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NAVIGATING LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN A RAPIDLY EVOLVING EUROPE

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SYNTHESIS

Newsletter Article - A European Partnership for a Shared Leadership Challenge

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For a long time, leadership education has relied on a familiar set of words: confidence, communication, teamwork, decision-making, resilience. These words still matter. But they are no longer enough.

A young girl preparing to become a leader today is not entering the same world her teachers, mentors or parents entered. She is growing up in a Europe shaped by digital transformation, climate urgency, social inequality, changing labour markets and new expectations around responsibility. Leadership cannot be reduced to speaking well in front of a room or managing a team efficiently.

It has to be redefined.

This is the ambition behind GirlLeadersComp, one of the core components of Girls Who Lead. The project aims to map the competences young girls need in order to become effective future leaders. This mapping does not look at leadership from only one angle. It brings together entrepreneurial skills, green skills, digital skills, social and emotional competences, and soft skills.

That combination is not decorative. It reflects the complexity of leadership today.

A future leader needs initiative, but also ethical awareness. She needs digital confidence, but also the ability to understand how technology changes work and relationships. She needs to think entrepreneurially, but not only in terms of profit. She needs to understand impact, sustainability and community.

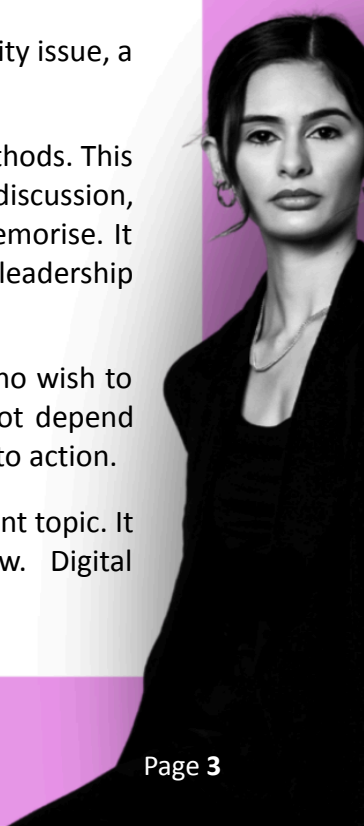
Girls Who Lead also recognises that young female leadership cannot simply copy traditional models. Many existing leadership programmes still assume that there is one neutral model of leadership and that girls only need access to it. But the project asks a deeper question: what do girls actually need in order to lead, inspire others and navigate the barriers that may discourage them from pursuing leadership roles?

That question matters because leadership is not only a skills issue. It is also a visibility issue, a confidence issue, a mentorship issue and a social expectation issue.

The curriculum planned within the project will be based on informal learning methods. This is a strong choice. Informal learning can allow girls to explore leadership through discussion, examples, reflection and practice, instead of treating it as a list of concepts to memorise. It creates room for girls to test ideas, connect skills to real situations and understand leadership as something they can actually do.

The project also aims to produce a mentors' guide, helping mentors and girls who wish to become mentors themselves. This is essential because skills development cannot depend only on content. Girls need people around them who can help translate learning into action.

What makes Girls Who Lead relevant is that it does not treat the future as a distant topic. It understands that the future is already shaping the skills girls need now. Digital



transformation is not waiting. Sustainability challenges are not waiting. The need for more inclusive leadership is not waiting.

So leadership education cannot wait either.

If we keep teaching leadership with yesterday's vocabulary, we risk preparing girls for a world that no longer exists. Girls Who Lead proposes something more ambitious: to build a framework that reflects the world young female leaders are actually entering.

Not a softer version of leadership.

A more complete one.

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