



Advancing Women's employment in the Agri-food sector through Re-skilling and Empowerment



During its first year, AWARE has focused on understanding the realities faced by long-term unemployed women and identifying the skills, support and workplace conditions that can strengthen their pathways back into employment. Through desk and field research across the partner countries, the project has brought together evidence, women's experiences, and the perspectives of employers and employment actors.

Understanding the needs behind the numbers

The first major step was to update the evidence on **women's skills needs, employment barriers and opportunities** in the **agri-food sector**, building on the **Rural Social Innovation** approach developed through **the InnovAgroWoMed project**.

The research combined two complementary approaches: **desk research**, examining existing data and evidence, and **field research**, bringing the voices of women and labour-market actors directly into the project.

Across **Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain**, partners conducted Community Mapping activities and individual interviews involving women from disadvantaged situations, agri-food businesses and VET professionals.

Together, these activities explored not only the obstacles preventing women from accessing employment, but also the **skills, resources and forms of support needed to create realistic pathways towards sustainable labour-market participation**.

What did the research tell us?

Several challenges appeared consistently across the research:

- childcare and caring responsibilities;
- skills and experience gaps after periods outside employment;
- gender and age discrimination;
- limited opportunities matching women's skills;
- language and cultural barriers;
- low wages and challenging working conditions.

At the same time, the findings highlighted the need for digital and technical skills, sector-specific training, mentoring, career guidance and more flexible and inclusive learning opportunities.



FROM RESEARCH TO DIALOGUE

The first AWARE national roundtables

Building on the research findings, AWARE moved to the next stage: listening directly to women, employers and professionals about what a truly gender-sensitive workplace should look like. The first national roundtables were organised in **Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain**, bringing together **unemployed women, agri-food employers, employment actors, VET professionals** and **gender experts**. The discussions will contribute directly to the development of the **AWARE Gender-Sensitive Working Environment Framework**, turning experiences and concerns from the four countries into practical recommendations for employers and other labour-market actors. Cyprus incorporated both stakeholder perspectives and an additional consultation with long-term unemployed women; Greece brought together a broad group of 14 participants; Spain included employers, employment support organisations, gender experts and LTU migrant women; while Italy brought together stakeholders from entrepreneurship, agriculture, VET, employment and gender equality.



What are women facing?

Across the four countries, several common messages emerged:

- Care responsibilities continue to affect women's access to and continuity in employment.
- Gender stereotypes and discrimination remain visible in recruitment and career development.
- Age, migration background, rural location and employment history can create additional and interconnected barriers.
- Returning to work can be particularly difficult after long periods outside the labour market. Women's existing and transferable skills are not always sufficiently recognised.

What can make a difference?

Participants pointed towards practical solutions:

- Flexible and family-friendly working arrangements
- Fair and transparent recruitment
- Equal opportunities for pay and career progression
- Mentoring and personalised career guidance
- Stronger employer awareness of gender bias
- Training linked to real labour-market needs
- Better cooperation between employers, PES, VET providers, NGOs and public authorities
- Regular employee feedback and monitoring of equality measures

LISTEN → LEARN → CO-CREATE → ACT

The voices collected through AWARE are now helping shape the project's training, counselling and Gender-Sensitive Working Environment Framework.



The next chapter is about women, skills and opportunities.

The evidence gathered so far is now being translated into practical AWARE tools and activities. In the coming months, the project will move towards recruiting long-term unemployed women, delivering personalised learning and counselling, and developing the AWARE Digital Platform.

COMING SOON: RECRUITMENT OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED WOMEN (at least 1 year unemployed)

AWARE partners in **Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain** will recruit long-term unemployed women to participate in the next stages of the project.

We want to reach women who could benefit from:

- tailored training and re-skilling
- personalised one-to-one career counselling
- digital and employability skills development
- connections with employers and employment actors
- pathways towards employment in the agri-food sector

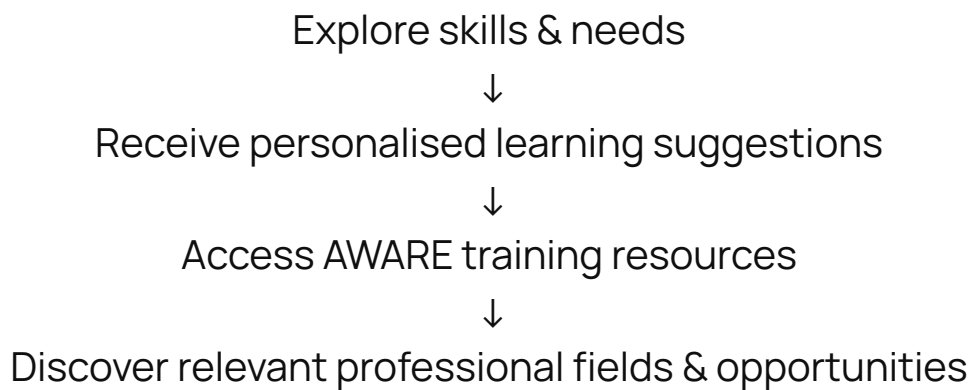




COMING SOON: THE AWARE DIGITAL PLATFORM IS TAKING SHAPE

Another important next step is the development of the AWARE Digital Platform, a free, multilingual space designed to bring learning, personalised guidance and employment pathways together.

One platform. A personalised journey.



The platform will provide access to the newly developed AWARE Training Course, consisting of **six modules**:

- 01 - Introduction to the Agri-food System and Related Sectors**
- 02 - Digital Skills for the Labour Market**
- 03 - Sustainability and Circular Economy in the Agri-food Sector**
- 04 - Soft Skills and Workplace Inclusion**
- 05 - Entrepreneurship and Self-employment**
- 06 - Social and Technological Innovation in the Local Agri-food Sector (context-specific module)**

The platform will also progressively connect AWARE with agri-food employers and employment actors, helping create a pool of potential employment opportunities and supporting the future exploitation of project results.



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