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# FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN HIGH-TECH ENTERPRISES

FONDAZIONE  
AREZZO INNOVAZIONE



CAMERA DI COMMERCIO  
AREZZO-SIENA

## The FEMINA Project

FEMINA partners believe that increased female participation can make high-tech SMEs more competitive. This belief, based on academic studies and practical experience, must become part of mainstream policy.

The gender gap is still visible in high-tech sectors across EU-28: women represented 29% of entrepreneurs in 2014 and 32.5% of employees in high-tech manufacturing and knowledge-intensive services in 2015. This is not a question of social inclusion. It is about economic growth: studies show that the women's specific skills can help to diversify and consolidate enterprises; that closing the gender gap could generate an EU GDP increase of 13%.

In this context, FEMINA partners cooperate at interregional level to reach their overall aim: to ensure that selected policy instruments are integrated with measures to promote female engagement in their high-tech sectors, with a focus on sectors in their RIS3.

FEMINA considers how to identify, implement, monitor and evaluate policy measures that break down barriers to female high-tech entrepreneurship, to employment and career progression in high-tech SMEs and to the gender dimension of innovation in funding schemes for high-tech start-ups and SMEs.

Policy improvements are foreseen through specific projects funded to address these barriers, through improved policy management (e.g. gender criteria in monitoring) and through strategic focus, whereby partners work to include female participation in high-tech as a fundamental principle of their policies for SME competitiveness.

FEMINA's main outputs are Action Plans, detailing these desired changes, which partners and selected stakeholders will implement and monitor over a 2-year period. The results of this implementation will benefit SMEs and the territory. An increase in female participation in high-tech entrepreneurship, employment and leadership should establish a culture of gender parity in these sectors, with impact on inclusive growth and regional competitiveness.



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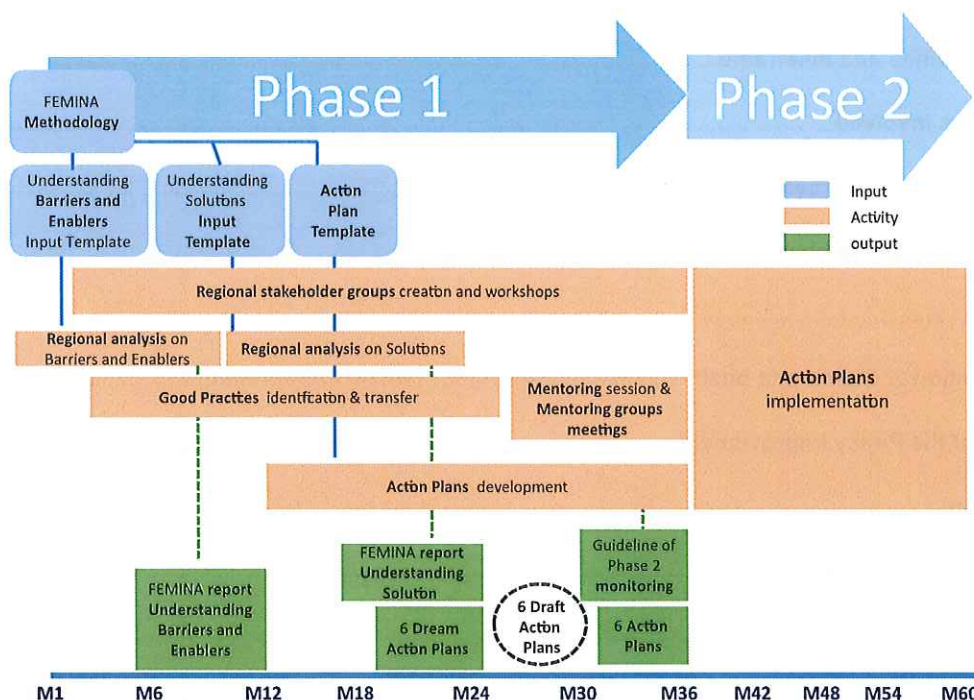
# 1. Introduction

Arezzo Innovazione and Arezzo-Siena Chamber of Commerce were the original members of the FEMINA project, having already worked together at local level and agreed on the importance of promoting female participation in the local enterprise fabric. The FEMINA project was born from a joint search to find like-minded partners across Europe and its direction and content grew up around this new cooperation.

FEMINA partners believe that increased female participation can make high-tech SMEs more competitive. This belief, based on academic studies and practical experience, must become part of mainstream policy. They have worked together over three years, in order to understand better the motivations behind the continued gender gap in high-tech sectors across the EU and how these can be addressed through local and regional policy measures.

FEMINA partners cooperated to identify policy measures that break down barriers to female high-tech entrepreneurship, to employment and career progression in high-tech SMEs and to the gender dimension of innovation in funding schemes for high-tech start-ups and SMEs.

The FEMINA approach is presented in the following graphic, which shows how exchange progressed from understanding barriers and enables to female participation in high tech industry, to identifying solutions, to merging findings within various drafts of the Action Plan.



Arezzo Innovazione and Arezzo-Siena Chamber of Commerce have found inspiration for policy change, thanks to the FEMINA partners. The policy change and the actions designed to take it forward and monitoring its impact are detailed in subsequent sections (Section 3, for description of the policy framework and the change achieved, Section 5 for Action details).

During the last year of Phase 1, the partners from Arezzo benefited from the Mentoring Group set up within FEMINA. Such a group was set up for each Action Plan, providing

support to the overall preparation of the plan and to the specific content. Members of the FEMINA Advisory Board provided input, as did the owners of the specific Good Practices providing inspiration to the content of this Action Plan.

## **2. General information**

Partner Organisations: Arezzo Innovazione and Arezzo-Siena Chamber of Commerce

Country: Italy

Nuts2: Tuscany

Contact Person: Francesca Tavanti

Email Address: francesca.tavanti@arezzoinnovazione.it

Phone Number: 0039 347 4178552



## **3. Policy context**

### **3.1 Overview of Tuscan strategy for Industrial Modernisation (Industry 4.0 Strategy)**

Before describing the selected policy instrument for Arezzo/Siena, it is important to set the context by describing the regional strategy for Industry 4.0.

The regional commitment to industrial modernisation officially began in 2016, with the formal approval of the initial measures for the launch of an Industry 4.0 Strategy. This document initiated a procedure to integrate 4.0 concepts into various measures of the ERDF Regional Operational Programme. This has evolved to the present time, where Industry 4.0 is now an integrated part of all funding for research and innovation funding and calls purely focused on this theme have also been published. Alongside this, the regional government has also funded various mapping and research activities. In the Arezzo/Siena area, Arezzo Innovazione participated in a regional study run by the University of Siena looking at the engagement of local enterprises active in the gold sector (priority sector for our local area) in digitalisation and Industry 4.0.

This strategy sets the framework for regional priorities and investments and is set to continue to gain importance in coming years. Therefore, local activities must take it into consideration. Moreover, the Arezzo/Siena area is keen to take advantage of the opportunities arising for its companies in the field of industry 4.0.

### **3.2 Overview of the selected Policy Instrument**

The policy instrument from our Action Plan is the Multiannual Programme of Chamber of Commerce of Arezzo for the period 2019-2023. This is a local level policy instrument.

The Multiannual Programme (MP) of the Chamber of Commerce is a 5-year policy document. It defines the priority areas for the administration and strategic objectives. All activities carried out in the period of reference must be in line with this framework. The MP is developed using input from territorial stakeholders.

The MP is updated annually through the programmatic forecast report, thanks to results from monitoring activities (performance plan). This report is the strategic plan for each intervention priority. It translates Policy objectives into concrete activities and projects, with a relative financial allocation.

The overall goal of the MP is to support local enterprises, within the mission of the Chamber of Commerce. In order to achieve this, the MP has 6 macro objectives:

1. A simple, digital and efficient Public Administration;
2. A cohesive, transparent and sustainable economic system;
3. Competitive enterprises (adapting to 4.0 and internationalizing);
4. An attractive and integrated territory;
5. Young generations and economic initiatives;
6. Organisational and management optimization.

Among these, FEMINA is particularly relevant to objective 4, for Competitive enterprises and to Young generations and economic initiative, which includes a sub-objective referred to female entrepreneurship.

In 2016 (D.lgs 219/16), a national level reform of the system of chambers of commerce was undertaken. This law foresaw the merging of the Chambers of Commerce of Arezzo and Siena. Thus, since 12 November 2018 (date in which the new Management Committee was instated) the two separate chambers have become one (Arezzo-Siena Chamber of Commerce). This means that the ongoing projects and plans are gradually being merged. This has an important impact on the FEMINA Action Plan, as it allows for a wide territorial scope of actions and a merging of expertise, resources and initiatives.

Both chambers have run a Committee on Female Entrepreneurship (IFE), which guides proposals and actions for female entrepreneurship. As of July 2020, these Committees have been officially merged. This internal committee now involves entrepreneurs from the territories of Arezzo and Siena: at the time of writing (September 2020) it includes 26 members. IFE promotes the creation of female enterprises, supports already established female businesses and strengthens female roles within these. Every year, IFE organises activities and events for female entrepreneurs, with funding allocated from the MP.

### **3.3 Policy Improvement within FEMINA Phase 1**

In 2019, Arezzo-Siena Chamber of Commerce and the IFE decided to finance a new, pilot project entitled 'INVENTOR LAB', through the budget allocated in the MP. The project is designed to support development of female entrepreneurship, with a special attention to strengthening and increasing the number of female start-up in high-tech/ICT sectors. This is the first time that such an approach has been proposed in this territory and for this specific topic.

INVENTOR LAB is structured around a hackathon contest, where ideas for innovative business projects are developed by female students. The most promising ones are selected by an evaluation committee, which included representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and from other local institutions. Two winning ideas are awarded a prize money, to start initial business actions.

INVENTOR LAB was born thanks to collaboration among different actors: Arezzo-Siena Chamber of Commerce, IFE, Arezzo Innovation and the Department of Education, Human Sciences and Intercultural Communication of the University of Siena (DSFUCI). It was open to groups of 2 to 6 students of DSFUCI (at least 80% female students), who have the opportunity to develop an innovative business idea through a female start-up or technology company. The business ideas were required to pay special attention to digitalisation.

The hackathon contest took place in February 2020 and the first projects were awarded the INVENTOR LAB prize. The 2020 pilot action was an initial test of an important instrument to encourage female entrepreneurship.

Following the pilot action, Arezzo-Siena Chamber of Commerce prepared an internal regulation and management system for financial reporting of the winning projects. In parallel, they maintained contact with the two winning projects in order to monitor their work.

*See section 5 below for follow-up activities on the Policy Improvement.*



## 4 Policy Need

### 4.1 Policy Need Addressed for Actions 1 and 2

Female entrepreneurship in our territory is substantial, according to latest data in the province of Arezzo there are a total of 8.946 female companies representing 9.3% of those in Tuscany and 0.67% of those in Italy. In the province of Siena there are a total of 6.962 female companies representing 7.3% of those present in Tuscany and 0.52% on a national basis. In the hi-tech sector in Tuscany, there are 408 female companies (170 in Arezzo, 15.9% of the national total).

At the level of political direction, there is general support for measures to support new forms of enterprise, new ideas and new talents. Moreover, the territory has experimented with some initiatives, such as events specifically aimed women interested in digital marketing. This is indicative of fertile ground on which to work in our territory.

However, the FEMINA project identified a number of barriers to female entrepreneurship that are also present in the Arezzo / Siena territory. To some extent, gender stereotypes remain a factor preventing women from starting businesses, particularly in the male dominated high-tech sectors. Moreover, it was found that difficulties to access to funding significantly affects practical opportunities for women to start businesses. This is not linked to "gendered" funding / investment schemes that privilege man over women, but to a set of factors that make it more difficult to female entrepreneurs to access to such funding.

In this context, the above described Committee on Female Entrepreneurship (IFE) has expressed a need to renew the approach to female entrepreneurship in high tech fields. In other words, providing a stronger link between two current priorities of the Chamber of Commerce: 1) female entrepreneurship and 2) economic development, supporting companies to adapt to new opportunities and take advantage of new opportunities, such as those offered by industrial modernisation. The IFE confers that specific initiatives are required to overcome gender stereotypes, in order to:

- raise awareness of the value of female entrepreneurship in real and effective terms for the benefit of the whole economic system;
- support female entrepreneurship in digital fields;
- fostering cultural change in SMEs, towards more inclusive and efficient forms of organization.

They also identified as a key need greater involvement of young people. The hypothesis is that new generations are more likely to be open to digitalisation, to new forms of enterprises and to new services. Therefore, by encouraging young females to take forward innovative business ideas, there is an opportunity to promote digitalisation and innovation, while helping to close the gender gap.

In practical terms, it was agreed that a number of measures need to be tested and piloted at local level, in order to assess their suitability to address the above described needs. Moreover, it was confirmed that such measures should be designed and run in cooperation: merging different territorial actors that can bring different capacity and input to the measures.



## 5 List of Actions

The Action Plan is structured around two actions, both contributing to the overall aim of providing business support services for high-tech female entrepreneurship.

The overall objective for Arezzo-Siena within FEMINA is currently to give greater priority within the Multiannual Programme to female entrepreneurship in high tech fields. In order to do so, the FEMINA project helped partners to understand some priority areas of intervention:

- actions to disseminate knowledge and to promote a new culture, connecting female participations to increasing digitalisation of the local economy;
- actions to support training for aspiring female entrepreneurs;
- actions to support business ideas from aspiring female entrepreneurs.

Within this Multiannual Programme (2019-2023), it is possible to initiate, test and roll out some new activities to support female entrepreneurship within existing strategic objectives. As Phase 2 concludes in 2023, it coincides with the preparation for the subsequent Multiannual Programme (2024-2029). The learnings from the FEMINA Action Plan will be used to provide recommendations for that programme, with the ultimate aim of creating a specific objective for female enterprises in an Industry 4.0 framework.

The two Actions are entitled as follows:

Action 1: Inventor Lab – hackathon to support female entrepreneurship;

Action 2: Digital and business plan mentoring for female entrepreneurs

## 6 Details of Action 1: Inventor Lab – hackathon to support female entrepreneurship

### 6.1 Overview of the Policy Improvement

#### Overall Topic

This action tests, monitors and rolls out the INVENTOR LAB initiative to support female entrepreneurship in high-tech sectors, in line with the policy shift to support industrial modernisation. The overall aim is to provide female entrepreneurs or aspiring entrepreneurs with concrete tools to start and take off their activities in the digital and technological sectors.

#### Specific Description

In order to achieve the above objectives, we propose a three pronged approach:

#### 1. Launch of the INVENTOR LAB project in 2020 (policy improvement already achieved in Phase 1)

The INVENTOR LAB project is introduced above, in Section 3 (Policy Improvement within FEMINA Phase 1). The first edition of this project was launched in February 2020, with the hackathon for new business ideas. 4 teams participated in the context and 2 of them were awarded the prize. The 2 winning projects, both developed by 100% female teams, were:

- ◆ “Build your Future” that builds on innovation to boost the inclusion in the labour market of people with disabilities;
- ◆ “Work – We can do it!” aimed at planning innovative co-working places, supporting people who want to start new businesses.

Both winning ideas were awarded prize money to launch their business idea: a total of 5000€, with 3000€ to the first prize and 2000€ for the second.

#### 2. Monitoring of INVENTOR LAB project results, with a view to its further roll out / consolidation in the Multiannual Programme 2019-2023 (activity initiated in Phase 1 and taken forward in Phase 2)

The INVENTOR LAB sets itself objectives related to:

- Improving the transition of female graduates from university to labour market;
- Strengthening synergies between academia and business;
- Empowering young female graduates;
- Boosting innovative entrepreneurial ideas that can innovate business models and approaches in the territory of Arezzo – Siena.

Progress towards these results and impact at territorial level must be monitored in order to define how to roll-out and consolidate the 2020 / 2021 editions. The 2020 edition was very well accepted by students and local stakeholders. Initial feedback was extremely positive and all stakeholders agreed that boosting female entrepreneurship in the digital / high-tech sector can be a key opportunity to innovate the local economy and that INVENTOR LAB can be the right tool to trigger this change. It is expected that the 2021 edition will be fully digital (Updates to be provided before end of Phase 1).



Moreover, the newly merged IFE for Arezzo and Siena wishes to merge INVENTRO LAB with an on-going project in Siena to support female entrepreneurship. Therefore, monitoring of INVENTOR LAB (as described above) will be analysed together with information from Siena, with a view to proposing a joint initiative for 2021. This work is carried out in cooperation with the key stakeholder, University of Siena.

The 2021 edition of the Programme – INVENTOR LAB 2.0, to be launched in the last quarter of 2021 – confirms the Hackathon approach and includes various new features, such as:

- LabAcademy to design and develop female led start-up projects;
- Wider participation criteria: opening to participants from various departments of Siena University and allowing multi-department teams to participate.

Some proposals for improvements were discussed between stakeholders during the last year of Phase 1 and relate largely to the addition of further support and mentoring services (see Action 2).

Within Phase 2, monitoring initiated in Phase 1 will be taken forward. Tools will largely be based around reporting from winning projects (from INVENTOR LAB and from the new, merged project), interviews and questionnaires with participants / potential participants, focus groups with stakeholders and any official data source available. As a result of this monitoring, decisions will be made on the future evolution of the INVENTOR LAB project / the new merged project, in terms of structure, resources and involvement of additional stakeholders (e.g. other University departments and/or SMEs providing mentoring/support services to candidates). Some proposals for improvements were discussed between stakeholders during the last year of Phase 1 and relate largely to the addition of further support and mentoring services (see Action 2).

### **3. Strategic input to the Multiannual Programme 2024-2029**

This part of our Action Plan also looks to the future. The ultimate aim would be to include the business support services for high-tech female entrepreneurship as an individual measure in the future Multiannual programme. This aim is ambitious, considering the many priorities for enterprise support that have to be covered by the programme. However, if results from the INVENTOR LAB (and Action 2 below) prove positive, recommendations to this effect can be produced. Moreover, recommendations for sub-priorities, actions and funding allocation can also be produced.

## **6.2 Background**

### ***Regional / Local input, including input from FEMINA Stakeholder Groups***

Regional/local input began with the analysis undertaken at project outset, concerning barriers and enablers to female entrepreneurship. Local stakeholder meetings saw active and important discussion on how barriers identified at project level were present at local level (see description of needs above).

During stakeholder group workshops, members had the chance to discuss female participation in high-tech enterprises. Discussion revealed that, while the Arezzo-Siena territory boasts many industries with a good turnover, they are still linked to old fashioned business approaches. Innovative business ideas / models are particularly sought after. It is a priority to link new developments in digitalisation and industrial modernisation, to traditional industries that form the backbone of the economy.

The INVENTOR LAB proposal was born directly from the local stakeholder group. The IFE, using learnings from FEMINA (as described below), proposed the project, ran it and allocated the necessary budget.

Description of Solution	Elements to be transferred	Exchange process
<p>Everygirl Everywhere (P6 - ADR Bucharest Ilfov, Romania)</p>	<p>This Good Practice encourages girls and women to enter the digital workforce. Their many actions include hackathons, positively evaluated as providing experience and know-how to succeed in digital. INVENTOR LAB was a test of this Romanian approach in Arezzo.</p>	<p>This Good Practice was presented at FEMINA Convention 2 (<i>Lamia (EL), 14th – 15th March 2019</i>). It was presented by Mihaela Secareanu from Smart Everything Everywhere. Discussion in the interregional tables following the presentation focused on the different initiatives, including the hackathon. Arezzo Innovazione subsequently requested details on that specific initiative.</p> <p>On 19/10/2020, a virtual meeting was held with the owner of EveryGirl Everywhere and with P6. During this mentoring group meeting, we discussed and gathered useful input especially related to follow-up activities after the hackathon, including monitoring results / impacts and possible measures to support winners.</p>
<p>Regional Committee for Gender Equality (P5 – Sterea Ellada, Greece)</p>	<p>This institutional committee supports and monitors integration of the gender dimension into Sterea Ellada’s development strategies. Exchange considered actions that can feasibly be supported by such committees. It was agreed that they could support activities like hackathons, if promoted by a network of actors with complementary skills. INVENTOR LAB’s network reflects this.</p>	<p>This Good Practice was presented at FEMINA Convention 2 (<i>Lamia (EL), 14th – 15th March 2019</i>). It was presented by Vasiliki Karavangeli on behalf of P5 – Sterea Ellada. Discussion in the interregional tables following the presentation focused on the different actions that the committee can support (as per description in the previous column).</p> <p>On 17/11/2020, a virtual meeting was held with P4/P5. During this mentoring group meeting, we gathered further insights on the committee’s work.</p>

**Transfer of FEMINA Solutions (GP) and other input from interregional exchange in FEMINA**



### 6.3 Specific activities and timeframe

Activities carried out in Phase 1	
Timing	Activity
Ongoing throughout Phase 1	<p><i>Discussions within FEMINA Local Stakeholder Group (based on IFE), considering both the needs of the territory and the potential for action within IFE.</i></p> <p>Initial workshops were held on 10/09/2018 and 31/05/2019, though contact with a number of key members was on-going since the start of the project. This contact was the basis for fact finding about the topic. It was the framework in which the INVENTOR LAB pilot project was born.</p> <p>In 2020 (July), the IFE from Arezzo and Siena were officially merged. Frequent contact between new members was used to analyse INVENTOR LAB and initiatives from Siena, with a view to merging the two projects. Meetings were also held to define the next stages of INVENTOR LAB.</p>
June 2018 – March 2019 (starting semester 1 / completed with interregional verification 2nd FEMINA Convention, March 2019).	<p><i>Analysis of local barriers and enablers</i></p> <p>The above described analysis of local barriers and enablers was undertaken during the first project year. It provided a valuable foundation for exchange at regional and interregional level and an important means of prioritising areas for intervention (see, for example, the decision to have an initial focus on female entrepreneurship in the Arezzo/Siena area, rather than the other two categories addressed in the project)</p>
Early 2019	<p><i>Bilateral contacts between IFE President and the Director of DSFUCI</i></p> <p>These contacts were organised to assess various opportunities for collaboration. Outcomes of this discussion were reported to the stakeholder group, looking at various options to support female entrepreneurship in high-tech and how existing initiatives could be improved.</p>
March 2019 – April 2019	<p><i>Learning about initial Good Practices</i></p> <p>The learning process began in preparation for, during and following up on the 2nd FEMINA Convention. The first 2 GPs cited above (from Romania and Greece) were presented and discussed by stakeholders on this occasion. Subsequently, written presentations of both were prepared. Arezzo Innovazione then shared details during the above-mentioned stakeholder workshops / contacts. These represent the initial interregional inspiration for this Action.</p>
September 2019	<p><i>Agreement to launch the INVENTOR LAB pilot project</i></p> <p>Following the above described discussion and learning, the actors</p>



	involved (CCIA, IFE, DSFUCI) agreed to launch the pilot project. Resolution N.89 25/09/2019 of CCIA, officially included INVENTOR LAB among IFE initiatives for 2019 and explicitly mentioned FEMINA project as a reference experience. This was followed by an internal act of the CCIA (approved shortly after) allocating funds for INVENTOR LAB.
<b>September 2019 – February 2020</b>	<i>First INVENTOR LAB edition (pilot project 2020)</i> The INVENTOR LAB call for Hackathon participants was prepared by CCIA, IFE and DSFUCI in the period September – November 2019 and launched at the end of November 2019. The call was closed at the beginning of January 2020. The hackathon context took place on 10/02/2020 and the first projects were awarded the INVENTOR LAB prize.
<b>March 2020</b>	<i>Preparation of internal regulation for INVENTOR LAB</i> Given that this was the first edition of such a project, an internal regulation was developed for financial management and costs claims. This is an important basis to manage the first winning projects and to manage eventual future editions.
<b>March 2020 – ongoing throughout 2020</b>	<i>Contact with winning teams of INVENTOR LAB</i> Ongoing contact was maintained with the two winning teams of the first INVENTOR LAB edition, in order to monitor their work.
<b>July 2020</b>	<i>Official merging of Arezzo and Siena IFE</i> The two committees for female entrepreneurship were officially merged, with a new president and (currently) 26 members. This is the framework in which decisions are made on future editions of INVENTOR LAB and possibility to merge it with the Siena entrepreneurship project.
<b>October 2020</b>	<i>Further Interregional Input</i> The Mentoring Group gathered on 19/10/2020 with the owner of the GP EveryGirl Everywhere for further input to be used for future editions of INVENTOR LAB.
<b>End October 2020</b>	<i>Annual programme updates</i> The annual programme for 2021 (Relazione Previsionale e Programmatica) was approved (31 October) with activities and budget. The path initiated within FEMINA, aimed at bridging the gender gap in the high-tech sector was confirmed. The programme confirmed the possibility to collaborate with the University of Siena, in order to support innovative business start-up projects. INVENTOR LAB 2.0 will be developed in this framework.
<b>November 2020 – May 2021</b>	<i>Enhancement of INVENTOR LAB and preparation for 2021 edition</i> Following the adoption of the Annual Programme for 2021, work was initiated to design the 2021 edition of INVENTOR LAB. This built on



	<p>monitoring of results from the first edition and on discussion with stakeholders.</p> <p>The enhanced edition of the Programme – INVENTOR LAB 2.0 – is expected to be launched by the end of 2021.</p>
<b>Activities planned for Phase 2</b>	
<b>Timing</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>June 2021 – end 2021</b>	<p><i>INVENTOR LAB 2.0 preparation and launch</i></p> <p>Work will continue to launch the 2021 edition, including the application pack and guidelines.</p> <p>The Programme is expected to be launched in the last quarter of 2021, in order to allow for the hackathon to be held in person (exact date will depend on the COVID situation).</p>
<b>January 2022 – May 2023</b>	<p><i>INVENTOR LAB (2.0) Project: further editions</i></p> <p>The INVENTOR LAB (2.0) Project is expected to run with an annual edition. Given that the 2021 edition will run at the end of the year, it is likely that one more edition (end 2022) will be organised before the end of FEMINA Phase 2. Upon approval of the annual programme of the Arezzo-Siena Chamber of Commerce for 2022 (usually taking place in October of the previous year), this next edition will be designed and run. Activities will include any necessary adaptations, emerging from previous editions (<i>see evaluation activities below</i>).</p>
<b>June 2021 – c. March 2023</b>	<p><i>Monitoring of INVENTOR LAB (2.0)</i></p> <p>Arezzo Innovazione and Arezzo/Siena Chamber of Commerce will undertake monitoring activities of INVENTOR LAB 2.0 (and of the eventual further edition in 2022), using the tools proposed above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- analysis of reports produced by winning projects,;</li> <li>- interviews and questionnaires with participants / potential participants;</li> <li>- focus groups with stakeholders (including regular meetings with main organisers of the project);</li> <li>- analysis of any relevant official data source.</li> </ul> <p>Analysis will focus on INVENTOR LAB in 2021 and on INVENTOR LAB 2.0 in 2022.</p>
<b>June 2021 – May 2023</b>	<p><i>Producing recommendations and implementing further activities based on monitoring results</i></p> <p>In parallel to the above described monitoring, Arezzo Innovazione and Arezzo/Siena Chamber of Commerce (with all relevant stakeholders, on the basis of their roles) will take any opportunities that arise to make recommendations / undertake necessary procedures for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improvements to INVENTOR LAB (2.0) (2022 edition). Should improvements be identified and approved, they will be formalised</li> </ol>

	<p>according to necessary internal procedures for approval and for funding allocation and implemented on the basis of agreements made;</p> <p>2. Strategic input to the Multiannual programme 2024-2029. All the above will be used to define proposal for the next programme, using internal procedures in place to develop programme content.</p>
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#### 6.4 Stakeholders involved

Name of Organisation	Role in Action Plan
Committee on Female Entrepreneurship (IFE) members (merged committee from Arezzo and Siena), including representatives from sector associations, trade unions and organisations promoting female entrepreneurship	In charge of INVENTOR LAB project / in charge of proposing furthering initiatives or recommendations for actions to implement within the Multiannual programme.
Department of Education, Human Sciences and Intercultural Communication of the University of Siena (DSFUCI)	Partner in INVENTOR LAB project
Other university departments	Involved for engagement of students and new-graduates as possible participants in INVENTOR LAB
Local SMES	Involved in evaluation panel of INVENTOR LAB

#### 6.5 Costs and funding sources

Costs	Funding Sources
Funding for pilot INVENTOR LAB – 2020 edition - 5.000€	Multiannual Programme funding for IFE (2019 budget)
Funding for INVENTOR LAB 2.0 – 2021 edition – 5.000€	Multiannual Programme funding for IFE (2021 budget)
Funding for INVENTOR LAB / merged project – further edition (2022) – expected minimum 5000 € (as per previous editions).	Multiannual Programme funding for IFE (2022 budget)



## 6.6 Risk and Contingency Plans

Description of Risk	Level of probability	Description of Contingency Plan
Reallocation of funding due to the COVID-19 emergency	Medium	Currently, it is extremely difficult to define what will happen in relation to the COVID.19 emergency and its impact on local enterprises and on potential business ideas. However, the regional trend so far has been to continue investing in Industry 4.0 as a means to emerge from the crisis. Therefore, actions going in that direction should continue to receive political and financial support.

## 6.7 Monitoring

Self-defined Performance Indicators			
Indicator	Target		Means of Verification
Number of projects approved to support female entrepreneurship within INVENTOR LAB	2020	2 projects	Official proceedings from pilot INVENTOR LAB – 2020 edition
	2021	2 projects	Official proceedings from INVENTOR LAB – 2021 virtual edition
Output Indicators			
Indicator	Target		Means of Verification
Number of teams participating in INVENTOR LAB 2020 edition	4		Official proceedings from pilot INVENTOR LAB – 2020 edition
Number of teams participating in INVENTOR LAB – 2021 edition	8		Official proceedings from INVENTOR LAB – 2021 edition
Number of recommendations proposed for future measures to support female entrepreneurship in high tech sectors (within Multiannual programme 2024-2029)	1 (overall recommendation document with FEMINA learnings)		Recommendation document, officially presented as part of Multiannual programme 2024-2029 development process

## 7. Details of Action 2: Digital and business plan mentoring for female entrepreneurs

### 7.1 Overview of the Policy Improvement

#### *Overall Topic*

This action tests, monitors and rolls out a mentoring path for a group of aspiring female entrepreneurs, focused on development of their business idea using the opportunities offered by Industry 4.0.

#### *Specific Description*

The Action is structured around the pilot testing and subsequent mainstreaming of a mentoring path, providing targeted and practical support for women interested in starting a high-tech business. The Action is structured as follows.

#### **1. Interreg Europe funded Pilot Action of the Mentoring Path**

The Pilot Testing will test a mentoring path for a group of 15 aspiring female entrepreneurs, focused on development of their business idea using the opportunities offered by Industry 4.0. Applications are expected in related to the 3 main economic sectors of the Arezzo economy: goldsmith, fashion and agro food.

The pilot will test: the structure of the programme and cost effectiveness of the proposed measures; the application and selection process to engage aspiring female entrepreneurs; the specific contents of the personalised mentoring path and tools used; the process to engage with enterprises and expert mentors from the territory.

The Pilot Action will last from June 2021 to April 2022 (11 months).

#### **2. Monitoring of Pilot Action results (part of Pilot Action) to define mainstreaming measures**

Throughout the Pilot Action, FEMINA partners will monitor and evaluate activities and results in order to define how the mentoring programme will be mainstreamed within the Multi-Annual Programme. This activity will assess the suitability of all measures (course content, selection procedures, course implementation).

With monitoring results in hand, Arezzo Innovazione and the Chamber of Commerce (with the Female Entrepreneurship Committee) will define recommendations for continuation of the training scheme within the annual programme for 2023.

The annual programmes to implement the Multi-Annual Programme are defined by the end of November in the previous year. The Pilot Action activity plan is designed to close by May 2022, so there would be plenty of time to propose and plan for a second edition in 2023, fully funded with Multiannual Programme resources. The budget for this further edition would be approved in the annual programmes. The involvement of the Female Entrepreneurship Committee of the Chamber of Commerce in each phase of the pilot will be essential to share and discuss results. This Committee has responsibility for proposing activities to be carried out within their allocated budget.



### **3. Strategic input to the Multiannual Programme 2024-2029**

In parallel with Action 1, this part of our Action Plan also looks to the future. Results from this action will also work towards the aim of including business support services for high-tech female entrepreneurship as an individual measure in the future Multiannual programme. The aim would be to include a relative sub-objectives and funding allocation to mainstream the mentoring programme in the 2024-2029 period.

## **7.2 Background**

### ***Regional / Local input, including input from FEMINA Stakeholder Groups***

As per Action 1, regional/local input began with the analysis undertaken on barriers and enablers to female entrepreneurship (*see description of needs above*). The priority related to new developments in digitalisation and industrial modernisation for traditional industries is relevant to Action 2, as it is to Action 1.

The Mentoring Approach proposal was born directly from the local stakeholder group. The IFE starting with the INVENTOR LAB proposal, as described above. This test initiative showed the importance of supporting aspiring entrepreneurs not only with funding, but also with training. On this bases, FEMINA partners sought inspiration from FEMINA (as described below), to consider how this might be achieved.

In this case, unlike INVENTOR LAB (Action 1), there was no local funding immediately available (2021 budget already fully allocated), so the local stakeholders made the decision to request the Interreg Europe pilot funding.

**Transfer of FEMINA Solutions (GP) and other input from interregional exchange in FEMINA**

Description of Solution	Elements to be transferred for my policy improvement	Exchange process
<p>STEM TALENT GIRL (Spain)</p>	<p>This Good Practice encourages female students to start careers in STEM, through mentoring and job shadowing initiatives. STEM TALENT GIRL promotes female empowerment and scientific-technological vocations and includes encouraging female entrepreneurship as one of its objectives- The programme has three main strands, each with a different female target group.</p> <p>The overall concept of this Good Practice is of interest for transfer in the Arezzo-Siena context. Moreover, there are particular 4 elements of this Good Practice that were identified for transfer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personalised support. Participants in STEM TALENT GIRL Strand 2 – Mentor Women are mentored, to guide their professional development and develop an individual project depending on their educational stage. While an initial Master Class is held with all participants in the programme, the mentoring path really has to be targeted to the individual, with an assigned mentor. In Arezzo/Siena, this will be slightly adapted, with the individual path based on the participant's individual application, rather than their education level.</li> <li>2. Target groups: Mentor Women is addressed to students and to young graduates. Exchange focused on the most appropriate target groups for the Arezzo-Siena case. Discussion highlighted that the mentoring path can be appropriate to other target groups (e.g. women already in the world of work / possibly recently unemployed because of COVID). As such, the target</li> </ol>	<p>This Good Practice was presented at FEMINA Convention 3 (Grimstad (NO), 24th – 25th October 2019), during the GP transfer workshop. The GPs was presented in the form of a 7 minutes pitch, followed by an assessment by other partners at regional level. Arezzo Innovazione evaluated this GP positively in terms of interest for their territory and potential for transfer. After sharing it with stakeholders, particularly members of the Female Entrepreneurship Committee, interest in this GP was confirmed.</p> <p>In Semester 5, there was ongoing contact with the owner of the GP STEM TALENT GIRL and with P7/P9. We discussed the STEM TALENT GIRL Programme as a whole and focused the exchange especially on the 4 elements of this Good Practice to be transferred in our territory (personalised support, target groups, selecting female mentors and enterprises and shadow sessions). Specific exchange within the mentoring group concerned the means of planning and running all the various activities and on how to effectively engage with key stakeholders. .</p>



for the Arezzo-Siena context confirms the young graduates and extends to other groups.

3. Selecting female mentors and enterprises: STEM TALENT GIRL assigns one female mentor to each participant. It strongly promotes contact with territorial enterprises and engaging a network of companies across the region. Action 2 matches these two points, by selecting the female mentors from local enterprises, who provide, at the same time, their business expertise and an understanding of the territorial context.

4. Shadow sessions: STEM TALENT GIRL includes shadowing sessions where participants go to visit the mentor in their place of work and accompany them as part of their daily work. In Arezzo-Siena, the shadowing concept is fully transferred.

### 7.3 Specific activities and timeframe

Activities carried out in Phase 1	
Timing	Activity
Ongoing throughout Phase 1	<p><i>Discussions within FEMINA Local Stakeholder Group (based on IFE), considering both the needs of the territory and the potential for action within IFE.</i></p> <p>This activity is as described in Action 1. Moreover, during the meetings held to evaluate INVENTOR LAB, the idea for the mentoring process was born and the Pilot Action content was developed.</p>
June 2018 – March 2019	<p><i>Analysis of local barriers and enablers</i></p> <p>This activity is as described in Action 1 and formed the foundation of the Action Plan, by identifying the focus on female entrepreneurship.</p>
March 2020 – ongoing throughout 2020	<p><i>Monitoring of INVENTOR LAB (Action 1)</i></p> <p>Throughout the implementation and follow up phase for INVENTOR LAB, monitoring and evaluation activities considered means of improving the original initiative and other relevant initiatives. The Mentorship Path was defined in this context.</p>
July 2020	<p><i>Official merging of Arezzo and Siena IFE</i></p> <p>The two committees for female entrepreneurship were officially merged, with a new president and (currently) 26 members. This is the framework in which decisions are made on the Mentoring Path (Pilot Action and future actions).</p>
October 2019 – End Phase 1	<p><i>Further interregional exchange on Good Practices / Mentoring Groups</i></p> <p>At the third FEMINA Convention (October 2019), STEM Talent Girl was presented in detail. Contact was on-going with the Spanish partner to discuss the procedures and content of the mentoring programme.</p>
March – May 2021	<p><i>Pilot Action development</i></p> <p>The Pilot Action for a test of the Mentoring Programme for aspiring female entrepreneurs was prepared and submitted to the JS.</p>
Activities planned for Phase 2	
Timing	Activity
June 2021 – November 2021	<p><i>Semester 1 of Interreg Europe funded Pilot Action</i></p> <p>The mentoring programme will be designed, run and monitored, as per approved Pilot Action application.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Definition of basic training content and application tools. June 2021 – Mid-September 2021.</li> <li>2) Dissemination: July 2021 – end September 2021.</li> <li>3) Launch of the call for applications and selection of Mentoring</li> </ol>



	<p>Committee. September 2021– November 2021.</p> <p>4) Selection of Mentoring Committee. September 2021– November 2021.</p> <p>5) Application and selection of participants in mentoring path. October 2021 – November 2021.</p> <p>6) Monitoring of application process and selection procedure. October 2021 – November 2021</p>
<b>December 2021 – March 2022</b>	<p><i>Semester 2 of Interreg Europe funded Pilot Action</i></p> <p>The mentoring programme will run, monitored and completed, as per approved Pilot Action application.</p> <p>1) Definition of targeted course content. December 2021.</p> <p>2) Mentoring path implementation. January 2022 – March 2022.</p> <p>3) Monitoring of the pilot procedures and activities (assessing the suitability course content and implementation). December 2021 – March 2022</p>
<b>April 2022 – May 2023</b>	<p><i>Producing recommendations and implementing further activities based on monitoring results</i></p> <p>In parallel to the above described monitoring, Arezzo Innovazione and Arezzo/Siena Chamber of Commerce (with all relevant stakeholders, on the basis of their roles) will take any opportunities that arise to make recommendations / undertake procedures for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inserting the Mentoring Path into the annual plan for 2023, with relative funding. As described for Action 1, should monitoring results be positive, the Mentoring Path can be included in the annual plan, with funding allocation. It would need to be included within the annual programme updates (<i>Relazione Previsionale e Programmatica</i>), approved by 31 October every year, with actions and budget for the following year. Timing permitting, the second edition of the Mentoring Path would be launched before the end of FEMINA Phase 2.</li> <li>2. Strategic input to the Multiannual programme 2024-2029. All the above will be used to define proposal for the next programme, using internal procedures in place to develop programme content.</li> </ol>

#### 7.4 Stakeholders involved

Name of Organisation	Role in Action Plan
Committee on Female Entrepreneurship (IFE) members (merged committee from Arezzo and Siena), including representatives from sector associations, trade unions and organisations promoting female	In charge of initiatives on female entrepreneurship and recommendations for actions to implement within the Multiannual programme.

entrepreneurship	
“Punto Impresa Digitale” – Digital info point of Arezzo-Siena Chamber of Commerce	Collaboration to take forward mentoring activities related to digital skills / to contact potential female entrepreneurs
University Siena – various departments	Involved in Business Plan mentoring activities
Local SMES	Involved in Business Plan mentoring activities

### 7.5 Costs and funding sources

Costs	Funding Sources
Funding for Pilot Action – Mentoring Path 2021-2022 - 70.900 €	Interreg Europe – Pilot Action funding
Funding for Mentoring Path 2023 – estimated at c.80.000 € (with the same number of participants at the 2021-22 edition).	Multiannual Programme funding for IFE (2023 budget)

### 7.6 Risks and contingency plans

Description of Risk	Level of probability	Description of Contingency Plan
Low number of applications submitted by aspiring female entrepreneurs	Low	High publicity will be given to the mentoring programme through the channels of LP Arezzo Innovazione and PP2 - Arezzo-Siena Chamber of Commerce (especially through the Digital Info Point)
Lack of interest from local enterprises to be engaged in the initiative	Low	The initiative will be adequately disseminated throughout the territory. Relevant publicity measures will be adopted to select the companies participating in the programme.

### 7.7 Monitoring

Self-defined Performance Indicators			
Indicator	Target		Means of Verification
Number of individual mentoring paths funded to support female entrepreneurship in high-tech industry	2021	15	Official proceedings from mentoring path Pilot Action (approved applications / proceedings from mentoring path)



Output Indicators		
Indicator	Target	Means of Verification
Number of potential participants contacted	100	Official proceedings from mentoring path Pilot Action (dissemination activities)
Number of applications received for mentoring path Pilot Action (2021)	25	Official proceedings from mentoring path Pilot Action (application submission procedure)
Number of applications for mentoring path Pilot Action above quality threshold (2021)	20	Official proceedings from mentoring path Pilot Action (application evaluation procedure)
Number of collaboration agreements with SMEs - engaged in mentoring path Pilot Action (2021)	3	Official proceedings from mentoring path Pilot Action (mentors selection activities)
Number of people completing the mentoring path (2022)	15	Official proceedings from mentoring path Pilot Action (mentoring path documentation)
Number of people intending to take forward the business idea following the mentoring service (2022)	10	Official proceedings from mentoring path Pilot Action (final evaluation with beneficiaries)
% of medium to high level of satisfaction among beneficiaries (female participants of mentoring path)	95	Official proceedings from mentoring path Pilot Action (final evaluation with beneficiaries)
% of medium to high level of satisfaction among mentors (SMEs experts)	95	Official proceedings from mentoring path Pilot Action (final evaluation with mentors / SMEs)
Number of proposals approved for further funding of mentoring path (in 2023 Annual Programme)	1	Updated Annual Programme ( <i>Relazione Previsionale e Programmatica</i> ) for 2023
Number of recommendations proposed for future measures to support female entrepreneurship in high tech sectors (within Multiannual programme 2024-2029)	1 (overall recommendation document with FEMINA learnings)	Recommendation document, officially presented as part of Multiannual programme 2024-2029 development process

## 8. Signature

Institution: Arezzo Innovazione

Name of Signatory: Fabio Badii

Position: President

Date 19/07/22

Stamp (if available)

Signature

**AREZZO INNOVAZIONE**  
FONDAZIONE DI PARTECIPAZIONE  
Via Spallanzani, 23 - 52100 AREZZO  
P. IVA e C.F. 01767240516  
Tel. +39 0575 489663 - E-mail: info@arezzoinnovazione.it



Institution: Arezzo-Siena Chamber of Commerce

ANNA LAPINI  
Name of Signatory:

Position: VICEPRESIDENTE VICARIA

Date 19/07/22

Stamp (if available)

Signature





