

An evaluation of the WEBNET project

*Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund through the
Programme for Employability and Inclusion 2014-2020*



Prepared for Partas

By

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Context and Background:

The Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL), is the only ESF programme in Ireland for the 2014 to 2020 period. The Programme involves a total investment of €1.157 billion; over €544 million each from the ESF and the Irish Government and a special allocation of just over €68 million from the EU's Youth Employment Initiative.

Priority Areas

The key priority areas chosen for investment in Ireland, in line with ESF Regulations, focussed on *activation of the unemployed, social and labour market inclusion, education and youth employment*.

The PEIL contains five Priority Axes, including Technical Assistance, which funds the operations, administration and communication of the programme. The Priority Axes are as follows:

- Priority 1: Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility.
- Priority 2: Promoting Social Inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market
- Priority 3: Investing in Education, Training and Life Long Learning with a view to upskilling and re-skilling the labour force
- Priority 4: Youth Employment Initiative
- Priority 5: Technical Assistance

Partas responded to a call for proposals in September 2016 as part of PEIL 2014-2020, under Priority 2, Gender Equality measure, specifically focussing on Women's Entrepreneurship.

a) Women returning to the workforce

b) **Women's entrepreneurship**

Following this call, grants totalling €5.2 million to promote Gender Equality were awarded to 18 projects nationally including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), locally based community groups, and others. Partas was successfully awarded €278,405 to deliver its project over a three year period.

Gender Equality Activity – PEIL PR 2.9

Funding will be made available through the Department of Justice and Equality (50% ESF funded, 50% Exchequer funded) over the period of the programme to support a) women returning to the workforce and b) women's entrepreneurship.

Up to €5.5 million may be committed under this call of which €4.5 million may be committed to projects supporting women returning to the workforce and €1 million may be committed to projects supporting women's entrepreneurship.

The Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality is responsible for granting funding under this Call.

WEBNET descriptor:

Partas described its ambition in the proposal document, which is outlined below:

WEB NET will be a dynamic business development programme designed to support women in Tallaght to become entrepreneurs. Ultimately, it will be about offering its members access to high quality accredited training and mentoring, equipping them with all the skills they will need to overcome barriers, and get from A to Z on the path to self-employment. A combination of mentoring, training and networking will ensure that the women participating are given every opportunity to succeed. It will target both those in the early stages of entrepreneurship (i.e., those 'thinking' about it) and those who may not even have considered self-employment yet. It will be housed in a hub of entrepreneurial activity in our Bolbrook Enterprise Centre that will create a sense of energy and enthusiasm among participations, exposing them to the sense of community within the centre, which is a crucial factor in creating an enabling a supportive environment, particularly for those that have been excluded, distanced and haven't participated in the economy for quite some time.

Transferable skills:

Participants will gain qualifications in new skills which will give them renewed confidence in their abilities. The three QQI modules respond to the needs of the labour market, and will focus on developing excellent marketing, communication, sales and business development skills among participants to enable them to develop, grow, sustain and manage successful businesses. Specifically, Sales and Marketing skills are essential in running a business, but are equally valuable in any sector of industry, thus their transferability must not be undervalued.

Indicative actions and categories of persons supported

Strand B – Women’s Entrepreneurship

1. To develop and deliver interventions aimed at addressing the gender gap in entrepreneurial activity through targeted supports for women’s entrepreneurship.
2. Women who can be supported to increase the rate of women’s entrepreneurship.

Contribution to ESF horizontal principles

All projects were required to demonstrate how the following four ESF

‘Horizontal themes’ will be addressed by the activities proposed in the application.

a) Promotion of equality between women and men

- Setting out how equality between men and women will be taken into account and promoted during the preparation and implementation of the project.

b) Promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination

- Setting out how the project will provide equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

c) Social Inclusion

Setting out set out how the project will address the needs of disadvantaged groups in order to allow them to better integrate into the labour market, and thereby facilitate their full participation in society.

d) Sustainable development

Setting out how the project will adhere to the principle of sustainable development and with the aim of preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment.

Project Monitoring

Monitoring is the process which involves the regular recording and reporting of information about participants and activities in order to:

- Indicate how each Beneficiary is progressing in delivering the project or service described in the Grant Agreement;
- Ensure allocated funds are used for their intended purpose;
- Provide data that the EU Funds Unit can aggregate and analyse to generate information on the overall size, value and impact of the programme.
- WEBNET sent quarterly returns to the EU Funds Unit, containing the following::
 - Financial information, quarterly using the template worksheets that were provided;
 - Operational information, bi-annually using the template worksheets provided;
- Audited Financial Statements, an Income and Expenditure Account and Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

Partas had a desk based on-the-spot (announced) verification audit with Alan McDonnell in 2017.

Overall Performance Based on Project Objectives:

Objectives as set out in programme application form and subsequent contract between the Department and Partas.

Programme objective

How will WEBNET contribute to the programme objective of increased female participation in labour market?

Objective outlined in application form:

1. Tackling the gender gap in self-employment in Tallaght:

WEBNET will engage with women from Tallaght including those from disadvantaged communities and those distant from the labour market, with a view to raising their skill level through the delivery of QQI business related training modules, ultimately increasing their future employment prospects. It is envisaged that the participants will be lone parents, unemployed women and 'women working in the home'. It will provide support to a minimum of 90 women (15 -20 per class, 6 rotations), of whom we anticipate 60 will become employed/self-employed.

Actual output on completion of project:

WEBNET successfully engaged, and recruited 118 women (represents 28 more women than planned) on to its 6 programmes between April 2017 and February 2020.

- 17 were over 54 years of age, and 1 was under 25
- 24 were of minority, migrant background
- 5 had a disability
- 54 of these were 'disadvantaged'.
- 83 were in employment or self-employment on completion of the programme
- 168 WEBNET sessions/classes were delivered over three years

Objective outlined in application form:

2. Enhancing skill levels among marginalised women:

WEB NET will offer both group training sessions and individual mentoring to women who want to become self-employed.

A minimum of 67 women will receive QQI accreditation on 1-3 modules completed.

Actual output on completion of project:

- 6 women had primary/junior cycle as highest level of educational attainment
- 44 had leaving certificate or further education
- 67 had higher certificate or above
- 81 were identified as short term unemployed of this 43 were long term unemployed.
- **82 women** gained a qualification upon leaving (in some cases, they gained two and three QQI awards)*.
- 83 were in employment or self-employment on completion of the programme.
- 3 joint Graduation ceremonies took place, where two WEBNET classes graduated at each event.

- *During the programme a small number of women had particular issues which prevented them from completing the course. Some of those issues included illness (mental health and cancer), pregnancies and births (one woman returned as soon as her baby was born, and even brought the baby to class on some occasions), bereavement (one woman's young husband and business partner died suddenly and unexpectedly).*
- *Despite these life changing events, almost all of these women continued to engage with WEBENT and participate in networking sessions.*

***Breakdown of Qualifications:**

Module	Career Planning Level 4	Start Your Own Business Level 5	Sales and marketing management Level 6
Number of women achieving award	81	45	19
45 women gained two awards.			
15 women gained all three awards.			
82 women achieved at least one award			

Objective outlined in application form:

3. Ongoing engagement with women through Networking:

It will address the objective of the programme in its continued commitment to creating a thriving business network of women who would otherwise not have become self-employed without the support of WEBNET.

Networking events:

- National Women's Enterprise Day 2018 and 2019
- A female entrepreneur, Emma Kennedy, Owner, Tallaght Echo
- Former Dragon's Den participant, Mindi of Mamma Nagis
- 'Say yes to happiness' Pauline Egan
- Social media marketing (at LEO site and one in Bolbrook plus Catherine Trebble)
- Prof. Tom Cooney, DIT, Entrepreneurship session
- Felicity McCarthy, full day social media marketing, as part of LEO enterprise week 2020
- WEBNET Alumni, Lorraine Carroll, owner FUHN App, and DCU high flyer
- Tallaght Enterprise Town market Day

Delivered multiple times:

- ‘The experience of successful female entrepreneur’ Barbara Quinn
- Audrey Hennessey, Tax Accountant, Tax session
- Aileen O’Meara, Video blogging session
- Christmas networking 2017, 2018 and 2019
- Summer networking 2018, 2019

Some photos from WEBNET Networking Events:



Networking session with Barbara Quinn,
Entrepreneur, June 2017



Networking session with Emma Kennedy,
Owner The Echo, August 2017



Christmas lunch, 2018



Christmas lunch, 2018



'Say yes to Happiness' workshop 2019



Diane Richmond speaking to Erasmus+ project about WEBNET



Vlogging session with Aileen O'Meara 2018



Christmas Networking Session 2019



Christmas Networking Session 2018

National Women's Enterprise Day 2019



Webnet Participant, Tallaght Town Market Day 2019



Webnet Participant, Tallaght Town Market Day 2019



Local Enterprise Week, social media marketing session with Felicity McCarthy 2020



National Women's Enterprise Day 2019

Programme Structure

WEBNET was contracted to deliver six programmes over a three year period. Each programme was to be 30 weeks in duration, and to take place over one half day per week. The aim was to have 15 participants in every course.

Programmes delivered:

Course	Programme Commencement Date	Participants
WEBNET 1	May 30 th 2017	20
WEBNET 2	October 5 th 2017	24
WEBNET 3	April 17 th 2018	20
WEBNET 4	October 4 th 2018	15
WEBNET 5	March 5 th 2019	15
WEBNET 6	September 19 th 2019*	24
Total		118

*This programme ran for 18 weeks, as the programme was adjusted based on the feedback from previous groups, that the Level 6 QQI Marketing Module was too onerous, and only 15 women had completed it in the previous five rotations of the programme.

	Career Planning QQI level 4	Start Your Own Business QQI Level 5	Sales and Marketing Management QQI Level 6
WEBNET 1	12	5	1
WEBNET 2	14	9	7
WEBNET 3	16	4	1
WEBNET 4	9	7	4
WEBNET 5	11	9	6
WEBNET 6	19	12	n/a
Total	81	46	19

Other key components of the WEBNET offering as outlined in the application form are outlined below:

A unique offering, with a view to increasing participation in work, training and networking locally:

Comprehensive and seamless support structure, where the development officer and course trainer work together to ensure that each participant is fully supported through the programme.

- This is evidenced in the overwhelmingly positive evaluation form feedback from participants, outlined in Section ** of the report

Focus on responding to the recognised deficit in sales and marketing skills among Irish Entrepreneurs, and reducing the gender gap in self-employment start-ups.

- Nineteen women completed the QQI Module, Sales and Marketing Management Level 6. As is evidenced in some of the feedback from participants, and from staff involved in the project, this module was perceived to be too demanding in terms of coursework (an essay, a marketing plan and an exam). It was deemed to be too theoretical, and less practical than the other two modules delivered by WEBNET. Furthermore, participants seem very interested in short non accredited marketing sessions, to include more social media type offerings.
- However, it is worth noting that the 19 women completing this module were all very satisfied with their performance and felt a great sense of achievement in completing the module.

WEBNET will be delivered in our Bolbrook Enterprise Centre, where participants will be fully exposed to the dynamism of entrepreneurial life and the support structure afforded by community enterprise centres.

- The programme was delivered in Bolbrook Enterprise Centre, and every WEBNET class had one or more female entrepreneurs who delivered a presentation to them.

The scale and rigidity of many existing networks often acts as a barrier for entry, particularly for women from marginalised communities. Our size and approach will see us well placed to overcome these barriers.

- As is evidenced in the feedback from participants, there was an overwhelming amount of satisfaction from the networking that happened on the programme.

Partas has an excellent reputation in this field, and has a strong relationship with DSP who will support the promotion, recruitment and delivery of this programme.

- Partas worked with many local agencies in supporting WEBNET, notably the LEO, DEASP and many other local community organisations.

Communication methods with participants:

Email

The primary method of communication was via email, course notes were sent via email, in addition to any course exercises.

WhatsApp

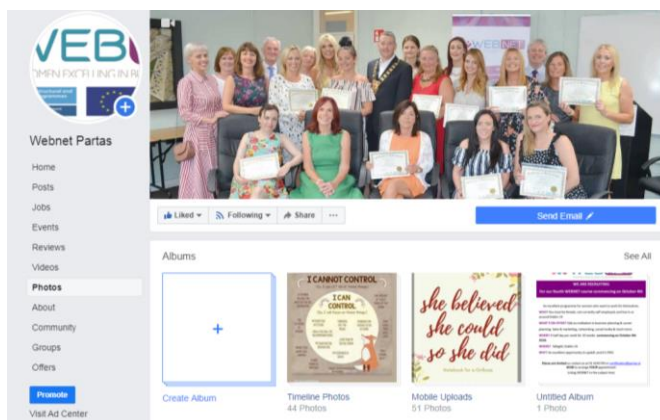
On joining the programme, participants were asked to join a class WhatsApp group. Consent forms were completed.

This was moderated by the programme manager.

This method of communication has proven to be incredibly important in fostering group relations. This is particularly evident during times of stress for participants e.g. deadline for assignment. It has also proven to be incredibly effective during COVID 19, as activity among the latest Webnet groups is seen on a daily basis.

Facebook page

Each participant was encouraged to like the WEBNET Facebook page. This is where pictures were shared, good news stories, and upcoming events. Participants would later use this as a way to share their own business pages



Feedback from Participants on WEBNET programmes

As part of the ongoing evaluation of the programme, feedback was sought in formal and informal ways. Informal feedback was usually discussed in class, openly with the groups; in private or; on WhatsApp or email. Formal feedback was sought through post course evaluation, in the form of a questionnaire; or recorded on Facebook through the review mechanism.

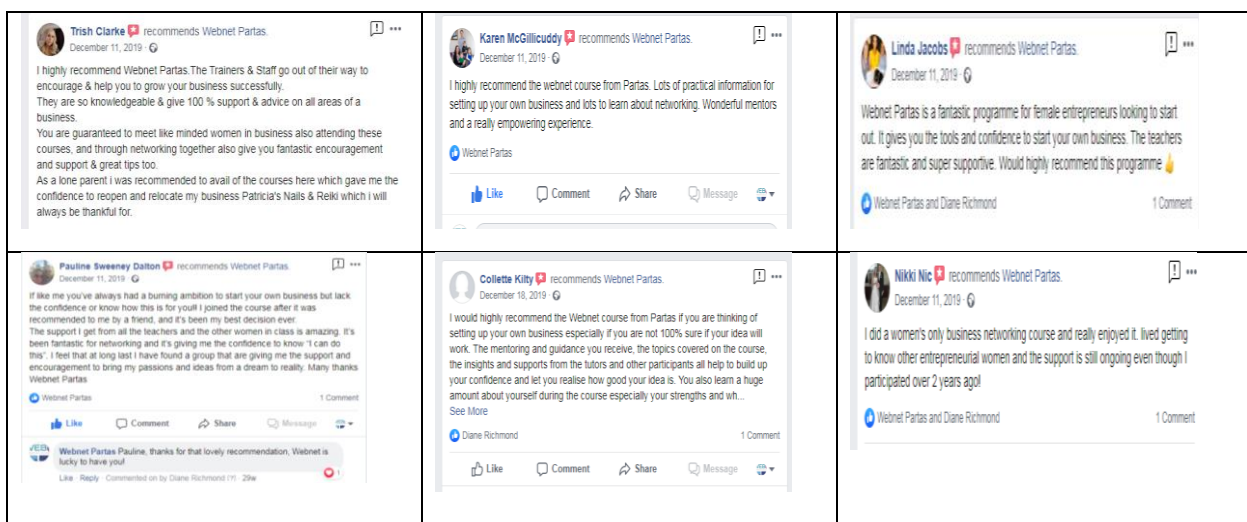
Anecdotal feedback (informal)

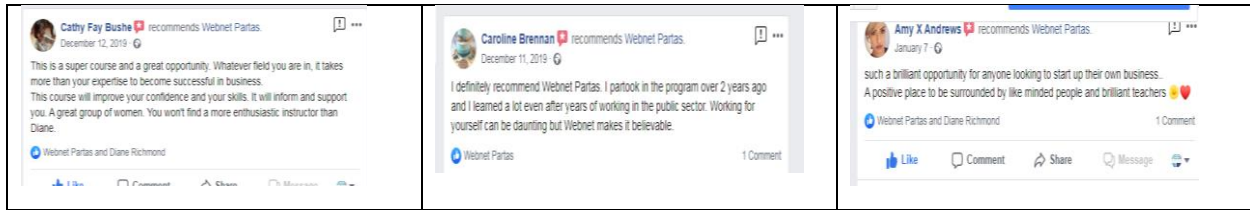
Throughout the programme, the team were inundated with anecdotal feedback from participants, about their involvement with the programme and its impact on them. Much of this is very personal, and obviously very subjective. However, the team involved were continuously encouraged by overwhelming positive feedback from those involved in the project. The team report that as each class approached the end of their programme, the overall sentiment was that they ‘didn’t know what they were going to do without their weekly class’. This was a clear indication to the team that WEBNET was fulfilling its role in supporting women to feel comfortable in a networking space.

Formal feedback

Feedback captured via Facebook

A number of participants contributed positive reviews to the WEBNET Facebook page, and below is a sample of some of the comments made during the programme:





Summary of Post Course Evaluation Findings:

At the end of each WEBNET programme, the participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. The form contains some ranking scale questions, but primarily consists of open ended questions.

Below is a summary of the comments and feedback made by 46 women.

What is your overall rating of the programme?

Where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent	1	2	3	4	5
Content of the Career Planning module					100%
Content of the Start Your Own Business module				4%	96%
Content of the Sales and Marketing module			10%	16%	74%
Course delivery by Tutors				7%	93%
Mentoring			8%	8%	84%

Participants were asked what they thought was the most valuable aspect of the programme. As the answers are all rather personal and reflect the impact the programme has had on them, it is important to show the responses. Also, this really highlights how valuable the course has been to these women, and is best captured in their own words:

- ‘The most valuable support was the help from the course instructors’
- ‘The networking amongst the class was invaluable’
- ‘The support in all its aspects and the boost of confidence I received after session with Webnet. I started with lots of ideas but very little confidence, and learnt so much throughout course’
- ‘I liked the women only vibe, felt we really supported each other’
- ‘The support, encouragement and advice was excellent’

- 'Huge support from the ladies on the course'
- 'Writing the business plan was probably the most valuable exercise. Not only is it the foundation of how the business will work but it also uses all the career planning goals and pull all the modules together'
- 'Diane and David have been remarkable with their willingness to offer help and support and motivation to everyone. If the tutors aren't interested, neither is the student. Webnet had a great dynamic overall and feel it was down to the tutors'
- 'I felt so valued and important from the day I arrived, the teachers have got it right with their approach, encouragement and delivery'
- 'Apart from the excellent tuition, the most valuable part for me was meeting likeminded creative women and getting such a boost in confidence from the experience'
- 'Being an older person I did wonder if I would fit in with the class, however from the first day it was clear that everyone was welcome and supported by Diane and Yvonne'
- 'We attended an Women's Enterprise Day in City West, this was a very inspiring day and we all came out feeling very energized'
- 'The most valuable aspect of the programme was gaining self-confidence, the course is presented in a very friendly manor and this created a comfortable learning environment. I have been out of the education system for nearly 30 years and this course was a great step in furthering my career and a space for me to learn how to develop as a female entrepreneur'
- 'The support from Diane and Yvonne and all the women on the course was the most valuable'
- 'The most valuable aspect was networking with the other women and learning so much from them, as well as the teachers. Networking with women from previous Webnet classes was excellent too, and the events like National Women's Enterprise day'
- 'Having mentoring available from Diane and Yvonne whenever is required was invaluable'
- 'Completing a business plan provided me with the confidence to set up a business'

- 'The confidence I got was amazing on a personal and professional level'
- 'The unwavering support from the course facilitators. Their knowledge and understanding. Nothing we asked for was too much for them'
- 'The information provided the content and how it was delivered. I could never have imagined going from where I was to a full business plan and distinction in a sales and marketing module when I started the course. It was delivered in such a way that it flowed really well and before we knew it, we were using all the relevant material for our own business ideas.'
- 'The best thing about the program was to have each other's and tutors support and encouragement. I also think that it was very beneficial to have experts with us in the class to talk about social media and accountancy and guests that have spoken to us about how they succeeded in their own business - it was very helpful and motivational.'
- 'The enthusiasm of the course facilitators set the tone for the duration of the course. It was very beneficial to meet likeminded business women. Although our areas of interest varied the programme was of huge benefit to all'
- 'The business planning and career planning module was delivered so well and the group really engaged with the content. I felt it was of great benefit to me to have a business plan completer and I gained a lot of confidence as a result'
- 'The group learning was invaluable especially as the girls bonded well and were eager to help each other.'
- 'The course content was excellent and the teaching and practical information went way beyond the slide content'
- 'For me the feeling of confidence to walk in and straight away feel I was in the right place. Women are so amazing when they come together'
- 'Supporting atmosphere of the tutors and the group. Reevaluating my goals, talents, putting my dreams into feasible format'
- 'I learned so much about myself and my business by putting it in a plan. Presenting it to the class was a fantastic experience and really helped my confidence'
- 'Sense of community and team spirit among the group'

- ‘Such an enjoyable experience, and the sense of community among the group was lovely’
- ‘Great environment to discuss and share ideas’
- ‘Personality profile was very valuable’
- ‘I found the different fora for discussion invaluable in this course. Whether it was chats with the other entrepreneurs in our group. Informal discussions at the end of each module with Diane and the other attendees. Also, the guest speakers were excellent; a great variety of different topics were covered and all of the speakers were very approachable and always prepared to answer our questions. I suppose this whole process enabled us to develop the skills for networking which is a key skill we all need to make it in the business world’
- ‘For me the most valuable aspect of the programme was the tutors. It is mainly due to their “you can do this” approach that encouraged me to start my own business. The tutors gave me the confidence to make my dream a reality’
- ‘It was invaluable, and if I were to pick one thing, it would be the networking with amazing like-minded people’
- ‘Personally, it was being surrounded by such amazing like-minded women. The guidance and support from Diane was second to none and I’ll always be grateful got this’

Participants were asked to identify what was the most challenging aspect of the course?

- ‘The business plan, and market research were most challenging’
- ‘The financial planning was quite tough’
- ‘Researching figures, statistics for the business plan’
- ‘The marketing module was tough to devote the time to it. Delighted I did though, and got through the exam’

Many people struggled with completing coursework outside of class:

- ‘Finding time to get the coursework done, and sitting the exam’
- ‘Finding time to do the assignments and study for the exam!’

- ‘Going into a classroom setting again was challenging’
- ‘The presentations were always a challenge, and was proud to overcome my fears’
- ‘The most challenging aspect of the course for me was being recorded while presenting communication skills for market research to a Focus group and giving a Power Point presentation of my Business Plan’
- ‘I found the sales & marketing module the most challenging’
- ‘Definitely sales and marketing module’
- ‘Completing the assignments and making sure I made the effort to prioritize things so I can get to my course every Thursday’
- ‘For me personally the most challenging were those exercises, where we were asked to speak in front of the class while being recorded. I have very little practice in public speaking and I was anxious about it, but I’m glad I showed up and did it anyway. Great learning experience!’
- ‘Putting my ideas into a business plan’
- ‘Studying for and doing an exam – so glad to come through it!’
- ‘Sales and marketing module. Too much theory, not enough practical use of the material. Finding time to do the coursework on top of work and other responsibilities’
- ‘The business plan financials were challenging. Also, whilst I did really well in the exam, the thought of it was terrifying. Great sense of achievement from completing it’
- ‘Documenting the business plan’
- ‘Preparing the business plan was very daunting when I started working on it. It was really useful that some aspects of it had been prepared earlier in the course, so these could just be adapted and inserted. Diane and Yvonne provided wonderful mentorship during this process. And I was delighted with the finished product’
- ‘The entire course was a huge learning curve for me, it gave me the help, guidance and advice I needed to explore all the options available now when thinking of starting my own business. I learned something new in every module and welcomed all the challenges the course offered me, from speaking in front of class to doing homework again!’

Participants were asked to identify what career/self-employment opportunities arise for you now? A sample of some of the answers have been summarised here:

Most women commented on being more equipped to start working for themselves:

- I am more equipped now to start my own business
- The course has given me the confidence to value my skill and market it accordingly.
- Example: 'In March 2020 I registered my own Business "WorkSing Together", I have been given a contract to work with a HSE department giving singing workshops, on hold now until September due to Covid 19. I have also been working on a project with Tallaght Community Arts. I am in talks with a business with regards to giving workshops later this year, again depending on Covid 19'

Some women have progressed into further education:

- 'Through the course I further developed my idea with great supports and encouragement from tutors and classmates. This led me to apply for social entrepreneurs Ireland Academy, and I am delighted to say I was accepted to be a participant in the Academy 2019. This will give me a great platform to develop onto the next stage.'

During the programme, a small number of women realised that self-employment isn't an option for them:

- 'I actually realized that I don't want to be self-employed anymore. It took too much work, time and energy from me without proper financial gain. I got a new job while at the course and I will stay part time employed for now and reflect on what I want to do with my life in the future'.

Having completed the WEBNET programme, they were asked what they now consider to be their key strengths and abilities. The answers were all very personal, but certainly followed a similar pattern, as summarised below:

- 'I am more confident now in my own abilities'
- I always wanted to run my own business, and now I have a more in-depth knowledge of 'what it takes to make it happen'
- 'I believe my confidence has grown, and I have now have better listening skills, networking and understand customer needs better'
- 'Better prepared – I have listed my goals and sticking to my business plan
- 'More educated – have done my research. Not afraid of networking, more confident, accepted change and looking forward to a new career'
- 'I have grown to appreciate and value myself as a person'
- 'More confidence and courage to start my business'
- 'I am now confident to speak in public, and confident to speak to customers and do more networking'
- 'Having completed the business plan and marketing plan, I have the skills to assess new opportunities and recognise if they would be good for business or not'
- 'Great networker, confident, motivated'
- 'Having completed the WEBNET programme I think my key strength now is that I gained so much confidence to openly discuss with people and tell them about my business and what I can do for them. Prior to doing the programme I had serious confidence issues, I thought I could help people improve their mental health and wellbeing through singing but lacked the belief in myself to start my own business'
- 'I have grown in confidence when dealing with third parties and discussing my business with them, the programme gave me the tools to set my business up and promote my business'

Similarly, they were asked in what way do they think their understanding of themselves (self-awareness), has improved since the beginning of the course. These answers are incredibly valuable as they demonstrate the impact and value their participation on WEBNET has had on them:

- 'I consider myself lucky to have been given a place on this course. I grew personally and professionally, and have more confidence now. Many thanks to the tutors; they are amazing, the best.'

- ‘This course has changed my thinking greatly, and developed my self-confidence. It has everything you need to start a business, the tutors are great, and thoroughly enjoyed it and would recommend highly.’
- ‘My confidence is greatly improved’
- ‘I know believe my business will succeed, without Webnet I don’t think I could have believed this’
- ‘I feel more confident than I have ever been, like EVER in any projects I may do moving forward, not only because of my own growth but because I know I have a very valuable unit of people who can help and who are there to offer support no matter how big or small’
- ‘My confidence has completely soared and I find myself partaking in conversations in my everyday life that before I wouldn’t have been able to contribute to. When others are talking about work and business, I can con participate and debate’
- ‘Very beneficial to complete personal profile. Networking was excellent. Making the presentations was great too’
- ‘I think my understanding of my self-awareness has improved, I’m more aware of my strengths and weaknesses. I am more focused.’
- ‘This course has allowed me to look at myself as a person and the qualities I possess and how I can use these in mu business. It has allowed me to pause and recognise the skills that I have and how I can apply them – as a mother you sometimes forget your professional capabilities’
- ‘I need to listen more, talk slower, believe in myself, have trust, have patience, work hard and I need to be kinder to myself and understand that being a female entrepreneur with young children is challenging’
- ‘I was told I lack confidence in myself and since Webnet I’m trying to work on it. Recently I received feedback from my hairdressing course tutor and she said that I am very confident, I have a great attitude towards the clients and she is sure I will be an amazing stylist. Finally believing in myself!’
- ‘I have the ability to bond with new classmates’
- ‘I am capable of making a PowerPoint presentation’

- 'I have learned to speak up again, and not to feel so scared. I have loved helping others and sharing ideas. I have met wonderful people and believe in myself again. Thank You'
- 'The main thing I have learned about myself is that I am good enough, in fact I'm better than good enough! I understand my business and I know what I'm talking about and I deserve to be listened to. I work in a male dominated industry and struggled with this, becoming almost invisible. I felt I didn't have a place in the networking around me. I now see this is ridiculous and I am more than able to connect and network with both women and men. This course has given me so much confidence, I can never thank Diane and Yvonne enough'
- 'This was an amazing journey for my self-awareness. I have built confidence and a network. I am convinced that I want to be an artist and this is my way of living from now on'
- 'The personality profile was invaluable, highlighting my strengths and weaknesses, and I now use in running my business'
- 'At the beginning of the course, I thought that I had to be talkative and outgoing to start a business, so didn't think I could do it. By the end, I understand myself more and can start a business'
- 'I think I had a good understanding of myself at the start of this process; I do not think it has changed much through this process. But doing this course gave me the time to reflect on what I wanted and the confidence to pursue my vision. And lots of valuable information on the practicalities of setting up my own business'
- 'I was quite self-aware before commencing Webnet, however the conviction that I need to connect and engage with people is now absolute'
- 'I believe when you embark on any journey and especially a journey like this, it identifies lots of areas you hadn't thought of'
- 'I feel empowered and enthusiastic about the future'
- 'I feel proud and resilient, to keep going at times when I felt I couldn't'
- 'I feel so much more confident in myself and my ability I don't feel like my ideas are impossible anymore. I was always aware that my organisation skills needed work but this course has pushed me to finally get a handle on that'

- ‘The personality assessment really helped me to understand and look at myself. I have gained considerably in self-confidence, the course has encouraged all of us to build on our strengths and that weaknesses can be overcome.’

Finally, they were asked what improvements could be made to the programme:

- ‘Sad the course has ended, more follow ups please!’
- ‘I can’t think of any way to improve this course. It was perfect for me, and delivered on everything that it set out to and MORE’
- ‘Nothing, it’s perfect the way it is!’
- ‘Maybe more details around each QQI modules at the start of each module’
- ‘Nothing, I loved it’
- ‘No, it’s interactive and hand-on, perfect’
- ‘It has been a life changing experience for me’
- ‘I would love a follow on programme, was an amazing experience’
- ‘Maybe finish at 12.30, instead of 1, just to keep the attention span up!’
- ‘No exams! Loved the course, would have loved it to continue on for longer’
- ‘More mentoring’
- ‘I would highly recommend the Webnet Course. The Course Director and the Tutors were all very supportive; the Talks given by the Entrepreneurs were inspirational. I greatly benefited and really enjoyed taking Webnet’.
- ‘Absolutely no suggestions for change! I loved this course from beginning to end. Without wanting to sound too dramatic, it has changed my working life forever’
- ‘I think more social media would be good’
- ‘Loved the different speakers, and how each week was different, no wouldn’t change a thing’
- ‘The pace of the course and duration was just perfect. If possible, for me, additional classes/workshops on generating business ideas would have been useful’
- ‘It would be useful to spend more time going through the business plan template, as I do think it was quite challenging to work through’
- ‘I realised that getting out of my comfort zone was important. Thank you for the wonderful opportunity and hope to keep in touch’

- 'I do not have any; this programme was exactly what I needed. Many thanks'
- 'I would have loved more time. More days. More assignments. But I guess that's a good sign. It was an amazing opportunity!'
- 'This course was very thought provoking as I never really thought about my strengths and weaknesses before , I am now definitely more self-aware and am aware of areas that I need to improve on ,on a practical level my technology skills!'

If you think we could improve the programme, please outline any suggestions you might have.

Great course, wouldn't change a thing☺
Keep up the wonderful work and positivity ladies and thanks so much for all of the encouragement☺

Participant A

Participant A is from an ethnic minority background, and has been living in Ireland for a number of years, working in the health care sector. She joined WEBNET as she had always planned to run her own business. She gained two QQI qualifications during the programme, and fully participated in all networking events and classes, even participating in a Dragons Den style session.

During her time on the course, she was made redundant. Having considered her options, she decided it was the right time to become self-employed. She invested her redundancy lump sum into setting up her own business and rented a kitchen space that she fitted out at her own expense. Prior to Covid 19, she spent three years building up her business, and developing her brand. She continues to run her business, and has just opened up in mid-July 2020, for the first time since lockdown in March.

Participant B

Participant B is in her early 50s and lives in Tallaght. She took redundancy from a large institution the year before she joined WEBNET. She was introduced to WEBNET through a friend who was on the previous programme, who brought her along to a networking event, Participant C came reluctantly. She really enjoyed this session, and despite feeling nervous and lacking self-confidence, she enrolled for the next Webnet course.

‘I think I am a very different person now to the one who arrived at WEBNET on my first day. For too long I had worked in an environment where my abilities and achievements were not recognised or truly appreciated so when I left my employer I knew I wanted to work for myself, and be responsible for my own future in the workplace, however I had no clue how to do this, or if I was able to do this! I soon gained the confidence to start my own business and while this has not been the most ideal time (Covid) to start I was determined to get up and running while my business plan was fresh in my mind. I feel I am no longer the person sitting in the corner quietly, I take any opportunity I can to let people know about my business and really enjoy letting people know how passionate I am about singing, and the positive effects it can have on a person’s mental health and wellbeing’

Participant B excelled on the programme, receiving distinctions in two QQI modules, and despite lacking confidence at the outset, accepted the challenge to speak at the graduation event about her journey. On completing the programme she had become self-employed, and remains so after 6 months, despite a slow season due to Covid 19.

Participant C

This participant was inactive for approximately 7 years, as she had taken time out of her career to stay at home and raise her children in Dublin 22. She decided to join Webnet, as she felt she now had more time to focus on her work opportunities. She wanted to work for herself as she felt that most employment opportunities in the market were full time in nature, and did not correspond to her own interests in maintaining good work family life balance. She is very well qualified, with a PHD, and her return to the labour market should be encouraged and supported. Participant C is similar to many women who have participated on Webnet, who feel that the only way to have decent part time/ flexible work opportunities is by becoming self-employed, as most positions in the market were for full time positions, which makes it difficult if people having caring commitments to fulfil.

She fully participated in the programme, and found the networking opportunities and fora for discussion to be invaluable *'I suppose the whole programme enabled us to develop the skills for networking which is a key skill we all need to make it in the business world'*. On completion of the programme she began the process of setting up her own consultancy business *'doing this course gave me the time to reflect on what I wanted and the confidence to pursue my vision. And lots of valuable information on the practicalities of setting up my own business'*

PR, Publicity and General Marketing

Promotional tools

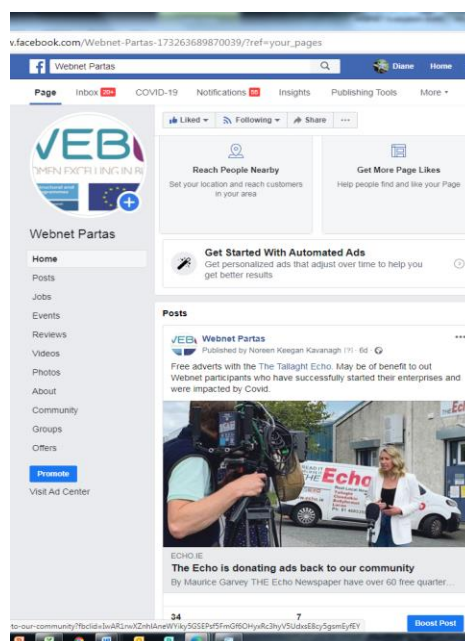
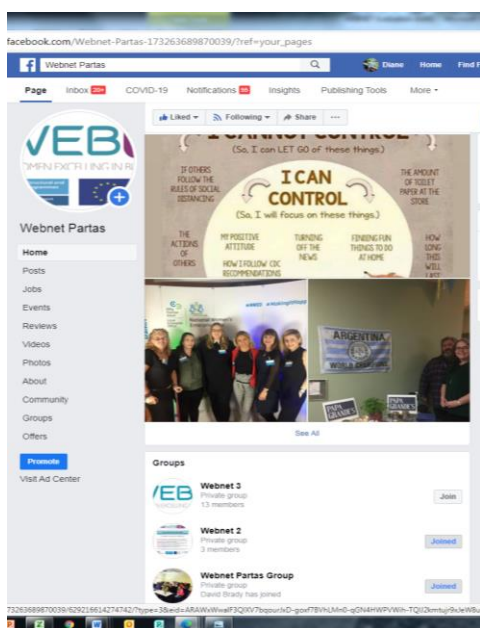
The WEBNET logo was designed in April 2017, and a flyer was produced to circulate to key stakeholders (including DEASP, and various community organisations in Dublin 24).

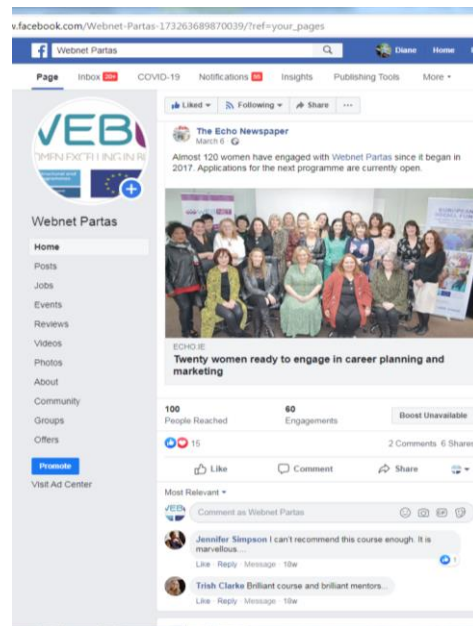
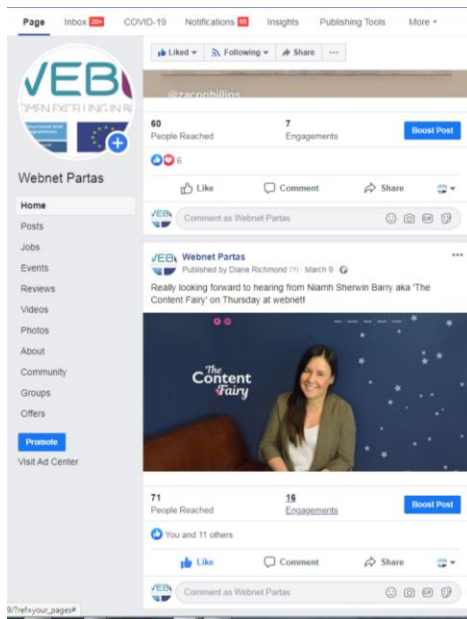


A pull up banner was also produced, and has been in situ in the training room at each session. This banner was used to promote the project at various events, including national Women's enterprise Day 2018, 2019, and a variety of job/training expos in Tallaght over the 3 year period.

A Facebook page was established at the outset of the project, and participants were encouraged to follow the page at the beginning of each programme.

Facebook Posts promoting project





Advertising

WEBNET advertised each of its courses in the The Echo newspaper, with circulation in Tallaght, Clondalkin, Lucan and Rathfarnham. In total, it placed 16 Ads costing a total of €5591.83



Women Excelling in Business Network WEBNET
An excellent programme
for women who want to work for themselves.

We are delighted to be recruiting for our next
WEBNET course

WHO? You must be female, not currently self-employed, and live in or around Dublin 24

WHAT'S ON OFFER? Sales & marketing, networking, social media AND QQI accreditation in business planning & career planning.

WHEN? One half day per week for 30 weeks commencing on Tuesday April 17th.

WHERE? Tallaght, Dublin 24

WHY? An excellent opportunity to upskill, and it's FREE

Places are limited so contact us at 01 4145700 or drichmond@partas.ie NOW to arrange YOUR appointment

WEBNET is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020. WEBNET is in initiative of Partas.





Number of ads placed:

- 1 May 2017
- 1 September 2017
- 3 March 2018
- 1 August 2018
- 2 September 2018
- 2 January 2019
- 1 February 2019
- 4 August 2019
- 1 September 2019



TWENTY women received certificates after participating on the Webnet programme, achieving QQI accredited awards in career planning, business planning and sales and marketing in Bolbrook Enterprise Centre on Friday.

Almost 120 women have engaged with Webnet since it began in 2017.



Webnet participants receiving their certificates on Friday in Bolbrook

Webnet is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

Daragh Solan, from the EU funds Unit of the Department of Justice and Equality, commended Diane Richmond and her team in delivering an excellent programme, and building a thriving network of women in business.

One of the Webnet participants, local woman Pauline Dalton, made an enthusiastic presentation, to talk about her experience on the Webnet programme, where she developed her brilliant business idea, 'WorkSing'.

Mayor Vicki Casserly spoke about the sense of unity among the webnet women, and how positive it is to be in Tallaght and be surrounded by so many entrepreneurial women.

Diane closed the ceremony by thanking the EU funds Unit for their continued support of the programme as WEBNET+ is currently recruiting for its next intake, on March 19th.

tel: 4685350 advertising@echo.ie

Do you want to work for yourself?

FREE high quality business training and networking to budding female entrepreneurs from Dublin 24 and surrounding areas! Next course starts on March 5th in Tallaght.

Partas is recruiting again for its fifth WEBNET Women Excelling Business Course. Diane Richmond, who is managing WEBNET, wants to receive enquiries from any women who might like to become self-employed; who may be unemployed or in receipt of a DSP Payment; who may be raising their family and working in the home; who may be working but want to become self-employed – basically, all are welcome to apply.

Participants will avail of wonderful networking support from their peers; they will also acquire accredited skills in business and career planning through the delivery of QQI modules. They will make great contacts, and have a very enjoyable experience!

Diane shares some of the feedback from other women on the programme:

- "I started with lots of ideas but very little confidence, and no strategy and have learned all of that through WEBNET."
- "This programme has changed my way of thinking and I have developed much more confidence."
- "WEBNET has everything you need to start your business."
- "I have thoroughly enjoyed it and would highly recommend it to any woman thinking of starting a business."

So don't miss out on your opportunity to join WEBNET! Call or email Diane now to make an appointment ASAP at drichmond@partas.ie or 4145700 citing WEBNET.

Mayor Paul Gogarty with Patricia Clarke

36 education, training & jobs

Do you want to work for yourself?

WEBNET
WOMEN EXCELLING BUSINESS NETWORKING

FREE HIGH Quality business training & networking to budding female entrepreneurs from Dublin 24 and surrounding areas! Next course starts on September 19th in Tallaght.

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At a recent graduation event, one of the Webnet participants, Lorraine Adams, made a presentation, to talk about her experience on the programme, she said: "Diane had unwavering support for us throughout the programme, and offered so much support to me. I am now in front of you all today as a female entrepreneur, with a priming grant award from South Dublin LEO, and owe so much to WEBNET for the confidence I now have in myself and my business – The FairyGood Mother."

So don't miss out on your opportunity to join WEBNET! Call or email Diane now to make an appointment ASAP at drichmond@partas.ie or 4145700 citing WEBNET.

Lorraine Adams receiving her certificate from Cllr Charlie O'Connor

education training jobs

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Lorraine Adams receiving her certificate from Cllr Charlie O'Connor

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g business

ENTERPRISE TOWN AWARDS

William O'Connor / pictures@echo.ie

Aaron Pigott and Greg Dunne from Priory Brewing

Monica Kowalska from Quilling Ireland with Diane Richmond, Yvonne Cusack and Keegan Kavanagh

David Havelin, Chinnery Gin

Sarah Varela of Sarah's Kitchen

Geoff Lynan BOI, Neill O'Reilly BOI, Karen O'Sullivan BOI, Barry Flynn BOI, Mayor Vicki Casserly, Katrina Murphy, Judge, Eddie Breen, Judge, John Kearns, Partas and Tom Rooney, LEO

esses

AWARDS

Aaron Pigott and Greg Dunne from Priory Brewing

Monica Kowalska from Quilling Ireland with Diane Richmond, Yvonne Cusack and Noreen Keegan Kavanagh

Promotional Resource Partners:

The South Dublin Local Enterprise Office shared WEBNET recruitment pieces many times, to their NEWS (Network of Enterprising Women in South Dublin) database, and on their social media channels.

WEBNET Graduation Events

A graduation event was held for each programme, combining two rotations at a time. The Mayor of South Dublin County Council attended each event, in addition to staff from the EU Funds Unit, Department of Justice. This was a hugely special occasion for the participants, and indeed their families. At each event a participant spoke about their experience on the programme, and their entry into the world of self-employment. Refreshments were provided at each event, and it was a great opportunity for former participants to network with each other. The Echo newspaper featured the events, and participants reported feeling proud to have featured in such a positive way.



Graduation of WEBNET 1 and 2, Summer 2018



Graduation of WEBNET 3 and 4, Summer 2019



Graduation of WEBNET 5 and 6, February 2020

Concluding Remarks

Engagement:

- WEBNET successfully engaged, and recruited 118 women (represents 28 more women than planned) on to its 6 programmes between April 2017 and February 2020.
- 17 were over 54 years of age, and 1 was under 25
- 24 were of minority, migrant background, 5 had a disability and 54 of these were 'disadvantaged'.

Education:

- 6 women had primary/junior cycle as highest level of educational attainment
- 44 had leaving certificate or further education
- 67 had higher certificate or above
- **82 women** gained a qualification upon leaving (in some cases, they gained two and three QQI awards)*.

Employment/Self-employment:

- When starting the programme, 81 were identified as short term unemployed of this 43 were long term unemployed.
- 70% (n83) were in employment or self-employment on completion of the programme.
- 69% were in employment or self-employment 6 months after completing programme¹.
- 21% had an improved labour market situation six months after leaving WEBNET.

¹ 23 women who completed WEBNET 6 did not have a 6 month follow up at time of writing report as they only completed the programme in February 2020.

Networking:

- 168 WEBNET sessions/classes were delivered over three years
- 3 joint Graduation ceremonies took place, where two WEBNET classes graduated at each event.

Copy of evaluation questionnaire

WEBNET evaluation

In reviewing this programme, please consider all of the lessons and modules that you have completed already.

What is your overall rating of the programme?

Where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent	1	2	3	4	5
Content of the Career Planning module					
Content of the Start Your Own Business module					
Content of the Sales and Marketing module					
Course delivery by Tutors					
Non-Course Support (Mentoring)					

What did you think was the most valuable aspect of the programme?

What was the most challenging aspect of the course?

Please identify what career/self-employment opportunities arise for you now?

What steps do you now need to take to progress this opportunity?

Having now completed the WEBNET programme, what do you now consider to be your key strengths and abilities?

In what way do you think your understanding of yourself (self-awareness), has improved since the beginning of the course?

If you think we could improve the programme, please outline any suggestions you might have.

Do you give consent to Partas to remain in contact with you for the duration of the WEBNET programme? if Yes, please sign your name below.

Signature _____

Date _____

Copy of Mayor's speech from Graduation 2020

Thank you Diane for those kind words of welcome and a special welcome today to the Graduates and their families and Mr Daragh Solan, our representative from the Department of Justice here today.

As Mayor of South County Dublin, I was delighted to receive Diane's invitation for such an exciting and progressive initiative such as WEBNET (Women Excelling in Business Network). Despite improvements in our national economy, I am very aware of the challenges facing people remote from the workplace, re-entering business and employment and starting their own business. Indeed, these are real challenges in any economy, good or bad. Add to this, the gender equality issues which unfortunately have deterred women from entering or even considering business start-up, and the mountain seems even higher.

That is why the solution that WEBNET offers is one of great national interest as well has highly pertinent to our local economy. Diane has alerted me to the outstanding progress that has been achieved by the 120 or so participants who have participated in the programme. Long evenings, time squirrelled away from family and of course juggling of finances and priorities make this an outstanding achievement. Six Webnet programmes have now been completed, bringing WEBNET to a successful conclusion. However, the good news is that the programme will continue for a further three years under the WEBNET+ initiative.

Participants have undertaken accredited QQI modules in Career Planning, Start Your Own Business, and Sales and Marketing. Innovative business ideas have been hatched and developed over countless cups of coffee and documented on Business Canvas. The exacting process of gathering research, conducting focus groups and preparing financial forecasts has also taken place.

Business planning is a key feature of the programme and participants have received diligent and supportive mentoring over weeks and months from Diane and Yvonne and have prepared rigorous and robust planning documents which have been highly commended by our external examiners. I am sure there are many business executives and financial managers in senior organisations who lack these important sustainability skills that the women have gained!

But more important than all of the above, is the dynamic confident group of female entrepreneurs I see before me today. Qualifications, good as they are, are of lesser importance than the skill development, confidence building, and networking skills that the students have gained. If I were to ask each of them, are they different? , Do they feel different? I am sure the answer would be unanimous - "Yes". That is the hallmark of a truly transformative process that this programme

represents and the European Social Fund must be greatly commended for initiating and funding such projects.

Of course, the students will be quick to remind me the journey has not finished. Many will feel it has just begun and the fruits of their hard work over the last six to nine months are yet to be realised. To this end, I know Diane has plans and activities for maintaining the network of students beyond completion of the programme and today's ceremony. In this way, the impact and benefits of WEBNET will expand and multiply. Isn't this the perfect definition of what a network means and should be? So too, will the future WEBNET students benefit from the skills, experience and expertise of the group here today.

And so it goes on.

In conclusion, on behalf of the South Dublin County Council, Community Partners and Public Representatives all here today, I pass on my hearty congratulations to the Graduates, Students and Staff of Partas for such a worthwhile and transformative initiative.

And with that I will hand you back to Diane for the next stage the ceremony.