitors per country (20+)). The biggest numbers are mainly in our target areas, though there was also interest from big tech hubs like the United States or more

Türkiye	Spain	Portugal	Poland	Netherlands	Germany
United States	Greece	Bosnia & Herzegovina	Italy	United Kingdom	Albania
Romania	France	Serbia	Finland	Latvia	Ireland
Bulgaria	Belgium	Slovenia	Austria	Croatia	Moldova
Sweden	Ukraine	Czechia	North Macedonia	Hungary	Lithuania
Tunisia	Estonia	Armenia	Georgia	Norway	Switzerland
India	Denmark	Cyprus	Slovakia	Egypt	Malta
Montenegro	Luxembourg	Russia	Indonesia	Israel	Mayotte
Senegal	Australia	Nigeria	Philippines	Canada	Kosovo
Réunion	Colombia	Japan	South Africa	United Arab Emirates	Belarus
Mexico	(not set)	Brazil	Jordan	Morocco	Saudi Arabia
Azerbaijan	Ghana	Iceland	Kazakhstan	Kenya	Panama
Malaysia	Uganda	Argentina	Chile	China	Nepal
Singapore	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Côte d'Ivoire	Kyrgyzstan	Monaco
New Zealand	Pakistan	Algeria	Andorra	Benin	Eswatini
Ethiopia	Iran	Malawi	Mauritania	Peru	Qatar
St. Martin	Tanzania	Thailand	Zimbabwe	Belize	Botswana
Cameroon	Cape Verde	Congo - Kinshasa	Costa Rica	Dominican Republic	ElSalvador
Faroe Islands	Guadeloupe	Guatemala	Hong Kong	Jamaica	Kuwait
Lesotho	Macao	Madagascar	Maldives	Mali	Mauritius
Mozambique	Taiwan	Togo	Uzbekistan	Vietnam	Ecuador

Figure 9. List of countries

established EU countries.

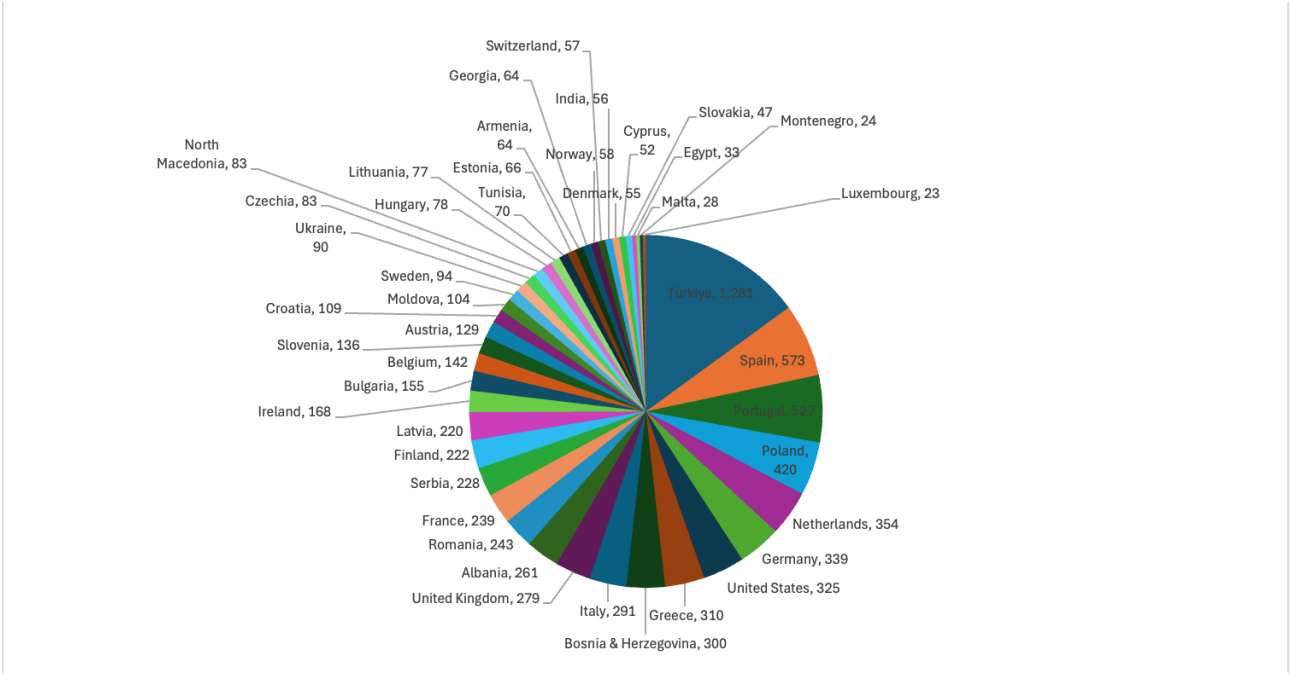


Figure 10. Number of visitors per country (20+)

The success of these communication efforts was also due to usage of recognizable colours and branding, which allowed to easily distinguish the project communication from other announcements and made the brand easy to remember and follow the updates over time.

Figure 11. Blog Post

4.6.3.2 NEWSLETTERS

Since in the first open call the newsletter mailings proved to be not so effective, as other channels, there were fewer newsletters sent, with the main focus on other channels, bringing more visitors and attention. Project partners shared the following newsletters promoting EmpoWomen Programme in the period analysed.

Table 9. Newsletters Distributed

MAIL TITTLE	DATE	PARTNER	INFO	EMAILS SENT	OPENS	CLICKS
New cascade funding opportunity: EmpoWomen	01.10.2024	SPL	New Open Call Alert!	821	327	100
EmpoWomen Open Call 2 Now Open – Apply Now!	03.10.2024	SPL	We are thrilled to announce that the EmpoWomen Open Call 2 is now officially open for applications!	373	176	125
EmpoWomen InfoDay – Register Now!	16.10.2024	SPL	We are excited to invite you to the EmpoWomen Info Day, tomorrow 17 October at 12:00 CEST!	366	169	55
EmpoWomen InfoDay – Materials	21.10.2024	SPL	Thank you for attending the EmpoWomen OC2 infoday! Materials shared: Presentation and Video recording of the session	629	349	199
EmpoWomen 2nd InfoDay – The Programme	29.10.2024	SPL	Do you want to know everything about the EmpoWomen support programme and services?	625	265	88

As a part of official communication, the EmpoWomen project sent one newsletter on the 7th of December 2024 to 491 recipients, where it shared the success of 11 startups of the first cohort at their Demo Day at Slush and announced the resulting number of applications of the second open call.

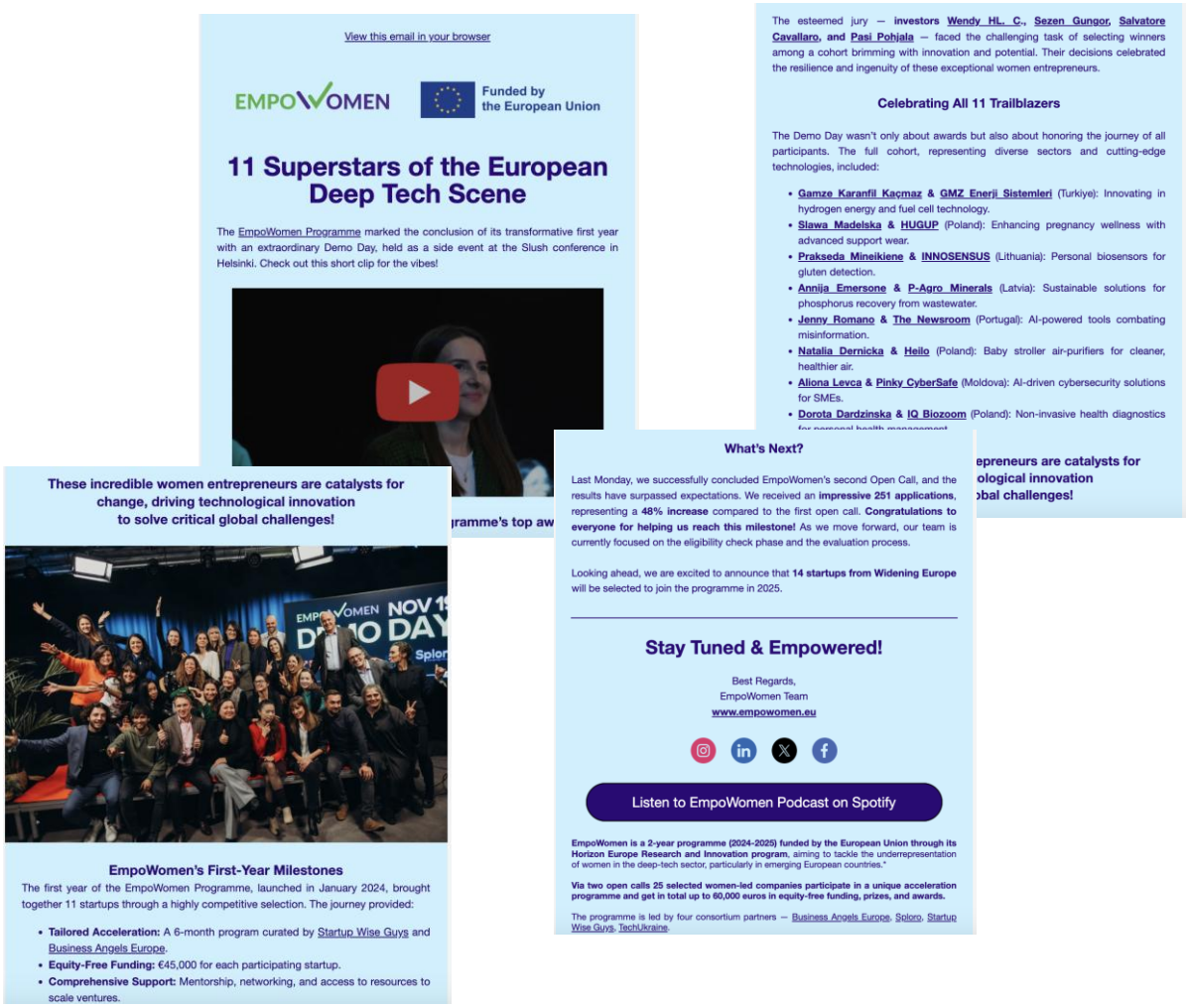


Figure 12. Empowomen Newsletter

The newsletter has quite a high open and click rate (38.7% and 4.5%), which shows the audience is genuinely interested in the project related announcements. Overall statistics of the EmpoWomen Newsletter#4 are included in Figure 13. Empowomen Newsletter #4:

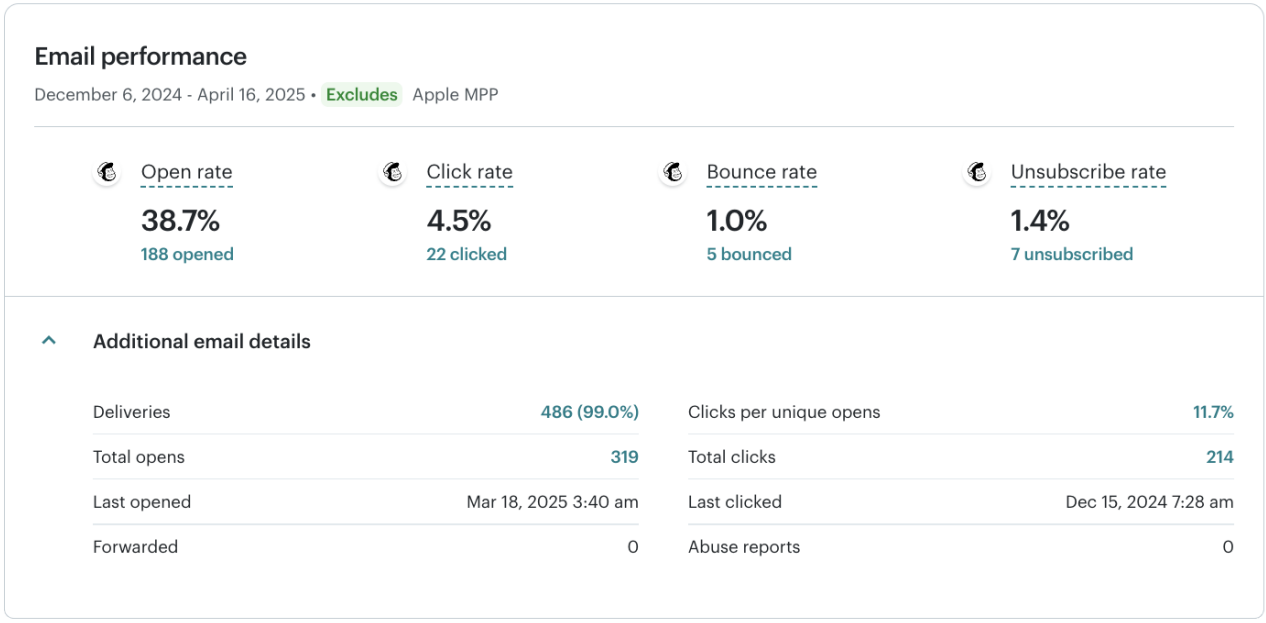


Figure 13. Empowomen Newsletter #4

4.6.3.3 PRESS-RELEASES

In the Second Open Call period, two press releases, announcing the start of the second open call and announcing the results, were sent to the relevant EU and national media platforms, to associated partners and a network of organizations and contacts in the widening areas, whom we reached specifically to ensure bigger coverage in our focus regions.

As a result, 46 articles mentioning EmpoWomen project were published, including media platforms of the EU projects such as EEN, NCPs, National innovation agencies and local EU platforms of such countries as Spain, Serbia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia, Portugal, Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary. The table below outlines the results achieved.

Table 10. Publications about the project

#	NAME	DATE	LINK	ORGANISATION TYPE	COVERAGE
1	Business Angels Europe	19.09.2024	LINK	Project Partner	EU
2	EEN Canarias	01.10.2024	LINK	EEN	Spain
3	Sploro	01.10.2024	LINK	Project Partner	EU
4	EU Funding & Tenders Portal	01.10.2024	LINK	European Commission	EU
5	EU Grants and Funding	01.10.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	EU
6	The Internet of Things	01.10.2024	LINK	Media	EU
7	Invest Sofia	01.10.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Bulgaria
8	EU Mogucnosti Sebia	01.10.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Serbia

#	NAME	DATE	LINK	ORGANISATION TYPE	COVERAGE
9	IAKOB GOGEBASHVILI TELAVI STATE UNIVERSITY Georgia	01.10.2024	LINK	Innovation Agency	Georgia
10	NCBR Poland	02.10.2024	LINK	Innovation Agency	Poland
11	EEN Czech Republic	02.10.2024	LINK	EEN	Czech Republic
12	Business.gov.lv	02.10.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Latvia
13	ANI - Agência Nacional de Inovação Portugal	03.10.2024	LINK	Innovation Agency	Portugal
14	Joint Innovation Centre of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences	03.10.2024	LINK	Innovation Agency	Bulgaria
15	PRAXI Network	03.10.2024	LINK	Innovation Agency	Greece
16	Mreza Mira Sarajevo	05.10.2024	LINK	Business Association	Bosnia and Herzegovina
17	Snaga lokalnog	05.10.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Bosnia and Herzegovina
18	SPIRIT Slovenia	06.10.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Slovenia
19	TechUkraine	07.10.2024	LINK	Project Partner	EU
20	TechUkraine	07.10.2024	LINK	Project Partner	EU
21	Enterprise Europe Network Croatia	08.10.2024	LINK	EEN	Croatia
22	Ab Ilan Turkiye	09.10.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Türkiye
23	Cascadefunding.eu	09.10.2024	LINK	Innovation Agency	EU
24	Horizon Europe Georgia	09.10.2024	LINK	NCP	Georgia
25	IAKOB GOGEBASHVILI TELAVI STATE UNIVERSITY	09.10.2024	LINK	University	Georgia
26	AgriVentures	10.10.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Bulgaria
27	Vedavyzkum Czech Republic	11.10.2024	LINK	Media	Czech Republic
28	EEN Slovakia	11.10.2024	LINK	EEN	Slovakia
29	ZEDA AGENCY	11.10.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Bosnia and Herzegovina
30	THE MECHATRONICS AND AUTOMATION CLUSTER	12.10.2024	LINK	Association	Bulgaria

#	NAME	DATE	LINK	ORGANISATION TYPE	COVERAGE
31	Ufuk Uvrupa	17.10.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Türkiye
32	Norgarante.pt	22.10.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Portugal
33	Eurocid Portugal	22.10.2024	LINK	Innovation Agency	Portugal
34	RISMSK Czech Republic	22.10.2024	LINK	Innovation Agency	Czech Republic
35	Agritech Magazine Moje Selo Bosnia and Herzegovina	31.10.2024	LINK	Media	Bosnia and Herzegovina
36	Mind Machines	01.11.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Türkiye
37	ITKey Media	07.11.2024	LINK	Media	EU
38	EEN Hungary	08.11.2024	LINK	EEN	Hungary
39	EEN Portugal	15.11.2024	LINK	EEN	Portugal
40	Innovation Fund	18.11.2024	LINK	Innovation Agency	Serbia
41	Inkubator Sezana Slovenia	19.11.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Slovenia
42	Startups & The City. eu	21.11.2024	LINK	Media	EU
43	Ukrainian Hub	21.11.2024	LINK	Business Support Organization	Ukraine
44	Ukrainian Startup Association	26.11.2024	LINK	Association	Ukraine
45	TechUkraine	30.11.2024	LINK	Project Partner	EU
46	Bankable Wisdom	03.12.2024	LINK	Workforce Development Agency	Africa

5. STATISTICS AND FINDINGS

If the first open call garnered significant attention and participation from women-led deep-tech startups across Europe, it can be said that **the second open call exceeded expectations, as it increased the number of applications opened in the funnel by almost 50%.** This section provides a detailed overview of the response to the open call and compares it with the results of the first call, presents key statistics and analyses the results.

5.1 Submission Progress

As in the previous call, a daily study of the status of the proposals submitted throughout the call period has been carried out. From October 1st to December 2nd, the trends of the applicants have been analysed. What can be seen in Figure 14. Submission Progress is that the number of applications uploaded seemed to be similar throughout the period, but in the last week there was a spike in submissions and the project's own record of applications received was broken.

This pattern has been followed in both calls. A lower number of proposals at the beginning and a peak as the deadline approaches. This suggests that the dynamics remain the same within the applicant pool. There is a first group of participants working from the early stages of the open call period and an increase in submissions from procrastinators as the deadline approached. Moreover, in this open call, submissions have remained very consistent, which gives an indication that interest in the programme has not been lost among potential applicants. In fact, **the number of applications received from one call to the next has increased by 48%.**

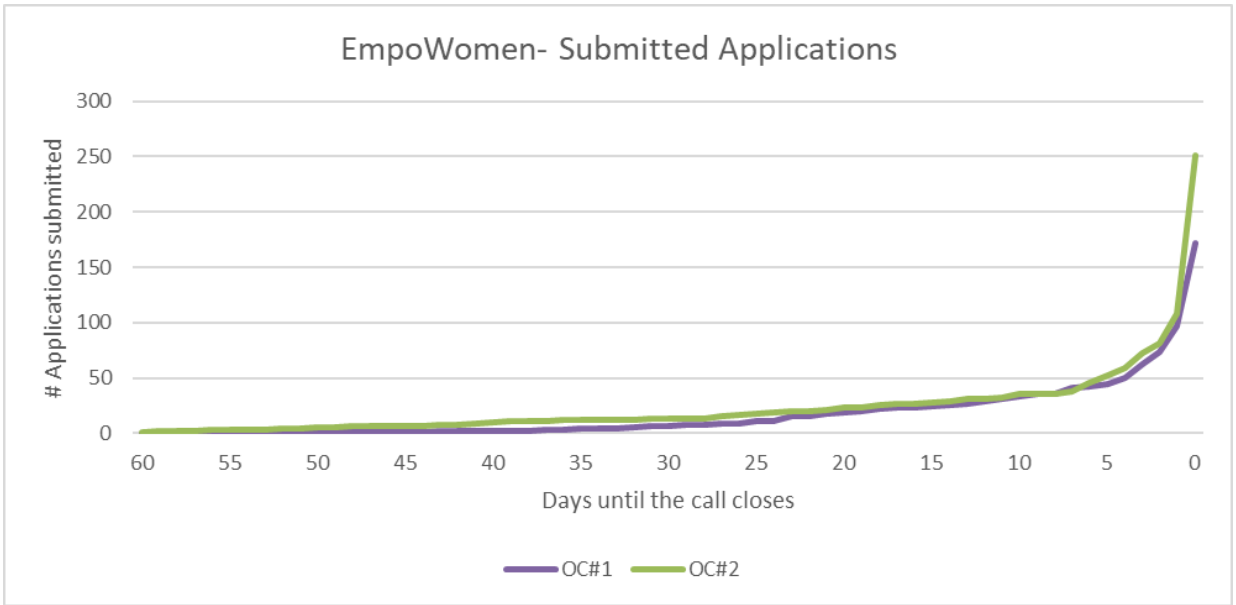


Figure 14. Submission Progress

5.2 Total Applications per Country

The Second EmpoWomen Open Call built on the momentum of the first, receiving a higher number of applications compared to the First Open Call submissions. This increase highlights a growing awareness and interest among women-led deep-tech startups in widening area countries. While certain regions continued to show strong engagement, others still exhibited lower participation, emphasizing the need for more targeted promotional efforts. The comparative analysis between the two calls reveals notable shifts in regional involvement, offering valuable insights into the evolving engagement of women-led deep-tech startups across widening area countries, outermost regions, and associated countries, check Figure 15. Applications per country. The second open call saw an increase in total applications, suggesting a growing awareness of the initiative and potentially more effective outreach strategies. However, the distribution of submissions remained uneven, with some countries demonstrating significant growth in participation while others continued to lag behind.

In particular, countries that had strong participation in the first call generally maintained or increased their numbers in the second, indicating sustained interest and a solidified ecosystem of applicants. Conversely, regions with lower engagement in the first call showed mixed results—some benefited from improved outreach, while others continued to struggle with low submission rates.

A closer look at the widening area countries reveals a varied response, with some nations experiencing a sharp rise in applications, possibly due to targeted promotional efforts or increased awareness of the funding opportunities. Similarly, outermost regions and associated countries exhibited diverse trends, with certain areas showing progress while others remained underrepresented. These patterns suggest that while overall participation has improved, further strategic efforts are needed to ensure a more balanced distribution of applications across all target regions.

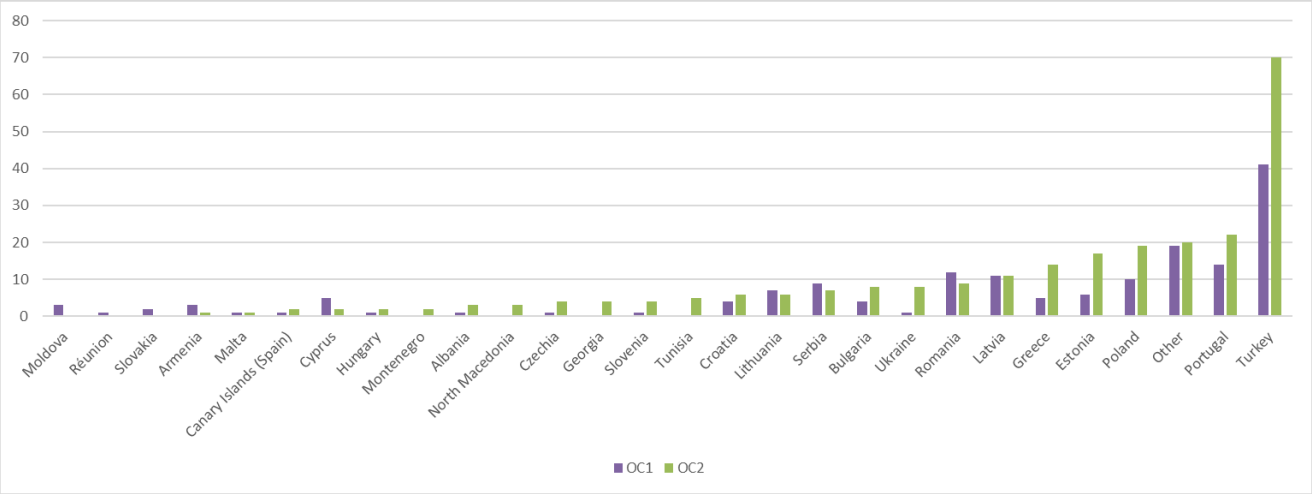


Figure 15. Applications per country

5.2.1 Analysis By Widening Area Countries/Regions

The response from **widening area countries**[1] in the Second Open Call showed an overall increase in engagement, reinforcing the positive momentum observed in the first call. This time, startups from **14/15 countries submitted applications**, marking an **improvement over the first call** (13/15), where Czechia and Slovakia did not participate. Check Figure 16. Widening Area Region Analysis.

Portugal maintained its strong position as one of the leading contributors, with an even higher number of applications compared to the previous round. Poland and Estonia also saw growth in submissions, further demonstrating the expanding reach of the initiative. Similarly, Greece and Latvia exhibited notable increases, indicating stronger awareness and participation in these regions.

While the overall number of applications from widening area countries increased, some nations, such as Hungary and Cyprus, showed only marginal growth, suggesting that additional targeted outreach may be needed to further boost engagement in these areas. Malta, despite its small size, continued to participate, though at a relatively low level.

In total, the widening area countries contributed a larger share of applications than in the first call, reflecting both the success of promotional efforts and a growing interest in deep-tech entrepreneurship among women in these regions. The increasing diversity in participation underscores the importance of sustaining and refining outreach strategies to ensure broader and more balanced representation across all targeted nations.

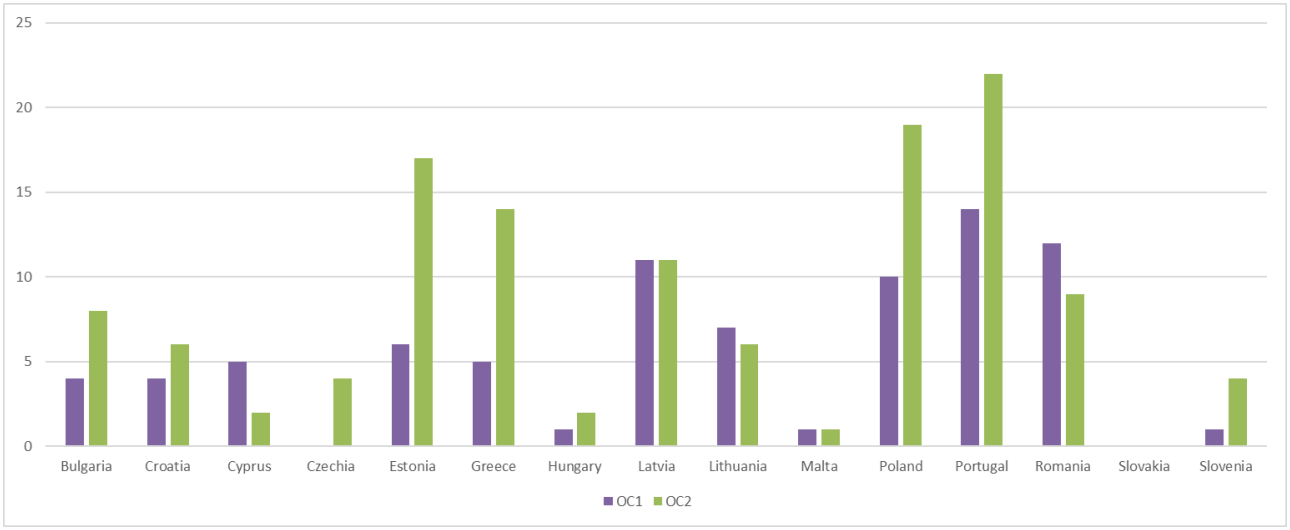


Figure 16. Widening Area Region Analysis

[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 in the first open call. In the Second Open Call, while the participation of Réunion remained at zero applications submitted, the Canary Islands showed a positive evolution, doubling their submissions from one to two. This increase may suggest that the enhanced communication strategies and tailored support structures implemented in the Second Open Cal had a modest but positive impact, particularly in regions where local partners such as the "Asociación Canaria de Startups Empresas de Base Tecnológica e Inversores Ángeles" were actively involved (Figure 17. Outermost Regions Analysis).

However, the overall participation from Outermost Regions remains low, with only a slight improvement between calls. This highlights the continued presence of structural or perception-related barriers that hinder engagement. The bad response from Réunion, in particular, underscores the need for more region-specific actions to address local challenges.

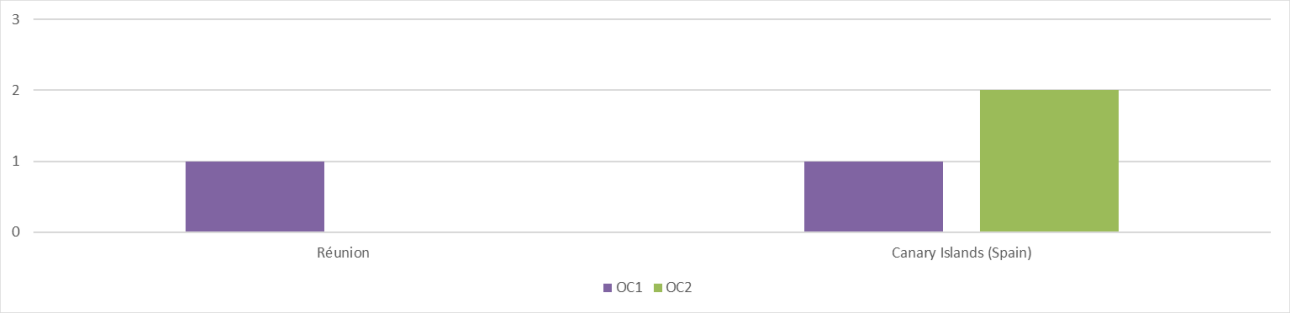


Figure 17. Outermost Regions Analysis

5.2.3 Analysis By Associated Countries

In this Second Open Call, Türkiye maintained its position as the leading contributor, increasing its already impressive number of applications from approximately 45 in OC1 to 70 in OC2. This sharp rise underscores Türkiye's sustained and growing interest in the programme and its strong entrepreneurial presence in the deep-tech ecosystem.

Serbia and Ukraine, which had shown promising engagement in OC1 with 7 and 8 applications respectively, presented a mixed pattern in OC2. Serbia saw a slight decline, whereas Ukraine more than doubled its submissions, reflecting a significant growth in interest and possible improvements in outreach or programme visibility in the country.

[2] Outermost Regions: Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Réunion, Martinique, Mayotte and Saint Martin (France), Canary Islands (Spain).

Other countries such as maintained a consistent level of participation such as Albania, Serbia and Georia, while Armenia and Moldova recorded minor fluctuations. Though their individual numbers remained modest, collectively these countries continued to demonstrate engagement and potential.

Overall, the data from OC2 confirms a strengthening trend of participation from Associated Countries, with Türkiye leading by a wide margin and other countries showing either steady or increasing interest, check Figure 18. Associated Countries Analysis. These results suggest that continued engagement efforts and tailored support in these regions are having a positive impact, and further investment in outreach could help unlock even more potential among early-stage innovators across Associated Countries.

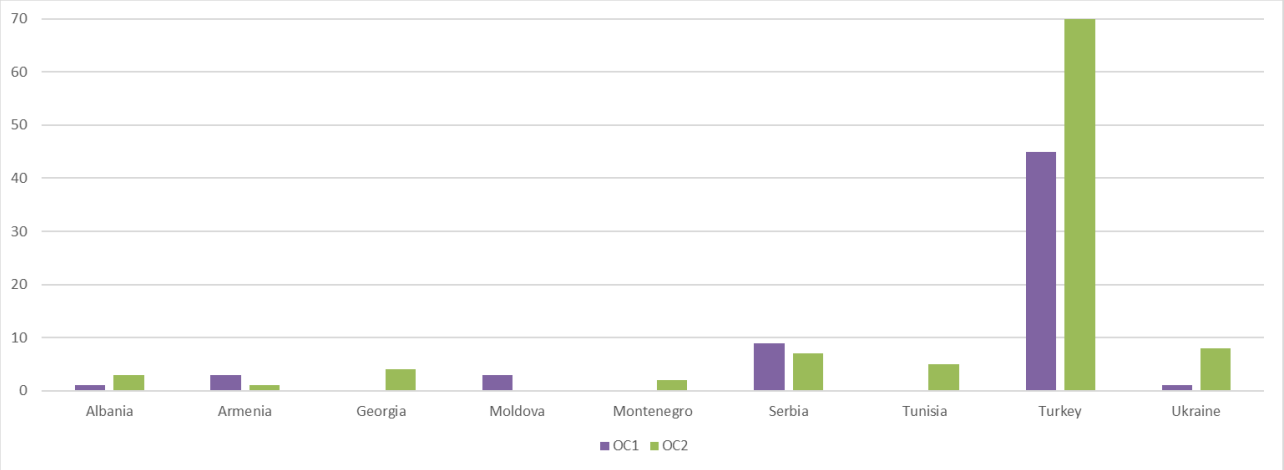


Figure 18. Associated Countries Analysis

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 equity or public 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.

The EmpoWomen project addresses the need of the women-led deep-tech startups from widening countries by offering tailored assistance to early-stage ventures. These startups should be classified as SMEs and have been active for no more than six years and have secured limited funding (up to EUR 1 million). This section presents an in-depth overview of the applications received and the profile of the startups that were interested in the EmpoWomen's Open Calls.

5.3.1 Technology Focus

The applications received across both open calls demonstrate the EmpoWomen programme's ability to attract startups from a wide spectrum of deep-tech fields (Figure 19. Technology Focus Stats).

In the Second Open Call, the most prominent area by far was **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML)**, with over 150 applications, showing a significant increase from OC1, where also was the most common technology. This surge indicates growing interest and development in AI-driven innovation among women-led startups.

Biotechnology and Life Sciences also experienced a notable rise, positioning itself as the second most represented domain, followed by **Sustainable Energy and Clean Technologies**, which maintained strong relevance in both calls.

Other sectors such as Cyb**ersecurity and Data Protection, Advanced Manufacturing, and Advanced Materials** remained stable in their representation, suggesting consistent interest in these areas. Fields like **VR/AR/Metaverse, Web 3.0, and Robotics** showed modest growth, reflecting emerging trends and the expanding range of technologies embraced by applicants. The participation in **Semiconductors, Electronics and Photonics, and Aerospace/Automotive and Remote Sensing** also increased slightly in OC2, indicating broader engagement across high-tech verticals.

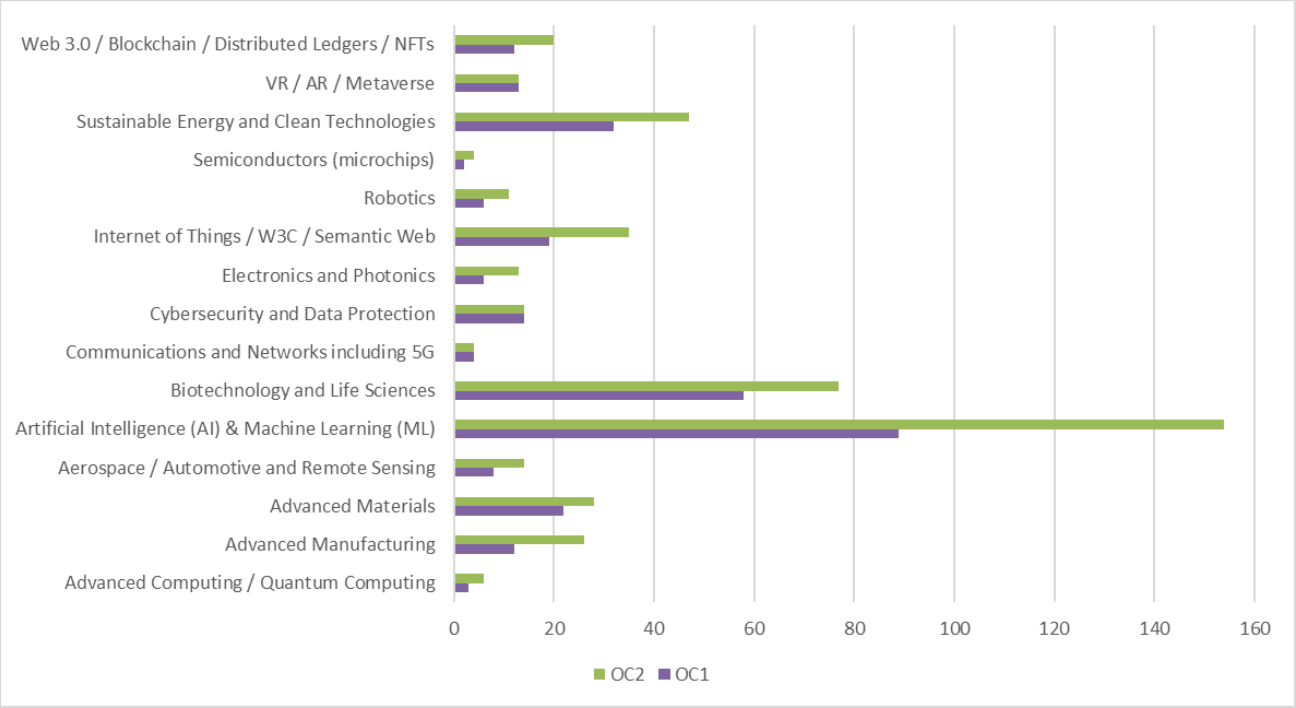


Figure 19. Technology Focus Stats

5.3.2 Year of Foundation

The Figure 20. Year of Foundation Stats confirms that both Open Calls primarily attracted early-stage startups, aligning with the programme's objectives**. In OC2, the concentration of applications from startups founded in the last few years is even more pronounced**, with the highest number of submissions coming from 2023 and 2024. Startups founded in 2023 alone made up the largest share, followed closely by those established in 2024, underscoring the project's strong appeal to the most recent entrepreneurial initiatives.

OC1 also showed a similar trend, with most applications coming from startups founded between 2020 and 2023, but with slightly lower numbers for each year compared to OC2. The consistent growth in application numbers from recent years—particularly from 2020 onwards—confirms that the majority of applicants fit the early-stage profile, as defined by the programme's criteria (founded within the last six years).

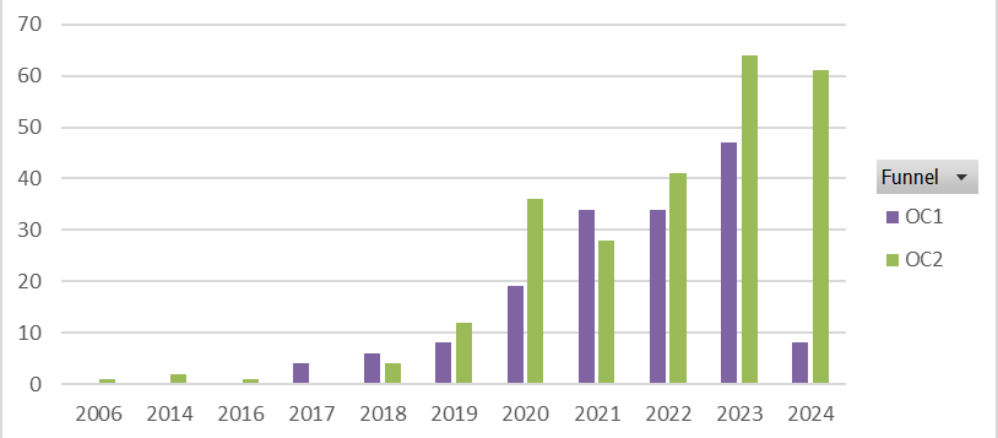


Figure 20. Year of Foundation Stats

5.3.3 Number of Employees

The Figure 21. Size of the company stats highlights that the **vast majority of applicants in both open calls are small teams,** reinforcing the early-stage profile of the startups targeted by the EmpoWomen programme.

In OC2, the trend is even more pronounced, with the highest number of applications coming from startups with only one employee, followed by those with 2 to 4 employees. This surge in micro-teams—particularly solo founders—demonstrates the programme's reach among the very early stages of startup development.

Altogether, **startups with 6 or fewer employees represented the majority in both calls,** showing that the initiative is successfully attracting nascent ventures that could benefit the most from structured support. The presence of many one- or two-person teams in OC2 particularly underlines the importance of EmpoWomen's resources, mentoring, and financial assistance in helping these startups scale and stabilize during their formative years.

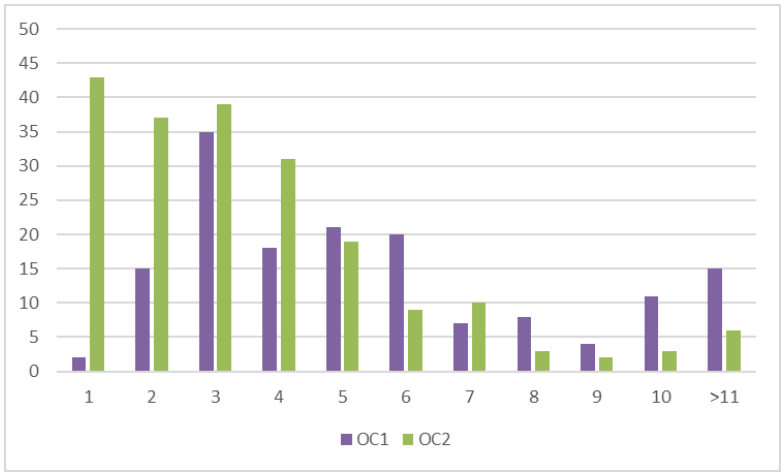


Figure 21. Size of the company stats

5.3.4 TRL Level

For the Second Open Call, there was a clear increase in submissions at **TRL4 or lower**, which reached over 100 applications—nearly doubling the corresponding figure in OC1, check Figure 22. TRL Stats.

Applications at **TRL5 and TRL6** also saw noticeable growth in OC2, reflecting a growing cohort of startups progressing toward validation and demonstration stages. Conversely, submissions at **TRL7** dropped compared to OC1, while **TRL8 and TRL9** remained relatively low across both calls—indicating that only a small percentage of applicants are nearing full commercialization.

Overall, these results confirm that **most applicants are at TRL6 or below**, consistent with the programme's mission to support early-stage, deep-tech innovations. The increased volume of lower-TRL applications in OC2 also suggests that awareness about EmpoWomen has expanded among startups that are still in formative stages, further validating the initiative's outreach and positioning.

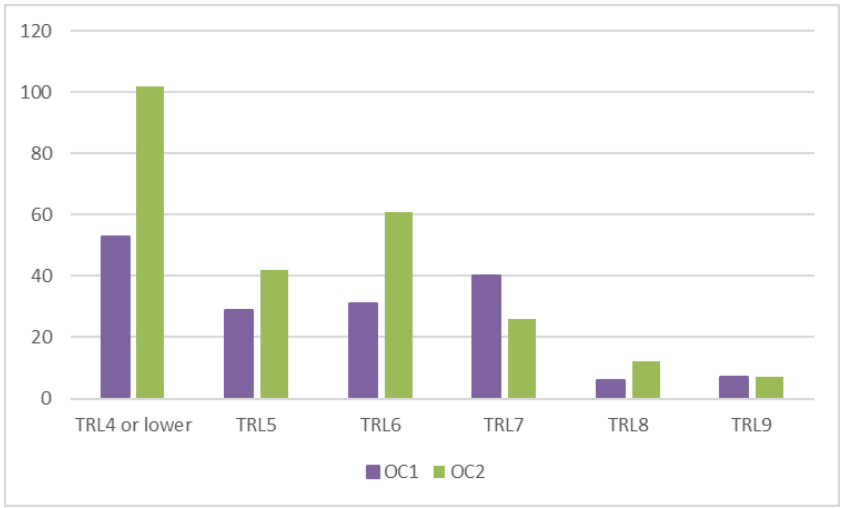


Figure 22. TRL Stats

5.4 Applicants vs Selected Companies[3]

5.4.1 Countries

Whit more than 250 applications received, it is clear that the pool of applicants is more diverse than in the first open call, and different profiles were submitted. Once again, the highest numbers come from Türkiye and Portugal, followed close from Poland and Estonia. This widespread interest indicates effective dissemination strategies during the open call, resulting in a broad range of applications from different locations.

In the first round, startups from 23 countries submitted applications, with Türkiye (42), Portugal (14), Romania (12), Latvia (12), and Poland (10) being the most represented. However, among the 11 selected startups, four came from Poland, three from Portugal, and one each from Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, and Türkiye.

This means that **Poland and Portugal alone accounted for more than 63% of the selected startups during Open Call 1,** despite not being the highest in terms of applicant numbers (Türkiye and Romania had more applications). Romania, for example, with 12 applications, had no startups selected, while Moldova, with only 3 applications, had one selected. This suggests that startups from Poland and Portugal may benefit from stronger ecosystems, more experience with international funding processes, or better readiness levels, which give them a competitive edge in the selection process.

In the second round, the pool of applicants expanded to 25 countries, with Türkiye (70), Portugal (22), Poland (19), Estonia (17), and Greece (14) submitting the most applications. Nevertheless, the 14 selected startups were heavily concentrated in just a few countries: Portugal (4), Türkiye (2), Estonia (2), and one each from Armenia, Greece, Slovenia, Poland, Serbia, and Latvia.

Again, Portugal emerged as a top performer, making up nearly 30% of the selected startups, despite being only the third in terms of total applicants. Türkiye, while having the highest number of applicants by far (70), had just two startups selected, reinforcing the pattern of underrepresentation despite strong interest. Romania, again with a high number of applicants (9), saw no selections.

[3] A summary of the selected companies is available in the **Annexes.**

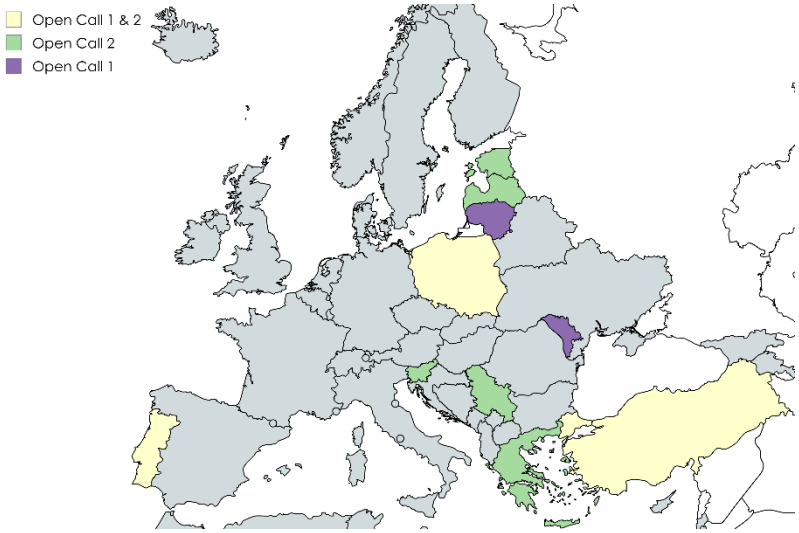


Figure 23. Map of countries from selected teams in both open calls

Across both calls, the data illustrates a consistent trend (check Figure 23. Map of countries from selected teams in both open calls): certain countries (notably Portugal and Poland) are significantly more successful in translating applications into selections. This may be attributed to more mature startup ecosystems, better preparation for EU-level competitions or greater familiarity with deep tech innovation standards.

Conversely, the underrepresentation of countries, despite their high participation, signals potential systemic gaps—be it in proposal development, access to mentoring, or innovation ecosystem support. These countries could benefit from capacity-building measures, tailored training, and ecosystem strengthening to improve their competitiveness in future calls.

5.4.2 Startup Profile

5.4.2.1 Deep-tech Technology

The deep-tech focus of the selected startups in the Second EmpoWomen Open Call shows a clear concentration in just a few areas. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Machine Learning (ML) and Biotechnology and Life Sciences** dominate, appearing in over 70% and 65% of the selected applications, respectively. Other eligible technologies—like **Robotics, Cybersecurity, or Quantum Computing**—were barely represented or absent altogether.

From the first Open Call, the most frequently selected technologies among applicants were also led by **AI & ML**, followed by **Biotech**, **IoT**, **Blockchain**, and **CleanTech**. While the selection trends mirror this to an extent, **AI clearly outpaces all other fields in terms of success rate**, suggesting a competitive advantage for startups operating in this space.

5.4.2.2 Year of Foundation

The founding years of the 14 selected startups in the Second EmpoWomen Open Call reveal significant insights into the stage of development targeted by our programme. The majority were founded in **2023 (5 startups) and 2022 (4 startups)**, with only a few from **2020 (3 startups), 2021 (1 startup), and 2024 (1 startup).**

This pattern suggests that the programme is effectively reaching and supporting **early-stage ventures**, aligning with its mission to empower emerging women-led startups in deep tech. It also indicates that **recency is not a barrier to success**—startups as new as 2024 were successful—provided they demonstrate innovation potential and alignment with the programme's goals. In fact, **over 64% of selected startups were founded in the last two years**, compared to only around 36% of all applicants during the same period.

5.4.2.3 Employees

The distribution of startup team sizes in both EmpoWomen Open Calls underscores the programme's strong focus on **small-scale ventures.**

In OC2, the trend is especially clear: the highest number of applications came from startups with only one employee, followed by those with **2 to 4 employees**. This surge in **micro-teams—particularly solo founders—demonstrates the programme's reach into the earliest phases of startup development**. Over **60% of applicants** had teams of **four people or fewer**, reinforcing this point.

This means that nearly **80% of selected startups had four or fewer employees**, confirming that EmpoWomen is effectively supporting micro-teams and nascent founders—those most in need of mentorship, visibility, and financial assistance. It also highlights the importance of continued investment in early-stage ecosystem support to help these startups grow and scale sustainably.

5.4.2.4 TRL

While applicants were distributed across the full TRL spectrum—from TRL 1 to TRL 6—the majority of selected startups were at **TRL 5 (36%) and TRL 6 (21%),** indicating that many of the selected teams had already validated or demonstrated their technologies in relevant environments. Lower TRL levels, such as **TRL 1 and TRL 2**, were represented in the applicant pool but rarely among the selected projects.

This distribution suggests that proposals from startups at TRL 5–6 may have more clearly communicated their technical maturity and readiness for acceleration. However, the presence of startups at **TRL 2 and TRL 3** among the selected cohort also shows that early-stage innovation was considered when aligned with the programme's objectives.

6. OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

The **Second Open Call of the EmpoWomen programme marked a significant milestone in the project's impact journey**, delivering both quantitative and qualitative outcomes that underscore the programme's relevance, reach, and effectiveness.

- **Increased Participation**: A total of **251 applications were formally submitted from 29 eligible countries**, representing a **48% increase in submissions** compared to the First Open Call. This growth indicates growing awareness and trust in the EmpoWomen initiative across widening and associated countries.
- **Wider Geographical Reach**: The call attracted **applicants from more countries**, with notable increases in engagement from Türkiye, Portugal, Poland, Estonia, and Greece. Widening countries like Czechia and Slovakia, which had no participation in the first call, submitted proposals in OC2, **improving regional representation**.
- **Diverse Technological Focus**: The 14 selected startups demonstrated strong innovation potential in deep-tech domains such as Artificial Intelligence, Biotechnology, CleanTech, Advanced Materials, and Sustainable Manufacturing—confirming the **programme's ability to attract cutting-edge initiatives**.
- **Enhanced Visibility in Underrepresented Regions:** Tailored communication strategies and targeted outreach (particularly in countries underrepresented in the first call) led to improved participation from previously unreached or minimally engaged countries and outermost regions (e.g., Canary Islands).
- **Cross-Sector Innovation:** The programme has fostered cross-sector innovation, with selected startups operating in **Healthtech, climatetech, advanced manufacturing, and maritime technologies, reinforcing the broad applicability of deep-tech across industries**.

The Second Open Call reaffirms **EmpoWomen's pivotal role in identifying, empowering, and accelerating high-potential women-led deep-tech startups from across Europe and associated countries**. The tangible growth in application numbers, diversity in participation, and strength of selected projects collectively demonstrate the success of the Discovery Phase and the effectiveness of the tailored outreach and evaluation strategies.

7. LESSONS LEARNT and CONCLUSIONS

The execution and results of the Second Open Call offered valuable insights that will help shape future actions within the EmpoWomen programme and inform similar initiatives aimed at supporting women-led deep-tech ventures across Europe.

7.1 LESSONS LEARNT

1. Targeted Outreach Increases Geographic Diversity: Focused promotional efforts in underrepresented countries from the First Open Call—through national contact points (NCPs) and tailored messages—successfully resulted in increased participation from widening-area and associated countries. However, disparities in representation persist, especially in outermost regions, highlighting the need for even more localized and inclusive outreach.

2. Timing and Intensity of Communication Are Critical: As in the first call, the majority of applications were submitted close to the deadline, reaffirming the importance of sustained communication throughout the call period. Regular reminders, last-minute info sessions, and countdown-style posts proved highly effective in driving final engagement.

3. Small and Micro Teams Need Extra Support: A high number of applicants—and selected teams—consisted of solo founders or startups with very few employees. These teams benefit significantly from mentorship, visibility, and guidance, reaffirming the importance of non-financial support services in the acceleration phase.

4. Ecosystem Strength Affects Outcomes: Countries with stronger startup ecosystems (e.g., Portugal, Poland, Estonia) achieved higher success rates in both open calls, even when not the most represented in terms of volume.

5. Cross-Promotion Through Events Works: Participation in prominent European tech events (such as WebSummit, SLUSH, South Summit) allowed for direct engagement with high-potential applicants and contributed significantly to the increase in submissions.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

The outcomes of the Second Open Call demonstrate the continued relevance and success of the EmpoWomen programme in addressing the gaps faced by women-led deep-tech startups, particularly in underrepresented regions of Europe. **The increase in the number of applications, broader geographic reach, and high-quality submissions illustrate a growing trust in the programme and its value proposition.**

Through a transparent, multi-stage evaluation process—including eligibility checks, expert reviews, and in-depth interviews—14 outstanding women-led deep-tech startups were selected. These early-stage companies represent a diverse range of countries, technological fields, and innovation levels, and strongly align with EmpoWomen's mission to empower female founders in widening-area countries.

Key takeaways from this open call include the value of sustained and targeted promotion, the importance of tailored support for micro and solo-led teams, and the critical role of ecosystem maturity in shaping startup success. The increasing engagement from previously underrepresented regions, combined with the diversity of technologies represented, confirms that the programme is both inclusive and effective in fostering deep-tech innovation led by women across Europe.

Annexes

ANNEX 1 .OC#2 SELECTED STARTUPS

eDynamics Technologies LDA

Startup Name	Dynamics Technologies LDA
Country	Portugal
PIC Number	875135068
Website	https://edynamics.pt/

Musculoskeletal (MSK) disorders are the top cause of disability worldwide, affecting 1.71 billion people. Physical fatigue, a silent leading risk factor for MSK disorders, affects both athletes and workers, causing pain, reduced mobility and well-being. In sports, increasingly congested schedules intensify fatigue, making it harder for teams to optimize training and prevent injuries, which costs over €150 billion annually in Europe. Industries like logistics face growing workplace injuries due to fatigue and load-induced strain, leading to lost productivity, early retirements, and €240 billion in healthcare costs across the EU. Current solutions rely on manual, episodic fatigue assessments that fail to provide actionable, real-time insights. Addressing this problem requires continuous, on-site monitoring of MSK biomarkers to enable personalized predictive analytics, empowering stakeholders (teams, industries) for effective decision-making injury prevention, and fatigue management.

PURR.AI, Lda

Startup Name	PURR.AI, Lda
Country	Portugal
PIC Number	880702480
Website	http://www.purrai.com

PURR.AI is a deep-tech startup revolutionizing treatments for age-related neurological diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Our proprietary AI-driven platform designs and optimizes peptides capable of crossing the blood-brain barrier, addressing the critical challenge where 98% of small molecules fail. By integrating computational biology, molecular modelling, and advanced AI algorithms, we streamline drug discovery and significantly reduce R&D timelines and costs. Our ambition is to scale up by expanding partnerships with pharmaceutical and biotech companies, leveraging successful pilot projects to validate our technology. With over €400,000 in funding, access to ESA BIC resources, and an advanced SaaS model in development, we aim to make our platform globally accessible. By scaling our platform and services, we envision PURR.AI becoming the global leader in AI-driven brain-targeted drug discovery, transforming how therapies are developed and improving health outcomes worldwide.

Enhanced Fertility EuropeUnipessoal

Startup Name	Enhanced Fertility Europe, Unipessoal LDA
Country	Portugal
PIC Number	875130121
Website	https://efp.clinic

Enhanced Fertility leverages data, AI, and remote testing to help fertility clinics optimise decisions most likely to result in live birth. Our vision is personalised fertility care for all, and our mission is rooted in the belief that everyone has the right to start or grow a family. We provide affordable fertility testing and software solutions, eliminating the trial-and-error of the diagnostic and treatment process. Our values drive us: 1) Access, making diagnostics and care affordable and accessible; 2) Knowledge, delivering fertility health data directly to patients; 3) Transform, researching person-centred ways to optimise fertility health. By 2029, we aim to operate in 190 clinics and achieve €23M in revenue, scaling our transformative solutions globally to redefine accessible, data-driven fertility care.

MAIA & MULLER - BIOTECH

Startup Name	Maia & Muller - Biotech
Country	Portugal
PIC Number	888662106
Website	https://www.coriumbiotech.com/

Corium Biotech exists to make exotic cellular leather a commercial reality, allowing conscious consumers to benefit from this unique material in a sustainable, environmentally and animal cruelty free way.

Our mission is to be part of the sustainable transformation of fashion, to drive the ecological transition of luxury fashion and to stimulate the need for strong animal welfare policies.

Our vision is to be a driving force in the development of science-based sustainable materials, combining scientific and engineering expertise to create new cell-based responsible fashion materials.

Our values: 1/ Protect biodiversity; 2/ Commit to circular economy practices. 3/ Raise awareness of the impact of animal products on climate change. 4/ Promote gender equality.

W2W LLC

Startup Name	W2W LLC
Country	Armenia
PIC Number	875114795
Website	https://wearify.ai/

Wearify is a pioneering startup delivering state-of-the-art 3D virtual fitting room solutions tailored for luxury and bespoke clothing brands. Our mission is to transform the online shopping experience by reducing return rates, enhancing customer satisfaction, and promoting sustainable practices. Leveraging advanced 3D avatars, augmented reality (AR), and generative AI, we enable brands to offer personalized, immersive shopping experiences, driving customer engagement and boosting conversions by up to 200%. Our vision is to become the global leader in virtual fitting solutions, beginning with empowering small and medium-sized brands that lack the financial and technical resources to develop such innovations in-house. With a focus on fashion hubs across Europe, we aim to drive accessibility to cutting-edge technology while championing sustainability and innovation. Our ambition extends beyond fashion, envisioning a future where our technology transforms industries globally.

AlongRoute Data IKE

Startup Name	AlongRoute Data IKE
Country	Greece
PIC Number	884381108
Website	https://alongroute.com/

AlongRoute is a deep-tech startup that is transforming marine weather forecasting with AI-powered models, providing data that improves the performance of weather-based routing systems. These systems optimize routes to reduce emissions and improve safety, in line with the IMO decarbonization targets. Current systems achieve only ~3% emissions reductions/voyage because they are hampered by inaccurate forecasts, resulting in misaligned routes and wasted resources. We bridge this gap with extensively validated marine weather forecasts improving accuracy by up to 20%. Our Mediterranean prototype support optimization systems with up to 130% better routing performance, aligning optimized and actual routes to build captain confidence. By scaling our technology globally, we aim to contribute to net-zero maritime operations, creating safer and greener oceans. We are currently working on scaling within the marine weather intelligence market through validated pilots and high-impact collaborations.

Wasit OÜ

Startup Name	Wasit OÜ
Country	Estonia
PIC Number	877000378
Website	https://wasit.green

Wasit connects small-scale farmers in emerging markets who lack access to good financial solutions with retail investors, bridging the gap in agricultural financing. We empower farmers by providing technical support, market access, and transparent profit-sharing models. For retail investors, we offer a seamless platform to fund high-potential agricultural projects with clear and tangible impact. Our vision is to revolutionize small-scale farming by leveraging partnerships with field experts to optimize operations and utilizing AI-powered tools to assess credit risks and ensure transparency for all stakeholders. Our ambition is to scale up by onboarding hundreds of farmers and tens of thousands of investors, expanding the agriculture operations in more markets Africa. With technology-driven solutions and strategic partnerships, we aim to become the EU trusted platform for impactful investments in agriculture, fostering economic growth and social impact.

Centrum Cognitio d.o.o.

Startup Name	Centrum Cognitio d.o.o.
Country	Slovenia
PIC Number	882455561
Website	https://tina-assistant.com/

Centrum Cognitio, the company behind Tina, is an emerging leader in AI-powered mental health care. Our deep expertise in AI is enhanced through ongoing collaborations with leading educational and research institutions. Founded by therapist Maja Gselman, our goal is to help therapists enhance their practice with AI tools that boost both efficiency and patient care. Tina reduces administrative burdens through features like emotional analysis, which provides real-time insights into patients' emotional states, and personalized treatment recommendations. Our mission is to reshape mental health care by supporting evidence-based, patient-focused therapy that drives sustainable healing. To grow, we plan to expand into key EU markets, improve Tina's AI capabilities with predictive analytics, and explore augmented reality. By 2027, we intend to empower 10,000 therapists, making Tina the go-to deep-tech solution in mental health care.

Shin Rai Robotics Natalia Lemarquis

Startup Name	Shin Rai Robotics Natalia Lemarquis
Country	Poland
PIC Number	875486984
Website	https://www.shinrai-robotics.com/

Our ambition to scale up is driven by a clear vision to transform manufacturing through integration of robotics, spatial computing and eXtended Reality interfaces to create efficient, automated and sustainable processes.

We have clear, confident goals to grow rapidly. Our software is easy to scale. First, we focus on automating production processes with XR-enabled visual set-up. Our company has already secured a pilot project with Orange Polska for automating visual inspection process using “no-code” visual approach. Our goal is to achieve 50% year-over-year growth in the next three years by securing partnerships with key manufacturers and showcasing the prototype with support from Orange. Starting on Polish market (100 products in 2y) we plan to expand our solutions into Europe (year 2-3) and North America (y3-4) and globally later. Once established, we plan to scale our offerings to include remote visual operations and spatial computing, broadening applications across industries.

AMYGDALAHELTH OU

Startup Name	AMYGDALAHELTH OU
Country	Estonia
PIC Number	888863381
Website	https://www.helloamygdala.com/

Amydala AI is an AI driven behavioural digital lifestyle modification programme for (pre)heart diseases patients powered by behavioural science. We use the best of artificial intelligence and behavioural science to enable more personalized, proactive, and effective behavioural lifestyle change. In order to achieve this, we use scientific approach the best of behavioural science, analytical and integrative approach to disease management by incorporating lifestyles, environmental exposures, and experiential variability. In addition to this, the use of AI automates the programme, automate repetitive tasks of users, creates lectures adjusted to individual level and weather conditions, use insights and trends from data to create behavioural interventions that are more personalized and human. Our solution with the use of data science, behavioural science and artificial intelligence has a potential to transform millions of lives who suffer from pre chronic and chronic heart diseases.

Helios Bilim ve Teknoloji Anonim Şirketi

Startup Name	Helios Bilim ve Teknoloji Anonim Şirketi
Country	Türkiye
PIC Number	878067572
Website	https://www.heliosscitech.com/

Our company provides advanced nanotechnology and material engineering solutions to optimize CO_2 capture and recovery processes from industrial flue gases. By integrating MOFs with SPIONs, we are developing an innovative technology for highly efficient carbon capture. Our vision is to lead the way in reducing the carbon footprint of energy-intensive industries, contributing to a sustainable future. While such innovative solutions are becoming increasingly common in Europe, they remain at the R&D stage in Türkiye. We aim to bridge this gap by adapting these technologies to industrial applications, ensuring scalability and impact on a global scale. Our ambition is to make this technology widely applicable across sectors like energy, heavy industry, and chemicals. Focusing on R&D, innovation, and partnerships, we aim to commercialize our eco-friendly, cost-effective carbon capture technology to benefit both industry and society.

Veles Sense doo Beograd

Startup Name	Veles Sense doo Beograd
Country	Serbia
PIC Number	881630673
Website	https://www.velessense.com/

Veles Sense develops advanced solutions for early grapevine stress detection, integrating multispectral imaging with AI to identify factors such as diseases, water shortages, and nutrient deficiencies. Our goal is to provide vineyard owners with a comprehensive monitoring tool to detect stress early, enabling timely interventions and yield protection. While our focus has been on detecting diseases and nutrient deficiencies, last year's severe drought highlighted the urgent need to address drought-related stress. This challenge, intensified by climate change, has become a top priority for vineyard owners. This project introduces a new Veles Sense tool targeting drought stress detection. By utilizing drone-based imaging, we ensure scalability, with over 300k agricultural drones already in use globally (according to DJI). This project expands our technology's capabilities, equipping vineyard owners with effective and sustainable tools to adapt to climate change and protect their yields.

SIA "SkinFuture" Helios Bilim ve Teknoloji Anonim Şirketi

Startup Name	SIA "SkinFuture"
Country	Latvia
PIC Number	875165332
Website	https://skinfuture.my.canva.site

Skinfuture is built on health, sustainability, and quality. As female founders, we bring a unique perspective to skincare innovation, blending scientific expertise, entrepreneurial passion, and a commitment to human health and environmental care. We believe sun protection should be effortless and effective, and this belief drives everything we do. Our journey began with a desire to create a solution that not only protects the skin but also offers added benefits. Inspired by the synergy of science and nature, we use natural resources to create a standout product. Clay-polyphenol composite material provides UV protection, anti-aging, anti-cancer, and antibacterial benefits in an eco-friendly formula. Our ambition is to offer this innovative composite as a raw ingredient to leading cosmetics companies worldwide. This enables us to scale globally, empowering brands to produce safer, more effective, and sustainable products, while advancing Skinfuture's vision for the future of skincare.

TAY Yazilim Teknolojileri A.S.

Startup Name	TAY Yazilim Teknolojileri A.S.
Country	Türkiye
PIC Number	878163990
Website	https://taytechno.com

TAY Software Technologies Inc. is a radar sensor company specializing in reducing energy consumption by utilizing cutting edge technology of metamaterials and AI powered vital sign detection. Based in the İTÜ Çekirdek Incubation Center, TAY focuses on the development of metamaterials to reduce energy consumption, leveraging their unique properties of focusing electromagnetic energy in radar sensor for health, search- and-rescue and IoT in industry applications. In order to establish a strong connection between innovation and commercial success, TAY's core team was formed to bring together experienced professionals from the startup ecosystem and commercial development fields with extensive academic knowledge of artificial intelligence algorithms and antenna technologies. TAY is focused on licensing software and systems to B2B clients, offering advanced metamaterial solutions and AI algorithms for radar technologies and expanding its reach in the European market.