



# Time 4Help

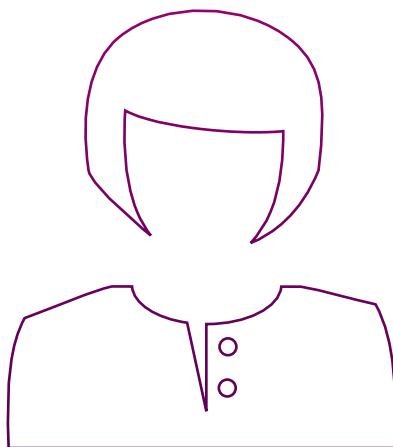
## 45+ ... and what next?

### A guide for mature women interested in changing their own professional activity





Women  
45+



**Time  
4Help**

**45+ ... and what  
next?**

**A guide for  
mature women  
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activity**

Wrocław, 2021

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*My mother died 3 months ago. Now I have time for myself.*

My son has left for England. I'm alone and I can finally start making my dreams come true.

**I've been working in the office for 20 years,  
and I'd like to do something different.**

*I've retired, but I'm only 60 and can continue to work.*

**I need to start earning more money – otherwise I won't be able  
to make ends meet living on my pension.**

*I've lost my job and I don't know if anyone will hire a 54-year-old.*

**I'm afraid the boss will hire someone younger than me.**

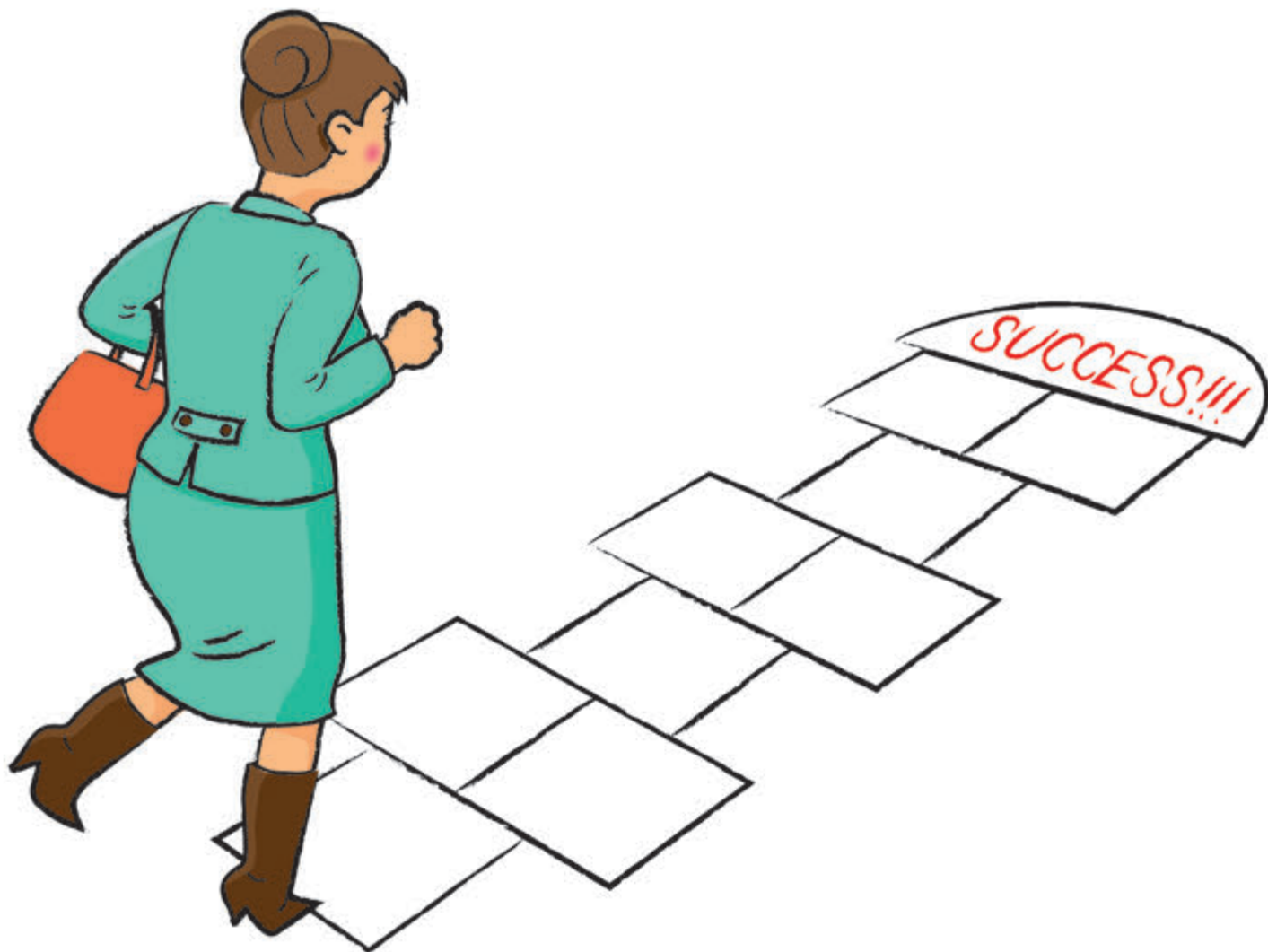
I work in a school, but my dream is to be a tour guide.

My parents, grandchildren and my daughter who is still at university...  
everyone wants something from me all the time. I'm just too  
exhausted to work full time.

**I'd like to change my job but I have no idea what I'd like to do.**

**I've always wanted to work and travel at the same time.**

**I have a feeling that I fall behind my younger colleagues at work,  
but I just don't want to stop working.**



# Instead of an introduction

This guide is the result of a project<sup>1</sup> in which we tested various concepts and ideas on how to support mature women in changing or taking up professional activity. Interestingly, the project, also in other countries (Belgium, Finland and Spain), was conducted mainly by women 45+. This is probably why we could feel, from the very beginning, what the addressees of our activities need, but in order to confirm it, we planned and carried out a lot of research that helped us to obtain an insight into the topic and understand the target groups. In the project, we developed initial ideas for the analysis of professional and development needs, training in the field of selected competences and assistance of a coach or psychologist in the field of personal development. Next, we checked these ideas in real activities – competency tests, coaching discussions, training and workshops, as well as presentations for employers. The most important conclusion from almost three years of work is a new approach to professional and educational activation of mature women, combining an in-depth analysis of one's potential, competences, needs and competency gaps with individualised ways of filling those gaps and strengthening as well as presenting assets of a given person.

In this guide, we included hints and tips on how to use the project results while making decisions about changing one's professional activity and obtaining necessary competences. Although it does not entirely exhaust the topic of work and education in the group of mature women, we hope that our suggestions and advice will inspire you to search for the right path and make good choices.

We encourage you to read the guide, think and act.

*The Time4Help project team.*

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<sup>1</sup> Time4Help. Project co-financed by the European Social Fund, Project no.: POWR.04.03.00-00-0039/18

# The objectives of the guide

This guide is intended for women who already know that they want to change something in their professional life – both those who already have a specific plan and those who know this change is necessary but have no idea where to start. We know that a professional change can be very diverse – you might want to find another full-time job, start your own company, change working conditions in your current workplace or combine some of those activities. It is necessary to bear in mind, however, that most changes require new competences, learning completely new things or improving the qualifications you already have. Contemporary times require improving one's knowledge and skills continually, making the phenomenon of *Lifelong Learning* a permanent element of our lives. Based on the ideas and tools developed in the project, this guide will show you how you can achieve this aim.

A special group which the content of the guide is addressed to consists of women from the so-called *Sandwich Generation* – especially those who, as a result of a life change, want to return to work or must reconcile career and care responsibilities (we have described them in the subsequent chapter). It is worth mentioning that *Sandwich Generation* is a new topic of research and related activities. Until now, this phenomenon has not been noticed or investigated thoroughly, although in the light of longer life expectancy it becomes increasingly important for mature women, employers, dependant people and lawmakers.

The guide covers several areas: knowledge about mature women and the *Sandwich Generation* (mainly from research conducted in the *Time4Help* project), hints and tips on making decisions about changes in professional activity (especially in the context of life changes), a description of the tools developed in the Project and other aids that can be used for specifying one's needs or limitations, information about training courses prepared in the Project, the role of a coach/career counsellor and suggestions on where to find help, as well as some tips on how to obtain funding for professional development.

You can read this guide like any other textbook, but we recommend that you read its parts and use the tasks and exercises described in it, as well as other elements and aids prepared within the *Time4Help* project and available on the portal dedicated to mature women.

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You can find additional information on the portal: <https://kobietywpracy.edu.pl/>

and find tests of needs and competences

under the following link: <https://kobietywpracy.edu.pl/kwestionariusze-kompetencji/>

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## A mature woman – that is, who?

In our country, according to the data from the Polish Central Statistical Office (2020)<sup>2</sup>, there were almost 5.5 million women aged 45–64, constituting approximately 14% of all Poles and 27% of all women. It is a huge number of consumers, employees, employers and also voters. The age limits we adopted for the purpose of the project are not official – they were determined by the conditions of the project and the possibilities of support in projects co-financed from EU funds, which is why we were looking for a more general definition of our target group.

The term “a mature woman” was adopted informally, after we ensured (in a nationwide survey in this group and in the group of employers) that it is commonly accepted, describes quite well a woman aged 45–65 and, according to most of the respondents, does not carry any negative meaning of old age or weakness<sup>3</sup>. According to the research report, the term “a mature woman” does not offend the respondents – almost 9 out of 10 of them claim that it fits women 45–65 years old. Interestingly, the percentage of respondents aged 56–60 who are of the same opinion is even higher (92%). It is true that some people may associate this term mainly with elderly women or even pensioners, but maturity is connected not only with age but also experience and wisdom that result from it. Maturity also means a higher level of knowledge and understanding of one’s needs and values, and thus – more specific requirements towards oneself and the environment, or better decisions.



<sup>2</sup> The Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS), Population by sex and age as of 30th June 2020, [www.stat.gov.pl](http://www.stat.gov.pl)

<sup>3</sup> A report by IQS 2019, CATI research as part of the “Time4Help” project. Research on mature women and employers for Dobre Kadry Research and Training Centre Ltd. (not published in the resources of Dobre Kadry Research and Training Centre Ltd.)

## What are mature women according to the research results?

In the above-mentioned research, we tried to learn about the values, goals and activities of mature women, their lifestyle and life situations. We were particularly interested in their educational and professional activity as well as their digital and social skills. A professional research centre asked a number of questions to a representative sample of more than 1,000 women aged 45–65, which allowed us to create a detailed profile of this group.

70% of the mature women taking part in the research are currently in a stable relationship, and half of them live in small households – 1-2 persons (51%). In general, they evaluate various aspects of their health as good, especially their daily well-being, with physical fitness and the current state of health described slightly less positively. Professional activity is very conducive to positive assessment – all the aspects of health are assessed better by women who are professionally active.

For most of the women, the most important values in life include good health and family. Their financial situation, that is, having incomes that allow them to live a decent life and be independent from others, also takes a high place in this hierarchy. The mere fact of having a job is very important for slightly more than 2/3 of the respondents, especially the youngest. However, what is interesting in the context of professional development, the professional career itself is not very important (very important for 1/4 of the respondents). What seems to be more important is an active life with passions, as well as preserving the youth of body and mind.

## What do work and free time of mature women look like?

During the research, in Poland the official retirement age for women was 60. Does it mean that ¾ of mature women from the 45–65 age group work? Not exactly. The percentage of professionally active women is much lower – only 43% are employed in a company, whereas 11% run their own business. Around 30% of women in this group are retired. More than 1/5 do not work, of whom 2/3 would like to take up employment. Pensioners are not satisfied with the amount of their pension. For 1/3 it is not enough to live on, for ½ it hardly covers their daily needs, and only 18% admit that it is fully sufficient for them.

Activity outside of work and home is not the domain of women aged 45–65. Most of them are not involved in any social, sports, political or religious activities. Their physical activity is very moderate and mainly involves walking, cycling or working in the garden/allotment.

## Is it right to say that people over 40, including women, have no digital skills?

Mature women, especially those from the younger group (45–55 years old), feel very independent in the digital world in its most basic version – that is, using the Internet, smartphones and computers. The same applies to matters they have to deal with when they visit offices. In other digital areas – social media, instant messaging and new technologies, as well as dealing with official matters via the Internet – more than half of the respondents feel completely or almost completely independent (especially when using social networking sites). Interestingly, only half of them have an e-mail address or a Facebook account, and in 2019 less than 1 out of 5 women from this group had a qualified electronic signature, an electronic ID or profile in the system of the National Health Fund. In the context of taking care of other people and combining various tasks, it is important that as many as 3 out of 5 mature women do not drive a car (70% of women aged over 60) and must rely on others in this respect.

It is interesting to note that half of the respondents have some experience in using e-mail, an online bank account, a profile on Facebook or instant messaging (although the last one to a lesser extent as fewer respondents have an instant messenger account). 1 out of 3 respondents have a passport, but it seems that respondents from this group are not that familiar with other digital solutions. Of course, the percentage of users of the above-mentioned applications and solutions is higher in the group of younger women, especially among those who are professionally active.

## Are mature women good employees?

Certainly, most of the readers will answer “yes” and, just like the respondents in the research, they will emphasise the importance of life experience and openness to learning new things. We contrasted this with the opinions of a group of employers, some of whom employ mature women. According to what they said, they do expect experience, but rather experience connected with a specific profession, and specific professional skills, especially digital and soft ones (therefore they often send their employees to training courses where they can improve them). Another aspect that is important to them is availability, which, in fact, a female employee without family commitments can offer. Life experience, which mature women praise so much, does not seem to be crucial for employers. Unfortunately, neither of the two groups appreciate and pay attention to organizational and management skills that women gain throughout their life when taking up and fulfilling multiple roles.

The family and responsibilities related to the household, in the opinion of most mature women, are by far the most important, much more important than their needs in the field of professional development. They accept the necessity of learning new things, but only when they need them for work – the need for professional development takes the last place in the hierarchy. In fact, almost 1/3 of the respondents have completed some training/courses or studies/education in the past 5 years or are currently doing it. The aim was to improve or even acquire new professional qualifications, improve their digital skills or learn a foreign language.



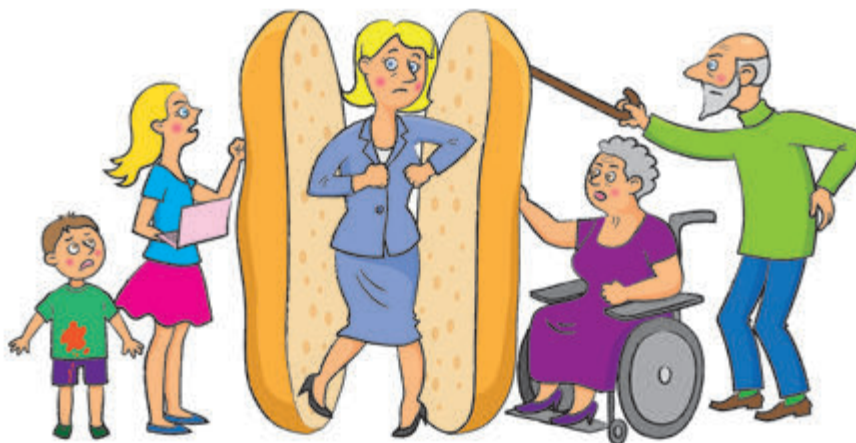
Professional development is not easy for mature women. Only a bit more than 1/3 feel the support of their immediate family in this area. Approximately the same proportion feel the need to improve their digital skills, and even fewer of them include professional development in their goals and feel motivated to develop when looking at other women pursuing their careers. Only 1/5 of the respondents intend to change their jobs, and only 1 out of 20 are going to start their own business.

## Distance or traditional learning?

The research was conducted in 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic, when most mature women strongly preferred a traditional or hybrid form of learning. Unfortunately, distance learning, which was somehow forced by the pandemic situation, was not good for all of them and as far as we know from the project, it discouraged them from continuing their educational activities, especially those women who were less digitally literate. However, after more than a year of the pandemic and after we had finished testing the training in the project, we learned from the project participants that many of them began to appreciate the advantages of remote training e.g. their availability to people from smaller places or to those who are not able to take some days off and go to the training.

## The Sandwich Generation

This is a group of people who are involved in taking care of the representatives of different generations – using the official terms, ascendants (parents/parents-in-law, grandparents) and descendants (children/grandchildren). This care can be either full-time or ad hoc, but it is permanent, and it forces a given person to work harder, or sometimes to completely give up their job. Combining professional work with care responsibilities is particularly difficult for *Sandwich Generation* members, and can have a negative impact on their overall well-being, health and performance at work. This is the reason why this group of people evokes interest in governments, scientists and also employers – they simply notice that such an excessive burden may have negative effects not only on the very members of the SG but also on the rest of society. The research that will be discussed in subsequent chapters shows that in some countries with a more traditional division of social roles, including those related to care (e.g. Poland), women are the most burdened social group. This concerns especially mature women who simultaneously take the role of mothers, grandmothers and daughters, and take care of younger and older family members, and often also siblings or partners/husbands. When their care responsibilities come to an end because, for example, the dependent person dies, some of the women experience difficulties re-entering the labour market and find it hard to adapt to the new social situation.



From the above-mentioned research conducted in a representative sample of Polish women aged 45–65 we know that half of them take care of different people. In most cases these are children (35%) and parents (35) (which is typical of the *Sandwich generation*), but also grandchildren (30%), a partner or husband (20%), siblings (3%) or other relatives (5%). 4 out of 10 respondents take care of a person with disabilities. It seems that mature women, by taking care of other people, have a second full-time job, especially that the declared time of care is 35 hours per week. According to the research conducted in several countries by a team of researchers from the University of Economics in Wrocław, it is mainly women who take care of other people in our country, whereas men devote less time to that (just like in Italy)<sup>4</sup>.

Those who decided to read this guide already have quite a lot of information about the group of mature women, and are now able to find there their characteristics and values. It is worth adding one more description – self-assessment.

From the research conducted in the project by semioticians, i.e. researchers dealing with the so-called cultural messages, we know that the image of a mature woman in our society is very diverse – from an independent or even rebellious woman acting beyond adopted standards, a woman accepting the passage of time but aware of her values, a woman overwhelmed by a fear of escaping efficiency to the one who is enslaved by obligations, diseases, menopause, and standing in the shadow of her loved ones. We know that mature women do not identify themselves with all of those images, but some notice their elements.

What about you? We encourage you to do this short test. Which of the images described in Test 1 do you identify yourself with the most?

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<sup>4</sup> Rajahonka M., Kwiatkowska-Ciotucha D., Timmers M., Zaluska U., Villman K. (2022). *Working Women in the Sandwich Generation. Theories, tools and recommendations for supporting women's working lives*. Emerald Publishing. ISBN: 9781802625042 (in preparation).

# TEST: Assessment of your own situation

Read the following descriptions. To what extent do they fit you? Next, in another column, think about the extent to which you would like them to fit you.

Then, read the comment in the box below.

<p>Scale:</p> <p>5 – <i>It fully fits me</i></p> <p>4 – <i>It rather fits me</i></p> <p>3 – <i>Neither yes, nor no</i></p> <p>2 – <i>It rather doesn't fit me</i></p> <p>1 – <i>It doesn't fit me at all</i></p>	<p><b>To what extent do the following statements fit you?</b></p> <p>Please write a number from the scale.</p>
<p><b>A.</b> I'm trying to stop the passage of time. I want to keep up with the changing world. I like reading different guides, using solutions and measures that let me stay in good health. I'm trying to keep up with innovations in order not to fall behind.</p>	
<p><b>B.</b> With age I feel wiser, more mature, I accept changes, and I want to stay active and develop myself as long as possible.</p>	
<p><b>C.</b> Now I can do whatever I want. I want to be independent and fulfil my passions. I don't care what other people say – I just want to fulfil my dreams, despite the fact that not everyone likes that.</p>	
<p><b>D.</b> I can feel the passage of time. An increasing number of health problems, menopause and the loss of physical and mental ability really disturb me. I am afraid of disease and old age, also because I become less attractive and less able to take care of others.</p>	

**According to 90% of women aged 45–65 taking part in the research, description B fits them best. ¾ pointed to descriptions A and C, whereas the lowest proportion of respondents – to description D. Perhaps your assessments are a mix of all those descriptions – some of them fit you more, whereas others – less.**

If description A fits you best, you probably make a lot of effort in order to keep up with the times not fall behind other people. The guide and other aids developed in this project will help you arrange certain aspects in a proper hierarchy, find areas where you still have a lot to do and indicate the most suitable training and workshops.

If description B fits you best, you probably would like to do something and you are mentally ready to do it. The project results may help you find the best way of putting your ideas into practice and indicate the directions of further development.

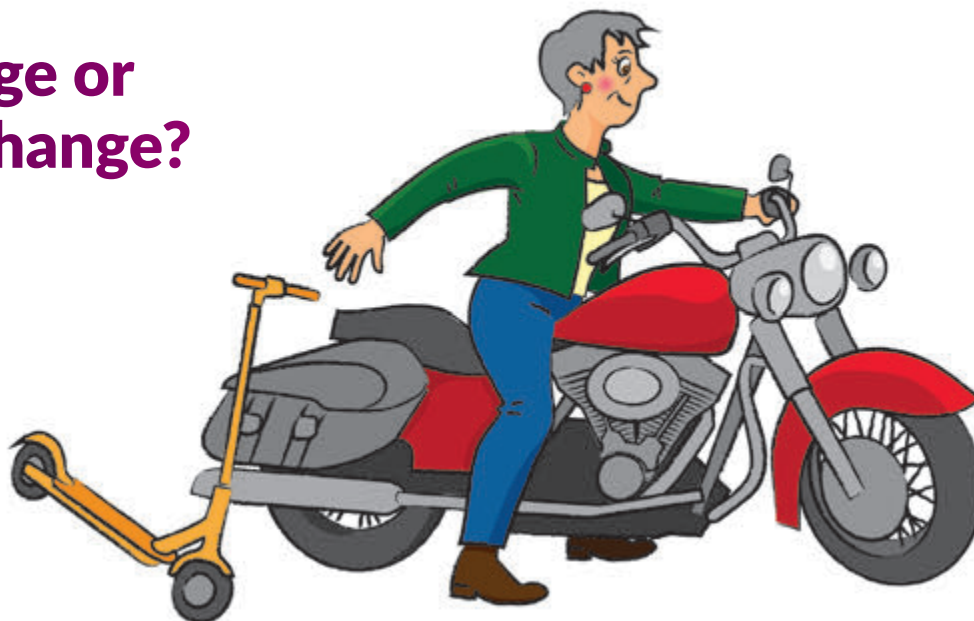
If description C fits you best, you probably do what you want to do and you already make some changes in your life. This guide will help you order your activities and think of new aims or ways of implementation.

If description D fits you best, you'd better define your needs and barriers to fulfilling them. You will probably need a coach or career counsellor to help you do that, especially if you still have many years of professional activity ahead of you. You might also need information on where to look for proper support. The aids we created in our project will help you define your needs and preferences.





## To change or not to change?



Maturity is a special period – you have acquired most of the resources, you have gathered experience, and you might actually focus on consuming them. *Status quo* can be and for sure is attractive to many people, especially to those who are getting to an end of their professional activity. However, life can be surprising and certain changes occur regardless of the fact whether we want them or not. Sometimes we have no other choice but to accept and adapt to them. As we have already said, maturity in a woman's life is not only about getting rid of some responsibilities and benefiting from the existing resources. Sometimes it brings new challenges and new opportunities. Interestingly, many women are ready to face them and know how to use them, many look forward to them, whereas others feel forced to accept them. What changes are we talking about? It is quite easy to imagine some of them, and it is necessary to remember that all of them have one common feature – they give more freedom and they can help to open up to new activities.

- Empty nest – adult children move out, start their own life, go to study or to work in another city or country.
- Loneliness – a divorce, death of a partner or another close person.
- No care responsibilities – when a dependent person dies, when he or she becomes independent or when someone else starts taking care of them.
- Losing one's job – eliminating certain positions at work, closing down a company, receiving notice just before the pre-retirement protection period.
- Achieving professional goals in the current workplace and receiving a proposal of changing something.
- Obtaining new competences or qualifications making it possible to introduce changes.



- Receiving new financial resources (e.g. inheritance/winning) or the possibility of obtaining them (e.g. subsidy) allowing of significant changes in life.
- Freeing oneself from financial obligations (e.g. mortgage) forcing permanent work.
- Change in health – illness or recovery, or remission of a disease making it possible to take up new activities.

As you can see, there are many situations which may be perceived as turning points. Interestingly, there are changes which we look forward to, and there are also those for which we need more time. Naturally, changes may also be connected with limiting one's freedom – illness of one's own or relatives, the emergence of new duties, e.g. taking care of grandchildren or a parent, or a changing a position in the workplace that requires new qualifications.

## How to carry out the decision process about the change and the changes themselves?

It is always necessary to analyse your starting point, that is, your resources, opportunities, goals, and assess discrepancies. Ideally, you should ask a coach or counsellor for advice. This aspect is described in the subsequent chapter of the guide.

After analysing the directions of action, you have to choose something and plan your activities. When you do not have the necessary resources e.g. competences, money or technical elements, you need to acquire them. Next, you may introduce the change e.g. set up your own company, change your job, go abroad or move to another place. Do not forget about planning and assessing the effects – try to answer the question whether you have achieved what you planned. When you know the answer, continue with your plan or modify it. If you, for example, fail to establish your own business due to the lack of funding, try to submit an application for subsidies next time or find a business partner. If you do not find a post-graduate course of your interest, try to look for one abroad, or sign up for a course where you may obtain a relevant certificate.

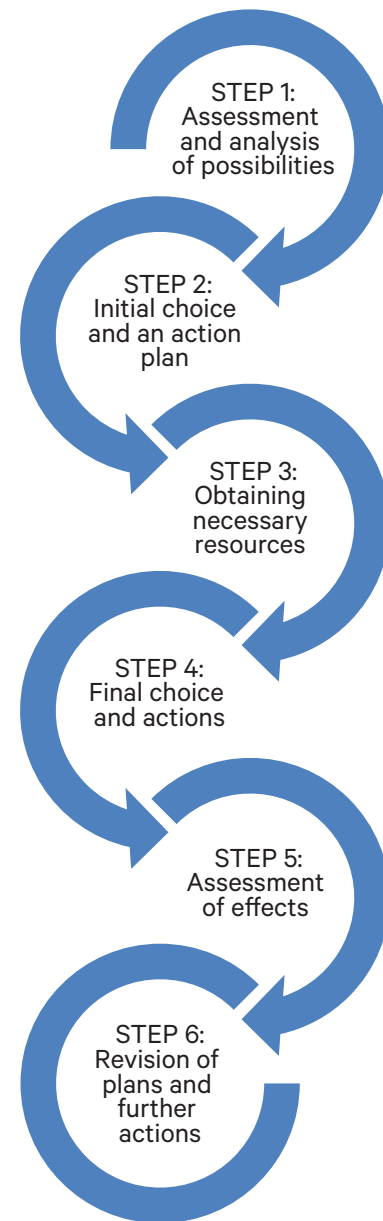


Figure 1. The process of change – steps  
Source: own work

# Where are you and what do you need?

## (assessment of needs, preferences, resources and limitations)

This first step in the process of change and decision, that is, the analysis of one's own possibilities, needs and goals, but also limitations, is very important and at the same time – difficult. It is worth using external tools for this purpose, many of which are available free of charge. In the *Time4Help* project, we prepared 2 online tests that you can fill out for free and immediately receive information helpful for further analyses or decisions.

Our guide, like the entire *Time4Help* project, is focused on professional and training activation. The above-mentioned tests are also used to assess professional preferences and competences. They give mature women the opportunity to obtain the following information:

- How they assess their practical skills increasing the probability of successfully finding oneself in the current labour market: the preparation of recruitment documents, the knowledge of foreign languages, the ability to use ICT tools and self-presentation.
- What level of motivation to develop individual competences and skills they present.
- Which of the attitudes (pursing one's goal persistently, willingness to learn, openness to changes, the ability to plan actions) will be conducive to the effective development of personal competences.
- Which of the social skills (communication, building relationships with others, etc.) or areas of personal effectiveness (time management, initiative, etc.) constitute their strengths, and which require improvement in order to increase both their chances and the feeling of personal satisfaction with undertaken actions.
- What type of work or activity is most suitable for their preferences, that is, what form of work will be the most attractive and also the easiest to find.


The tests in the basic version available to everyone are performed independently and anonymously. The result is available only to the person who does the test. In the extended version, one needs to have a unique password, whereas the results are stored in a database on the server and can be accessed by coaches and institutions e.g. training agencies.

### Where to find tests?

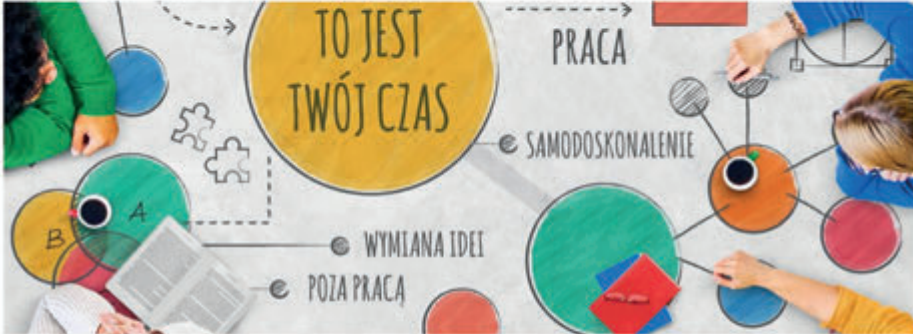
<https://kobietywpracy.edu.pl/kwestionariusze-kompetencji/>

**KOBIETY=PRACY**SPU.PL

O projekcie | Samodoskonalenie | Praca | Poza pracą | Kontakt



## Kwestionariusze kompetencji




Opracowaliśmy dwa narzędzia w formie testów, umożliwiające kobietom dojrzałym dokonanie samodzielnej samooceny i diagnozy swoich potrzeb rozwojowych. Dzięki nim będą miały możliwość uzyskania następujących informacji:

1. Jak oceniają swoje praktyczne umiejętności zwiększające prawdopodobieństwo skutecznego odnalezienia się na aktualnym miejscu pracy: przygotowanie dokumentów rekrutacyjnych, znajomość języków obcych, umiejętność korzystania z narzędzi informatycznych i autoprezentacji.
2. Jaki prezentują poziom motywacji do rozwijania poszczególnych kompetencji i umiejętności.
3. Które z postaw (konsekwencja w dążeniu do celu, chęć do nauki, otwartość na zmiany, umiejętność planowania swoich działań) będą sprzyjały efektywnemu rozwojowi poszczególnych kompetencji.
4. Które z umiejętności społecznych (komunikacja, budowanie relacji z innymi itp.) lub obszarów osobistej efektywności (zarządzanie czasem, inicjatywa itp.) stanowią ich mocną stronę, a które wymagają doskonalenia, w celu zwiększenia zarówno swoich szans, jak i odczuwania osobistej satysfakcji z realizowanych działań.
5. Jaki typ pracy lub działań jest najbardziej adekwatny do ich preferencji, czyli w jakiej formie pracy najłatwiej będzie im się odnaleźć, będzie ona najbardziej atrakcyjna.


**TEST PREFERENCJI**

**TEST POTRZEB ROZWOJOWYCH**







### Praca

Poszukiwanie pracy, rozmowa kwalifikacyjna, tworzenie CV, jak założyć firmę



### Poza pracą

Prawo konsumenta, porządkiw domowym budżecie, różniw życie



TEST OF PREFERENCES

The questionnaire form includes 32 pairs of statements in 4 preference areas – scales.

Preferred style of action

The following sentences are set into pairs. Each element of the pair represents behaviours, views or attitudes that, to a greater or lesser extent, may characterize you.

Give each pair of sentences a certain number of points – from 0 to 5 (the total number of points must always be 5).

**0 means** that this statement absolutely does not fit you

**5 means** it largely fits your way of acting or beliefs

Your score will always total 5 (e.g. 0 + 5, 1 + 4, 2 + 3 etc.).

Choose the number next to one element of the pair, and the other one will appear there automatically.

Before I make a decision, I discuss it with others

☐ 0

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☒ 4

☐ 5

I make decisions on my own

☐ 0

☒ 1

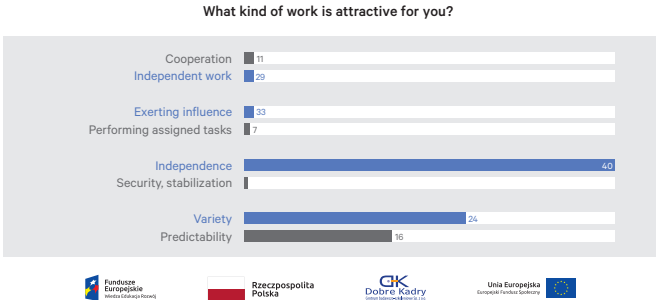
☐ 2

☐ 3

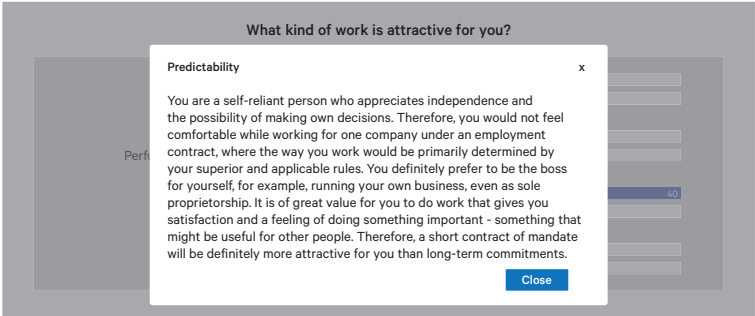
☐ 4

☐ 5

An example of a result in an online version has a form of a chart showing the preference for work in 4 bipolar scales: e.g. Independence – Stabilization.



In each area the result is available in a descriptive form by clicking on the area name.



## DEVELOPMENT NEEDS TEST

The questionnaire consists of 75 statements to be assessed on 2 scales. The scales are supposed to measure the adequacy of the statements to the current situation of the person undergoing the assessment and to assess their willingness to develop in a given area. The statements concern several areas:

## Development needs

Lifelong development is not just a slogan. In contemporary times, full of changes, it is a must and a need. It provides us with the feeling that we are up to date with this world, and that we have the skills, knowledge and competences that are needed and useful. There are no perfect people, and everyone has some areas that can be improved. The following set of tests is to help you determine how you can manage your development, in which areas you feel confident, and which of them require improvement, so that you can always feel like a person who is able to discover new possibilities, fulfil potential and stay active as long as possible.

Below you will find statements that describe the various characteristics and skills. For each of them, use 1-4 to mark the answer that best corresponds to how you perceive and evaluate yourself.

After you choose the answer you want and write it down in your worksheet, think about whether you would like to develop or improve this skill. Select a field with 1, 2, 3 or 4, where 1 means you definitely don't want to do that, whereas 4 – that you definitely want.

## 1. I can write a convincing cover letter

<input type="radio"/>	Definitely no
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Rather no
<input type="radio"/>	Rather yes
<input type="radio"/>	Definitely yes

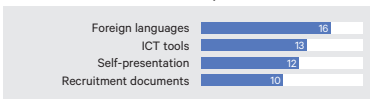
Would you like to develop this skill?

<input type="radio"/>	Definitely no	<input type="radio"/>	Rather no	<input type="radio"/>	Rather yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Definitely yes
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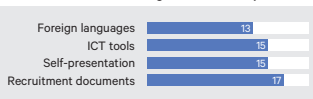
The results represent a self-assessment of the current situation and a self-assessment of the willingness to develop in a given area. The comparison of both results allows of additional analyses and interpretations.

In each area, the result is available in a descriptive form after clicking on its name.

## Skills that will allow me to find myself in the labour market



## Declaration of the willingness to develop



## Characteristics that will help me achieve my goal



## Characteristics that will help me achieve my goal



## My strengths and areas for development



## Declaration of the willingness to develop



## Skills that will allow me to find myself in the labour market



## A foreign language

You can speak and write in a foreign language in a way understandable for your interlocutor. You understand and you can use basic colloquial expressions and expressions related to everyday life, introduce yourself and others, formulate questions related to private life e.g. a place of living, and have a conversation.

Close



## Ready to take the test? TEST 2

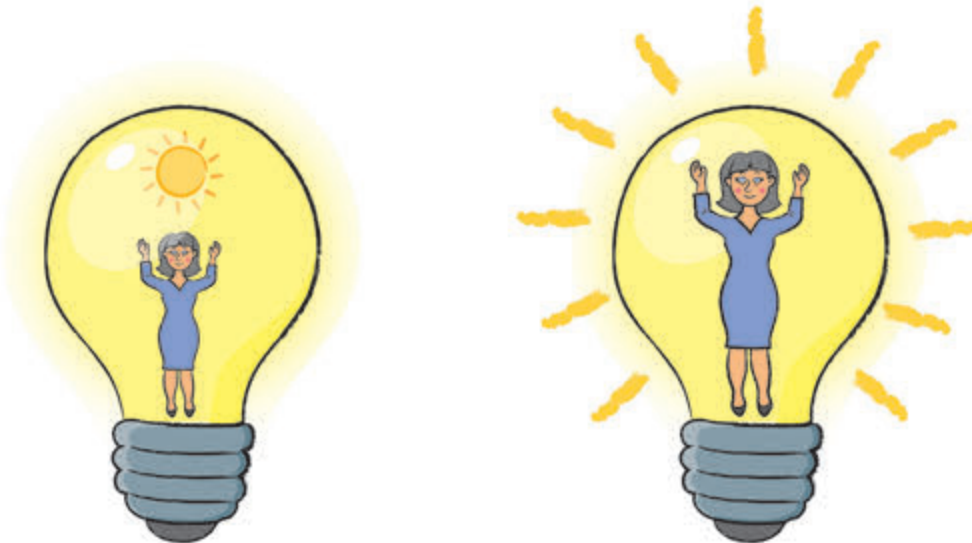
**For more tests, go to:**

<https://kobietywpracy.edu.pl/kwestionariusze-kompetencji/>




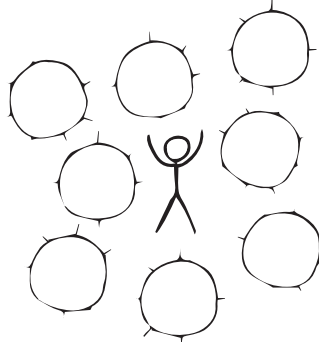
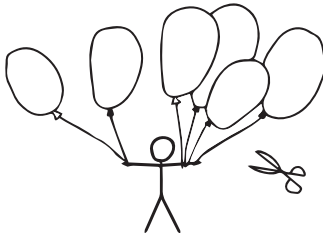
**What are the effects of the test?**

**You have probably found out in which areas you feel stronger, in which weaker, which jobs you prefer and which you would rather reject.**



For *Sandwich Generation* members, there are special tests that help them assess their own situation. They can be a starting point for a coach who supports them, and they can also evaluate commitments and limitations of other people who do not belong to this group. Their purpose is to help them explore their personal limitations, develop ways to monitor them, identify signs of getting closer to them, and find a balance between established boundaries and adapting to them.

Table 1. Assessment of the situation of a mature woman – examples of tools used by a coach

DIAGNOSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION	SOURCES OF SUPPORT									
<p>Draw yourself and the situation you are in now in the form of “a sandwich”. When drawing this picture try to think about yourself and your professional and family duties that overwhelm you. Below you will find some examples of drawings...</p>  <p>Next, in the two pieces of the sandwich write the things that burden you. Then, mark the 3 things that burden you the most. Which spheres do they belong to? Work, family or maybe you?</p>	<p>Who or what is your source of support? Where do you get your energy from? Write it down in the fields below.</p>  <p>Who could give you more support and why? Can you ask for it? Yes/No? Why?</p>									
NORMS, VALUES, ATTITUDES	BOUNDARIES AND LIMITATIONS									
<p>What are your standards and values ? What attitudes do you adopt? What do you have to do? What mustn't you do? Use this drawing and write down all the do's and don'ts you have to face in the 3 spheres of life in the balloons: work/family/you.</p>  <p>What would happen if all those do's and don'ts disappeared? What prevents you from letting them go? What or who could help you cut the string and let these balloons fly away? Which balloon would fly away first?</p>	<p>Do you know your limits? How do you know you are reaching your limit? Can you recognise the signs suggesting it? Try to write them down in the table below.</p> <table><tr><th colspan="3">MY LIMITS</th></tr><tr><th>PHYSICAL</th><th>MENTAL</th><th>EMOTIONAL</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table> <p>Can you set and respect your own limits? Are they easier or more difficult to identify in any of these areas? In which one? What or who could help you identify them?</p>	MY LIMITS			PHYSICAL	MENTAL	EMOTIONAL			
MY LIMITS										
PHYSICAL	MENTAL	EMOTIONAL								

Source: Women 45+ as valuable employees! A guide for employers and organizations supporting mature women, Dobre Kadry, Time4Help – on the basis of Hoogeschool Odisee, *Coachen van mensen uit de sandwichgeneratie. Een handleiding voor loopbaancoaches*, Brussels 2020

## The role of a coach/counsellor or psychologist

A person who might also play an important role in the self-assessment process is a coach or career counsellor. Where to find one?

In Poland, there are many forms of free-of-charge assistance or support available in this area, which is required by the legal acts of the European Union as well as national regulations and acts.

**You can look for information about assistance provided by the state, local governments or NGOs on appropriate websites. There are multiple options you can choose from<sup>5</sup>.**

**GENERAL COUNSELLING:** Tasks connected with providing adults with information about the possibilities of supplementing or continuing their education or obtaining qualifications are carried out, among others, by Voluntary Labour Corps, employment agencies, universities, associations, foundations, social and professional organizations and other entities whose statutory goal is to provide such services. In schools for adults, lifelong learning institutions, practical training institutions and training and professional development centres, students can benefit from counselling and consultations provided by psychologists as part of psychological and pedagogical support. These tasks are also carried out by non-governmental organizations with the use of government, local government and European Union funds.

Vocational and lifelong education centres (currently in both larger and smaller towns<sup>6</sup>) offer:

- help in finding a job
- organizing or assistance in completing an internship, apprenticeship or voluntary work
- access to current information about professions and possibilities of improving or obtaining knowledge and professional skills
- help in learning about oneself, about one's possibilities and expectations, improving one's self-esteem and increasing motivation
- developing the skills of planning an educational and professional path, looking for a job and preparing for an interview
- developing soft skills, including effective communication, negotiation, and assertiveness
- support for entering the labour market, including the process of transfer from school and adaptation to the work environment.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/guidance-and-counselling-lifelong-learning-approach-50\\_pl](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/guidance-and-counselling-lifelong-learning-approach-50_pl)

<sup>6</sup> e.g. <http://ckziupoznan.pl/p/dz/doradztwo-zawodowe-dla-doroslych/>, <https://www.ckziuludowpolski.pl/>



County labour offices offer services to unemployed people or jobseekers (including people with disabilities) who are registered there:

- career counselling
- scholarships for people undertaking education
- training – extracurricular activities aimed at obtaining, supplementing or improving one's skills and professional or general qualifications needed to perform work, including the ability to look for employment
- internship enabling a given person to acquire practical skills necessary for work by performing tasks in the workplace without entering into an employment relationship with the employer
- vocational preparation in the workplace enabling a given person to obtain new qualifications or professional skills through performing professional tasks in the workplace according to the programme agreed between the county governor, the employer, the person who seeks employment or who is not employed.

Information about Labour Offices and a lot of additional information can be found on the government website: <https://zielonalinia.gov.pl/>.

In voivodship labour offices – **sometimes also in their divisions – it is possible to visit Centres of Information and Professional Career Planning<sup>7</sup>**. They help the unemployed, jobseekers, school graduates, young people and employers, and provide help on site as well as remotely. A person who decides to use the help of such an entity may obtain information about:

- ways of writing cover letters, CVs, preparing a reply to a job advertisement
- preparation for a job interview
- choosing the most appropriate method of training or retraining
- effective job search methods
- basic issues related to opening one's own business
- specificity of various professions
- job offers on the domestic and foreign market
- the current situation in the labour market.

The centres also offer access to information about schools, universities and training institutions, magazines, leaflets, examples of CVs and cover letters, videos, information files and computer programmes about specific professions and educational institutions. These entities can organize workshops, individual counselling, tests, and they can help to find job offers. They cooperate with employers, organizations and the media. Last but not least, they make available different **information resources to anybody interested** in using them in their offices.

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<sup>7</sup> e.g. <http://www.ciipkz.dwup.pl/>



There are also many private career advisers providing paid services. It is possible to find their contact details using search engines or by checking associations consociating such specialists<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> e.g. Narodowego Forum Doradztwa Kariery, <http://www.nfdk.pl/>

# Increasing personal resources and reducing limitations

If you already know which competences you lack, it is worth obtaining them through self-study, courses or formal education. It is never too late to do that – mature people are often seen among students of the first or second degree studies, whereas in post-graduate or specialist courses they usually make the majority of participants.

According to our research, employers usually send their mature female employees to three main types of course: professional, ICT and accounting. They would also like them to participate in courses teaching them a new profession, or those which will help them to improve their soft, language and technical skills (e.g. a driving licence).

## TOPICS OR FIELDS OF TRAINING / COURSES OR STUDIES / UNIVERSITY



### Courses/training completed by women

Professional qualifications/a new profession	<b>64%</b>
Digital skills	<b>22%</b>
Foreign languages	<b>12%</b>

*Basis – respondents who are completing/completed them, N=304*

### Courses/training which women plan to participate in

Professional qualifications/a new profession	<b>53%</b>
Foreign languages	<b>23%</b>
Digital skills	<b>18%</b>

*Basis – respondents who plan to participate in courses/training, N=101*



### Courses/training selected by employers for their employees

Professional	<b>58%</b>
ICT & computer	<b>32%</b>
Finance and accounting	<b>13%</b>

*Basis – employers who have sent their employees to some courses/training, N=46*

### Courses/training which employers would like their female employees to participate in

Digital skills	<b>86%</b>
Professional qualifications/a new profession	<b>79%</b>
Soft skills	<b>65%</b>
Foreign languages	<b>54%</b>
Technical skills (e.g. a driving licence)	<b>52%</b>

*Basis – employers who see the need for such courses/training, N=66*

Figure 2. Topics of courses and training preferred by employers of mature women

Source: IQS report for Dobre Kadry

In the *Time4Help* project, we prepared training and workshops aimed at developing or improving competences in specific areas. From the testing period we know that their programme and workshop methods can be useful and attractive for mature women, even if they are conducted remotely. We show them as examples of training improving one's knowledge and skills, and equipping mature women with competences that can be attractive for employers.

## Social skills

Some of the proposed training concerns soft skills in two areas – better self-awareness and improvement of relationships with others, and acquiring unique skills useful in contemporary work teams: cooperation in intercultural teams and with people with disabilities.



Figure 3.  
Training in social skills  
developed in the *Time4Help*  
Project

Source:  
own work

Table 2 presents the most important information about the proposed training and courses. It is worth noting that those offering new social skills in the field of cooperation in intercultural teams and with people with disabilities may spark an idea of creating new professional competences. In fact, they provide unique competences – knowledge and skills useful in practically every industry and in many positions, especially those related to contact with other employees and customers.

Table 2. Social skills of mature women – thematic scope, addressees and expected outcomes of training and workshops

TITLE	MAIN GOAL	FOR WHOM?	BENEFITS
<b>The analysis of strengths in the field of creating one's own image based on the group's feedback</b>	Increasing awareness and knowledge of the impact of creating one's own image on other people.	Women motivated to learn new things and those who intend to start their own business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feedback from the group about one's own image,</li> <li>• discovering one's own strengths and weaknesses,</li> <li>• possibility of developing skills in conscious self-creation,</li> <li>• testing oneself and one's own reactions in stressful situations e.g. when being evaluated by others or performing difficult tasks etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Building own image in relationships with other people</b>	Increasing awareness and knowledge of the impact of creating one's own image on the development of professional career with the use of social media.	Women motivated to learn new things and those who intend to start their own business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feedback from the group about one's own image,</li> <li>• learning about the latest trends in social media regarding communication and creating your one's own brand,</li> <li>• developing one's skills in the field of conscious self-creation or an idea for a business,</li> <li>• creating one's own ideas on how to communicate on the Internet,</li> <li>• testing oneself and one's own reactions in stressful situations e.g. when being evaluated by others or performing difficult tasks etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Cooperation in team and multicultural groups (knowledge and skills)</b>	Acquiring basic knowledge about working in multicultural teams, learning about models and dimensions of culture (selection), cultural differences (selection) and acquiring skills to properly interact and communicate with the representatives of other cultures.	Dedicated to all people who, due to the character of their work, professional and/or social contacts, work or intend to work in a culturally diverse environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improving the skills of effective communication and appropriate acting in a multicultural environment,</li> <li>• improving the skills of properly responding to problematic situations caused by cultural differences.</li> </ul>

<p><b>A mature woman as support for people with disabilities in the workplace.</b></p> <p><b>Development of social skills as an opportunity to improve the professional potential of women aged 45–65</b></p>	<p>Informing training participants about various types of disability (sensory, motor, intellectual, autism, Asperger's syndrome), proper communication and the principles of good behaviour towards people with disabilities; developing and strengthening unique social skills of mature women useful in the work environment.</p>	<p>Women who do not work but who would like to take up employment, women who would like to change their job, women who take care of people with disabilities, women who intend to establish their own business in the care sector and those who employ people with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• information about various types of disability (sensory, motor, intellectual, autism, Asperger's syndrome),</li><li>• learning about proper communication and the principles of good behaviour towards people with disabilities,</li><li>• the ability to behave properly among people with disabilities (both in professional and private life),</li><li>• unique social skills of mature women useful in the work environment,</li><li>• development of professional potential.</li></ul>
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Source: own work based on the concept of training courses and workshops prepared and tested as part of the *Time4Help* project carried out by Dobre Kadry Research and Training Centre Ltd.

## Key competences – including digital skills and preparation for learning foreign languages

Mature women want to learn foreign languages, and employers also see a need for this. The set of training courses developed in the project includes training which is supposed to prepare participants for language courses or self-study, and which is useful for almost everyone who is not a professional linguist. The research results say that mature women have a lot of digital skills, but according to them and also their employers, this area requires constant improvement. Among training courses dedicated to this subject, there are several proposals (see Figure 4 and Table 3) of practical use of available programmes for work, in one's own company or even for the development of one's own passions (such as writing a blog). A very important and useful topic of personal data security can be a bargaining chip when looking for a job in a smaller company, and it is also a necessary element of preparation for running one's own business. A course in operating technical payment tools used in almost any point of sale can supplement this set of competences preparing a given person to start their own business activity (or obtain employment in places like shops, service points or catering outlets which constantly look for new workers).

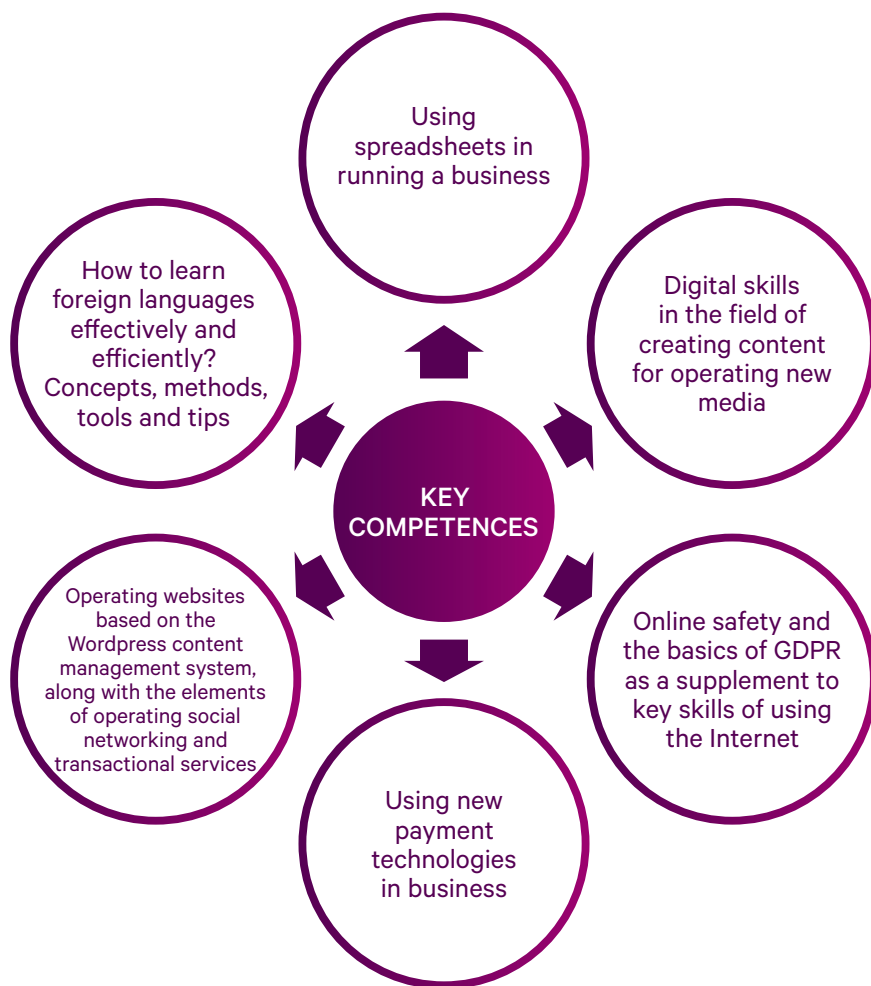


Figure 4. Training in key competences developed in the *Time4Help* project

Source: own work

Table 3. Key competences of mature women – thematic scope, addressees and expected results of training and workshops

TITLE	MAIN GOAL	FOR WHOM?	BENEFITS
<b>How to learn foreign languages effectively? Concepts, methods, tools and tips</b>	Obtaining information about modern and effective methods of learning foreign languages, increasing the level of motivation to learn and readiness to undertake learning a foreign language.	All people who want to effectively learn a foreign language, the knowledge of which is one of the key competences of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discovering one's aptitude for learning foreign languages and the preferred learning style,</li> <li>• information about effective methods of foreign language learning,</li> <li>• a greater degree of independence in learning a foreign language and the ability to manage the process of gaining language proficiency.</li> </ul>
<b>Using a spreadsheet in planning and managing one's own business</b>	Efficient use of a spreadsheet in the scope necessary to perform basic activities in planning and running a business.	Women who want to start their own business, want to change their job and those who would like to improve their competences in the field of practical use of a spreadsheet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning about spreadsheet tools that can optimize one's work,</li> <li>• acquiring skills of using a spreadsheet to plan and manage one's own business,</li> <li>• overcoming barriers/fears related to the use of computer applications.</li> </ul>
<b>Digital skills in the scope of creating content for using new media</b>	Acquiring skills of preparing an article for a website on one's own (including images), learning about the rules that should be followed when developing content for a website and learning about the tools that make it possible to prepare photos and images for a website.	People considering using the Internet for personal and professional development (e.g. managing a website, online sales, development of interests).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning about the rules of proper entering, editing and formatting of the content in the text editor,</li> <li>• learning about the principles of creating accessible content (WCAG standard),</li> <li>• acquiring skills of editing photos so that they could be published on the Internet,</li> <li>• acquiring skills of using cloud solutions to store and share resources.</li> </ul>





<b>Operating websites based on the Wordpress content management system, along with the elements of operating social networking and transactional services</b>	Learning about the basic principles of creating websites in HTML based on the Wordpress content management system, learning about the advanced functions of Allegro, PayPal, Facebook and LinkedIn.	People who consider a more active use of online tools for personal and professional development (e.g. online sales, blogging, looking for a job, development of interests).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the ability to run one's own blog/website on the Wordpress platform,</li><li>• the ability to effectively search for information on the Internet using various sources,</li><li>• the ability to sell one's own products/ services using transactional websites (e.g. Allegro) or an online store (eCommerce plugin),</li><li>• the ability to use advanced functions of searching for job offers and groups on LinkedIn, Facebook,</li><li>• the ability to select the appropriate data to share on social networking sites (LinkedIn, Facebook).</li></ul>
<b>Security on the internet and the basics of GDPR as a supplement to key skills of using the internet</b>	Learning about the rules of safe use of the computer and online resources, learning about the rights of internet users in the field of collecting, storing and processing of personal data, learning about the provisions and rules regarding the protection of personal data applicable to the operation of the website, learning about the functions and rules of using cookies on websites.	People using the Internet and electronic devices on a daily basis who want to increase their cybersecurity and be more aware of their rights and obligations concerning personal data protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• learning about the rules of safe use of Internet resources,</li><li>• the ability to recognize potential threats and respond to them appropriately,</li><li>• learning about the rules of personal data processing on the part of both data processor and the person whose data is processed, learning about the advantages and disadvantages of using the so-called cookies,</li><li>• increasing the sense of security and awareness of using Internet resources.</li></ul>



New technologies in sales and in one's own company – an example of universal skills	Practical preparation of course participants to perform activities and work as a cashier or manager in a point of sale (selling products or services).	Every person planning to work in a point of sale as a worker or manager, also those who run their own business selling services or products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• general knowledge about the organization of the sales service point,</li><li>• the ability to operate a cash desk with a payment terminal, scales and a barcode reader,</li><li>• openness to modern technologies in sales systems, electronic payments and other new payment methods.</li></ul>
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Source: own work based on the concept of training courses and workshops prepared and tested as part of the *Time4Help* project carried out by Dobre Kadry Research and Training Centre Ltd.

### Creativity and entrepreneurship workshops

For women who are interested in starting or developing their own business, there are two complementary small-group workshops. The first one helps to build and specify one's own ideas for a company, based on the increasingly popular Design Thinking technique and user-oriented design. The second workshop aims to work out financial specifics and help in developing a business plan (see Table 4).

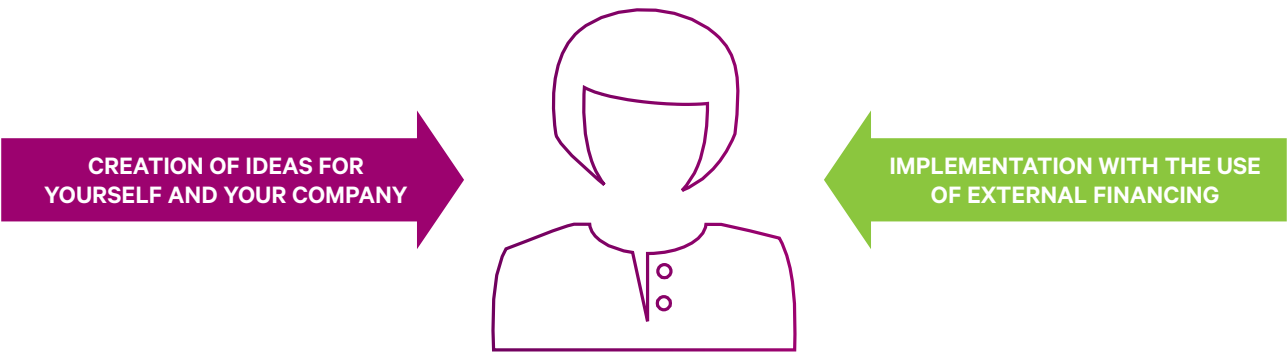


Figure 5. Creativity and entrepreneurship in training mature women  
Source: own work

Table 4. Creativity and entrepreneurship of mature women – thematic scope, addressees and expected results of the workshops


TITLE	MAIN GOAL	FOR WHOM?	BENEFITS
<p><b>How to plan “your own business” that will give you satisfaction and be useful to others?</b></p> <p><b>The use of design thinking tools to create ideas for one’s own professional activity</b></p>	<p>Learning about Design Thinking and how to use it in order to create innovative and user-friendly solutions.</p> <p>User-oriented design experience based on the key tools of the Design Thinking methodology – inspiration to use Design Thinking tools when searching and developing an idea for one’s own professional activity.</p>	<p>People interested in acquiring competences in the field of the practical use of Design Thinking when creating a concept of their own business activity, those who want to stop trying and start acting, throw their excuses into the bin, learn from experience and make some positive changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge about Design Thinking – where it comes from, where it is used, how the work proceeds based on the analysed approach and what stages it consists of</li> <li>• participation and experience in the Design Thinking and design process</li> <li>• learning about principles, techniques and key tools used during the various stages of design and putting them into practice</li> <li>• finding answers to the following questions: How to take matters into your own hands and design your own professional activity? How to generate interesting ideas for an activity that is satisfactory and useful for others? How to develop your own passions, hobbies and skills? How to turn your talents into professional activity that will bring independence, freedom of decision, opportunity of self-fulfilment and a sense of financial security?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Managing finances in business activity</b></p>	<p>Learning about the tools of effective financial management and determining the level of profitability.</p>	<p>Women who intend to start their own business, especially those who would like to submit applications in order to obtain financing from public funds (job offices, marshal’s offices, competitions for start-ups).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning about the methods of identifying revenue and expenditure within the conducted business activity.</li> </ul>

Source: own work based on the concept of training courses and workshops prepared and tested as part of the *Time4Help* project carried out by Dobre Kadry Research and Training Centre Ltd.

## Individual educational path – create your own!

We have said and presented quite a lot as far as educational activities are concerned, but it is necessary to mention that mature women may already have certain competences and skills in a given area, even at an expert level. We know that mature women differ greatly in their experience and competences and, contrary to young people, they should be able to choose training that will suit their individual needs and preferences. The solution that we propose after the testing stage is an individual selection of training topics appropriate to the competency gaps and the needs of a given woman. Look at the examples shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Individual selection of training and workshop topics

	<p><b>KATARZYNA, aged 47</b>  <i>Księgowa pracująca An accountant working in an accounting department of a medium-sized company. She would like to start her own business in this field, sole proprietorship for a start. However, she lacks experience in running own business and she feels that she isn't self-confident enough in relationships with other people.</i></p>	<p><b>BARBARA, aged 62</b>  <i>After the death of her husband she had been taking care of for the las 5 years she would like to put herself out there and earn some extra money in retirement. She knows German very well, and before her husband fell ill, she had been working as a German teacher at school. Now she would like to work as an assistant of a tour guide organizing trips in Poland.</i></p>	<p><b>TERESA, aged 55</b>  <i>She works in a large company in an administrative position, but would love to work part-time to help her daughter with grandchildren and have more time for her mother who requires more and more care. Because of her menopause, she feels tired and she is also afraid of losing her job.</i></p>
	<p>She chooses training improving her management and social skills.</p>	<p>She chooses training improving her social skills and the knowledge of GDPR. To refresh her skills, she also decides to participate in a course in foreign language teaching.</p>	<p>She chooses training courses improving specific social skills and relationships with others, and also those in GDPR. Additionally, she decides to participate in training which will help her learn foreign languages.</p>

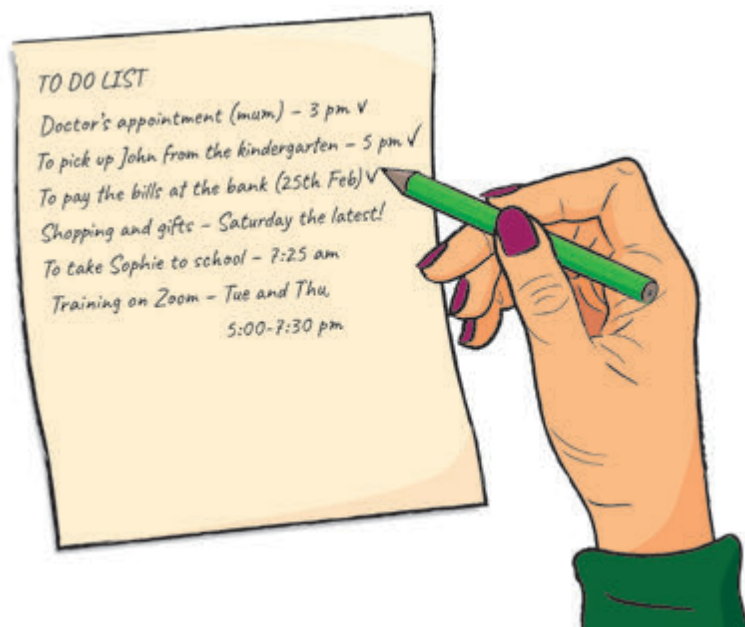
	KATARZYNA aged 47	BARBARA aged 62	TERESA aged 55
<b>SOCIAL SKILLS</b>			
Analysis of strengths in the field of creating a personal image based on the group's feedback			
Creating one's own image in relationships with other people			
Working in a team and multicultural groups (knowledge and skills)			
A mature woman as support for people with disabilities in the workplace			
<b>ICT AND LANGUAGE SKILLS</b>			
How to learn foreign languages effectively and efficiently? Concepts, methods, tools and tips			
Using a spreadsheet in planning and managing one's own business			
Digital skills in the field of content creation for using new media			
Operating websites based on the Wordpress content management system, along with the elements of operating social networking and transactional services			
Online safety and the basics of GDPR as a supplement to key skills of using the Internet			
New technologies in sales and in one's own company – an example of universal skills			
<b>CREATIVITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP</b>			
How to plan your own business that will give you satisfaction and be useful to others? The use of design thinking tools to create ideas for one's own professional activity			
Financial management in a business activity			

Source: own work

## Limitations and problems

In the project, we tested practically all training courses and workshops together with the authors of the programmes and a group of mature women. Unfortunately, trial testing collided with restrictions imposed in connection with Covid-19 pandemic, which only worsened the problems faced by many people, let alone women who wish to participate in educational activities and who are burdened with many other limitations and obligations at the same time. Therefore, female readers of this guide, even if motivated to learn and make new commitments, should carefully analyse their life situations and opportunities, and be ready to adapt to any emerging difficulties.

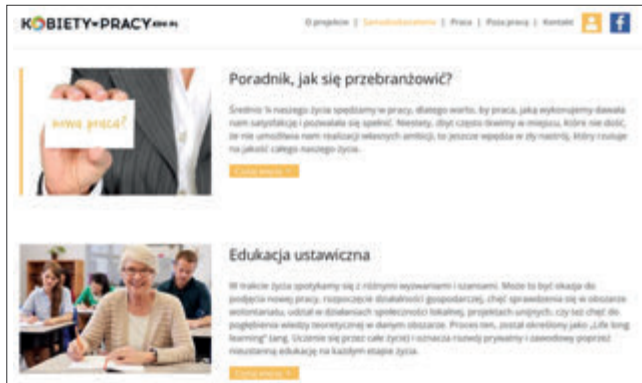
**What can happen?** Actually, anything – from health problems, problems of relatives and changes at work to technical issues such as poor Internet performance or a lack of suitable software while participating in online classes, or – in the case of traditional offline training – problems with getting to the place where such a course is run. We know that many mature women look after other people and for them it is the family that comes first, not their career. We are also aware of the fact that you, our reader, may be one of them and in an event of a conflict of values or tasks you will choose the good of others. It is worth being prepared for such conflicts and arranging, e.g. assistance in case your grandson picks up a cold or the possibility of participating in the class one more time if you fall ill. Luckily, it is possible to predict most of the problems of distance learning and get ready for them e.g. by testing your Internet connection, checking your equipment and software beforehand, or attending a special workshop that will prepare you to take part in online lessons.



## Who offers such training?

Training and workshops prepared as part of the project may be offered by training centres implementing the Time4Help model. However, you can find similar training courses supplementing your skills or helping you acquire new competences also in other training institutions, depending on subjects or learning outcomes that you would like to achieve. Information on where to look for them can be found in the next chapter.

# Where to look for support?

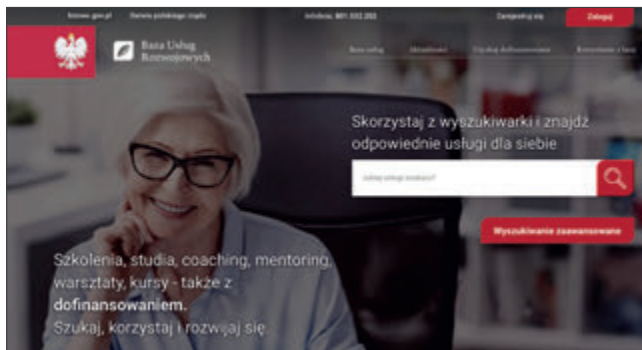


## Motivation and knowledge

As part of the project, we have prepared a website for mature women with a lot of information and inspiration

<https://kobietywpracy.edu.pl>.

In the “Self-improvement” tab you will find advice and information about places providing counselling services.



A lot of information about the available training, also free and co-financed, can be found on the government website: Database of Development Services

<https://uslugirozwojowe.parp.gov.pl/>



The database includes 12 training categories, a search engine for training and training providers, and a guide on how to search for training.

On the website, it is also possible to find information about co-financing the company's development or training: <https://serwis-uslugirozwojowe.parp.gov.pl/dofinansowanie>.

We have already written about counsellors working in public institutions supporting professional and educational activity. Interestingly, many of them also offer financial support for starting or developing one's business (e.g. in the autumn of 2021, a lot of grant competitions for people setting up business activity were organised) and assistance for the unemployed, e.g. scholarships for people starting an apprenticeship (information available at the local labour office).

Support for retraining or business development may also be available under local grants, e.g. from regional operational programmes (<https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/>) or in local groups (<http://ksow.pl/baza-danych/lgd-2014-2020>).

Of course, it is also a good idea to enter a few keywords in the search engine and see the most popular results – e.g. when you type “entrepreneurial women”, you will probably see information about local projects and possibilities of support. Many of them will probably not be available to everyone – some will be dedicated only to unemployed or young people, but it is worth following what such places offer and contacting project operators to learn about their services.

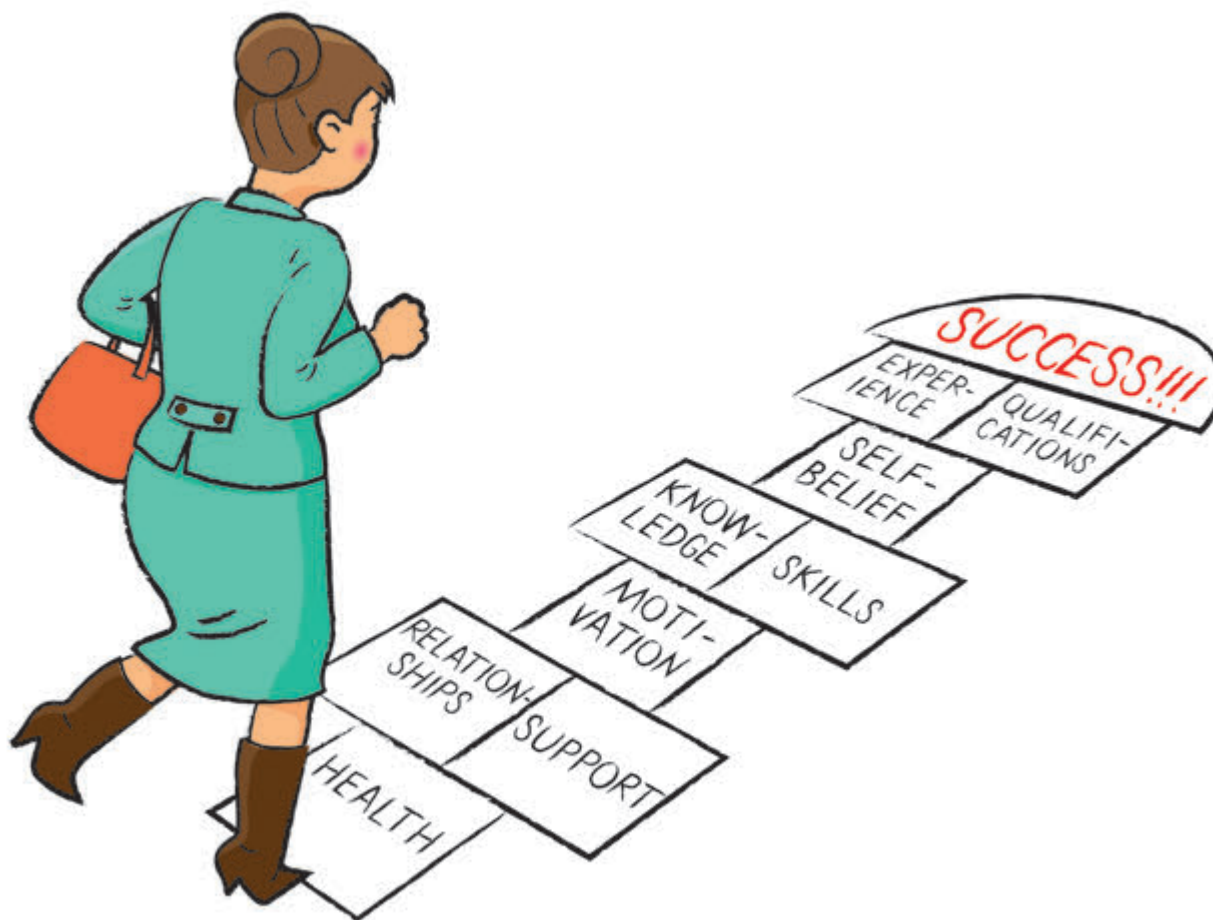
## Organizations supporting women

In Poland, there are many associations and foundations whose aim is to support women in crisis and help them develop their entrepreneurship. It is quite easy to find them with the use of a search engine, and it is a good idea to type keywords such as “active women”, “financing for women”, “projects for women”, “women's entrepreneurship”, or “help for women”, adding the name of a foundation or association, and also the name of the city or place of residence. We do not recommend any specific organization – their goals and support options are very diverse and require more careful checking.



## Final remarks

If you have read this guide and you have done the tests available on the project website, it means you have done a lot and you probably already know which direction to follow. Good luck!



## General information about the project

The *Time4Help* project (POWR.04.03.00-00-017/18) is co-financed by the European Union under the European Social Fund and implemented in a Polish-Finnish-Belgian-Spanish partnership. In Poland, the project is conducted by Dobre Kadry Research and Training Centre Ltd., in Finland by XAMK University in Mikkeli (South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences), in Belgium by Odisee University in Brussels (Odisee vzw – Higher Institute for Family Studies), whereas in Spain – by Acción contra el Hambre foundation from Madrid.

The main goal of the project is to develop new solutions to support mature women aged 45–65. In order to achieve it, the project assumes motivating the representatives of this target group to increase their attractiveness in the labour market by improving their competences and qualifications in various forms of lifelong learning. As part of the project, we developed a model solution that takes into account the specificity of mature women who belong to the *Sandwich Generation*, that is, a group of middle-aged people taking care of the dependant representatives of both younger (children, grandchildren and older (or the same) generation (parents, siblings).

**Implementation period:** December 2018 – January 2022

### Project target groups:

<b>RECIPIENTS</b>	mature women (the assumed age is 45–65 years old)
<b>USERS</b>	employers, training institutions, employment agencies

As part of the project, we carried out numerous studies in the area of the needs of the defined target group. We strove to investigate the situation of Polish mature women and, using the results of the research, suggested solutions that might effectively increase the chances of improving their situation in the labour market. The main source of data for the analysis was qualitative (semiotic research on texts of popular culture) and quantitative research (CATI – Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) on a representative sample of 1010 mature women and 104 employers.



Project co-financed by the European Union under the European Social Fund  
Project number: POWR.04.03.00-00-0017/18

Women  
45+



Time4Help



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