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Author(s)	Anamaria Fărcășanu-Răvar, Alexandru Dinu (UEFISCDI), Sophia Ivarsson, Moa Persdotter (Vinnova), Marcela Linková (ISAS), Liv Baisner Petersen, Molly Occhino (SDU), Helene Schiffbänker, Julia Greithanner (Joanneum), Helen Garrison, Maria Hagardt (VA), Fredrik Bondestam (UGOT)
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AC	Associated Countries
AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BMM	Bimonthly meeting
BG	Bulgaria
CASPER	Certification-Award Systems to Promote Gender Equality in Research
CH	Switzerland
CoARA	Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment
CoP	Community of Practice
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EC	European Commission
EE	Estonia
EGET	European Gender Equality Taskforce
EL	Greece
ERA	European Research Area
ES	Spain
GE	Gender equality
GEAM	Gender Equality Audit and Monitoring
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
GBV	Gender-based violence
GiRI	Gender Dimension in Research and Innovation
KIF	Norwegian Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research



IE	Ireland
IHS	Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna
IL	Israel
IRC	Irish Research Council
ISAS CR	Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences
IT	Italy
JR	Joanneum Research
LT	Lithuania
MT	Malta
MLW	Mutual learning workshop
MS	EU Member States
ISAS CR	Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences
NIP	National Impact Plan
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
PT	Portugal
RFO	Research Funding Organisation
R&I	Research & Innovation
RO	Romania
RPO	Research Performing Organisation
SDU	University of Southern Denmark
SE	Sweden
TR	Turkey
UEFISCDI	Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research and Innovation Funding in Romania
WP	Work Package



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This final report reviews and evaluates the outcomes of the actions over the course of the project in the two Communities of Practice (CoP). It builds on the results of the mid-term evaluation report, and internal reports for the capacity building and mutual learning (MLW) events organised as part of tasks 7.3 and 7.4. Inputs from partners responsible with the organization of workshops and bi-monthly meetings (BMM) also fed into this report

The data presented in this report shows that the GENDERACTIONplus project has effectively built capacities for gender equality among policymakers and representatives of research funding organisations (RFOs) through structured and impactful MLWs and BMM. By fostering a supportive environment for exchange, reflection, and peer learning, the project significantly enhanced participants' understanding, skills, and practical abilities to advance gender equality and intersectionality within the European Research Area (ERA).

Participants in the capacity building actions consistently expressed high levels of satisfaction, particularly praising the use of interactive formats, sharing concrete national cases and practical examples, as well as expert inputs. Workshops that provided opportunities for deeper reflection and direct application of new knowledge were especially well-received. Quantitative evaluations confirmed these positive impressions, with high satisfaction ratings across different dimensions, such as content relevance, moderation quality, and practical applicability.

Key impacts include heightened awareness and increased motivation among participants to integrate gender equality considerations into their national and institutional contexts. Workshops were described as catalysts for institutional change, empowering attendees to actively apply learned strategies in their daily work, such as implementing Gender Equality Plans (GEPs), addressing gender-based violence (GBV), and mitigating gender bias within research funding processes.

The European Gender Equality Taskforce (EGET) played a pivotal role in supporting national implementation of gender equality actions. Through tailored interventions in various countries including Malta and Estonia, the EGET provided crucial expertise and facilitated stakeholder engagement. These interventions were highly valued for their practical insights in addressing country-specific challenges. Evaluation highlighted the critical need for strategic and sustained support systems, such as GEP monitoring mechanisms, to ensure the success and systemic integration of gender equality initiatives.

Several crucial lessons were identified. Firstly, interactive formats and practical examples were essential for meaningful engagement and learning; onsite events were particularly effective in fostering deeper interactions, networking, and trust-building compared to online formats. Secondly, strong facilitation and clearly structured activities have been highlighted as critical to maintaining participant engagement and preventing information overload, particularly during online workshops. Lastly, action-oriented content and tangible application strategies significantly increased the perceived relevance and effectiveness of capacity-building activities.

Overall, the GENDERACTIONplus capacity-building programme has demonstrated substantial effectiveness in equipping stakeholders with the necessary skills and insights to advance gender equality policies and practices and laying important foundations for sustained institutional and systemic change across Europe.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. About the project

Building on the Horizon 2020 project GENDERACTION, the overall goal of GENDERACTIONplus is to contribute to the coordination of the gender equality and inclusiveness objectives of the new European Research Area (ERA) through the development of two communities of practice (CoPs), one consisting of representatives of national authorities and the second consisting of representatives of Research Funding Organisations (RFO). The network is made up of a total of 22 EU Member States (MS) and 3 Associated Countries (AC), as well as 26 project partners and 14 Associated partners.

Adding the plus sign to the title of the previous GENDERACTION project not only indicates that it is a follow-up project but also makes it explicit that this project also addresses diversity and intersectionality (the gender+ approach).

Specifically, the GENDERACTIONplus project aims to:

- Develop strategic policy advice on existing and emerging policy solutions;
- Enhance the policy-making process by engaging with stakeholders, civil society organisations, and citizens;
- Build capacities, competence, and expertise for gender equality and mainstreaming in Research & Innovation among the policy and RFO community members, with special attention to countries with a less comprehensive policy;
- Create an impact through communication, dissemination, and exploitation.

Thematically, the project focuses on:

- Intersectionality and inclusiveness
- Gender-based violence
- The gender dimension in research and innovation
- Monitoring and evaluating gender equality actions in the European Research Area (ERA)
- Promoting institutional change through Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)

GENDERACTIONplus aims to achieve the following impacts:

- Advance policy coordination among MS and AC countries and through stakeholder and citizen engagement.
- Improve research careers and working conditions in European R&I, by developing policy dialogue and solutions on inclusion and intersectionality, combating gender-based violence, and promoting institutional changes through GEPs.
- Improve research quality and the social responsibility of knowledge by integrating the gender dimension into research and innovation (R&I).
- Reduce geographic inequality by targeting less experienced/engaged countries and regions.



1.2. Objectives of the report

The aim of this report is to analyse and assess the degree to which the MLWs developed and delivered in the two CoPs have been effective in building capacities for partners involved in the project.

To this end, the report looks into:

- evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the MLWs and BMMs organised for the two CoPs (Policy and RFO), in terms of strengthening participants' knowledge, skills, and capacities in key thematic areas of gender equality.
- assessing the alignment between the capacity building activities and the specific knowledge and skills needs identified in the initial needs assessment, particularly in relation to intersectionality, gender dimension in R&I, stakeholder engagement, and resistance to gender equality initiatives.
- examining the perceived relevance and usefulness of the workshops and meetings, including participants' reflections on learning outcomes, satisfaction levels, and the practical application of the knowledge gained in their work and institutional contexts.
- documenting promising practices and lessons learned in the design and delivery of capacity building activities, with the goal of informing future efforts to support the professional development of policy makers and RFO representatives engaged in gender equality work.
- analysing the effectiveness and impact of the EGET interventions in facilitating national implementation of gender equality initiatives, particularly through expert knowledge exchange, stakeholder engagement, and addressing specific contextual challenges at the country level.

Ultimately, the insights presented in this report aim to enhance and sustain effective gender equality actions within research and innovation ecosystems across Europe.

1.3. The relationship of this report to other tasks and work packages

Collaboration among consortium members from different work packages is crucial to ensure synergies within GENDERACTIONplus, as it allows for the integration of diverse perspectives, expertise, and experiences, ultimately leading to a comprehensive and holistic approach towards achieving the project's goals.

The current report builds on the:

- results of the needs assessment elaborated as part of task 7.1 Needs assessment
- results of the capacity building actions designed and delivered as part of tasks 7.2 - *All partners capacity building and mutual learning*, 7.3 *Capacity building and mutual learning for the RFO CoP*, and 7.4 *European Gender Equality Taskforce*
- results and conclusions of [Deliverable 7.1. Mid-term evaluation report on capacity building and mutual learning](#)



The content of the MLWs delivered as part of WP7 was developed and delivered by the partner organisation responsible for capacity building, i.e. SDU, ISAS CR, Vinnova and JR. This was done in close collaboration between the CoP co leads (SDU and ISAS CR for the policy CoP and Joanneum and Vinnova for the RFO CoP) and the coordinators of thematic WPs (Kif Committee, UGOT, FECYT, IHS and HEA). Logistical support was provided by UEFISCDI and support for participatory technique engagement was provided by VA and consortium members from various WPs. The organisation of BMMs was ensured by SDU and ISAS for the policy CoP and Vinnova and JR for the RFO CoP. The capacity building actions carried out in Task 7.4 were coordinated by KILDEN, with UGOT as co-leader, during June 2022-December 2023, and by UGOT from January 2024 onwards.



2. COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: A DRIVER FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

A Community of Practice (CoP) is understood as a social learning environment aimed at broadening knowledge, promoting mutual learning and fostering empowerment (Amin & Roberts 2008; Wenger 1999). Key elements of successful CoPs are the identification of a defined domain and purpose, the involvement of a core group of committed individuals, the engagement of a broader community, shared vision and values, a safe learning environment, clarity of governance structures and members' roles, and active facilitation (Corradi et al. 2010; Iverson & McPhee 2002).

CoPs are an efficient way to connect people; create shared contexts to build understanding and insight; enable policy dialogue and practice on emerging topics; stimulate capacity building through mutual learning, mentoring coaching, and self-reflection, benchmark and diffuse existing knowledge to design solutions and collect promising practices; and take action to generate policy change, in order to transform policy cultures.

In line with the grant agreement, nine mutual learning and capacity building actions were planned in each CoP over the course of the project, with three organised in the first year to build a common understanding. This capacity building plan has been exceeded, with a total of 10 mutual learning workshops organised in the policy CoP and 11 in the RFO CoP. Six of these were organised jointly for both the CoPs; the joint events were either on topics of shared interest (gender dimension in research and innovation, intersectionality, resistance to gender equality) or intended to foster cross-CoP exchange and sharing.

2.1. Policy Community of Practice

The GENDERACTIONplus policy CoP has brought together representatives of national authorities or organisations appointed by national authorities to conduct activities on their behalf in the GENDERACTIONplus project. The policy CoP has 23 members from the following 17 countries: AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, HR, IE, IL, LT, MT, NO, PL, SE, SI, SK.

A capacity building plan, defining objectives and formats, was developed in year 1.

The learning activities designed for the policy CoP were based on the following assumptions (and also aligned with the findings of the needs assessment):

- Policy makers' need to enhance their understanding and knowledge of gender equality issues, especially on topics such as intersectionality and gender+ approaches, and gender dimension in research. By equipping policy makers with the necessary knowledge and tools, the capacity building events should empower them to effectively promote gender equality within their policy development and implementation processes.
- Policy dialogue and collaboration should be fostered among members of the policy CoP. To this end, capacity building activities need to include interactive sessions, peer-to-peer learning



opportunities, and networking events, in order to facilitate the sharing of best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches.

2.1.1. Objectives

Overall, the GENDERACTIONplus project has aimed to empower policy makers within the policy CoP to drive positive change, advance gender equality, and create more inclusive and equitable research and policy environments. The work in the policy CoP was organised to contribute to achieving the following three objectives:

Objective 1: Enhance Policy Makers' Understanding and Knowledge of Gender Equality Issues

The first objective of the capacity building activities is to deepen the understanding and knowledge of gender equality issues among policy makers within the GENDERACTIONplus consortium. The focus will be on the specific needs identified through the needs assessment conducted. These activities will aim to equip policy makers and civil servants with the necessary knowledge, frameworks, and tools to effectively promote gender equality within their policy development and implementation processes.

Objective 2: Foster Policy Dialogue and Collaboration among Policy Makers

The second objective is to foster policy dialogue and collaboration among policy makers and civil servants within the GENDERACTIONplus consortium. This objective recognises the importance of collective learning and the exchange of experiences among policy makers from different countries and institutions. By fostering collaboration, the objective is to create a supportive environment that encourages policy makers to work together towards advancing gender equality in their respective contexts.

Objective 3: Strengthen Policy Makers' Skills in Gender Mainstreaming

The third objective is to strengthen the skills of policy makers in gender mainstreaming. This objective acknowledges the need to enhance the practical capacities of policy makers in integrating a gender perspective into their policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation processes. This objective aims to empower policy makers with the skills and confidence to design and implement gender-responsive policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by different population groups.

2.1.2. Capacity building formats

Bimonthly meetings (BMM)

BMM are regular online meetings of 2.5-hour duration that were primarily based on exchange and exploration of CoP-members' own practices, such as the progress and collective reflection of National Impact plans (NIPs). To focus exchanges and reflections, BMMs have been centred on specific topics and themes that have aligned with the project's overall progress, outputs, milestones and policy engagement. The exchanges / reflections that have taken place at the BMM have had a twofold objective: 1) to qualify the work and efforts of individual members and their organisations, and 2) to anchor and inform the policy output and impact from the thematic work packages (WP2-6) specifically



and GENDERACTIONplus in general with perspectives from national practice. BMMs took place every second month from May 2023 to the end of the project.

During the reporting period, regular policy CoP meetings have been set online on the third Wednesday of every second month. For the policy CoP bimonthly meetings organised during the project, see Table 1.

Table 1 - Overview of policy CoP bimonthly meetings

Year	Topic	Format	Date
YEAR 1	Policy CoP working modalities Lessons learnt from GENDERACTION	Onsite, Vienna	25 May 2023
YEAR 2	Intersectional data collection	Online	20 September 2023
YEAR 2	Intersectionality Policy messages for position paper prepared for the mid-term event	Online External experts from FRA	15 November 2023
YEAR 2	Policy advice on gender-based violence Feedback on draft Zero Tolerance Code of Conduct	Online	17 January 2024
YEAR 2	Gender dimension in research Input for the MLW on resistances	Online	20 March 2024
YEAR 2	Inclusive research careers: main findings and input for policy advice	Online	15 May 2024
YEAR 3	Feedback session on methodology for GEP evaluation	Onsite, Madrid	12 June 2024
YEAR 3	Policy advice on gender-based violence	Online	12 September 2024
YEAR 3	ERA monitoring of gender equality: discussion of findings and policy recommendations	Online	13 November 2024
YEAR 3	Benefits of participation in GENDERACTIONplus and contributions to national level effort	Online	15 January 2025



YEAR 3	Making gender equality matter: policy frames for the future (competitiveness, excellence and social justice)	Online	19 March 2025
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In BMMs, the emphasis has been on members' practice in relation to the addressed topics, their reflections on their practice and on mutual exchanges, and qualification of the policy output and impact, on both national and European / project level. To this end, following approaches have been fostered during BMM:

Reflective spaces and group discussions: At all BMMs, dedicated time has been allocated for reflection and group discussions. These sessions have provided opportunities for CoP members to critically analyse the presented information, share insights, and collectively develop a deeper understanding of the topic. Facilitators have guided these discussions to ensure active engagement and a collaborative learning environment where CoP members can learn from each other's perspectives and experiences.

Action planning: To ensure the practical application of the learnings, the BMMs have included action planning. CoP members have identified specific actions they can take within their own policy contexts to apply the knowledge and skills acquired. This has helped CoP members translate theory into practice and create a tangible roadmap for integrating gender equality into their policy development and implementation processes.

Peer support: The BMMs have provided space to share information and consult about the NIPs developed as part of Task 8.4. These plans are the operationalisations of activities to ensure that the outputs and outcomes of the project are translated into the national environments of the project partners. The CoP members have had the opportunity to discuss and receive feedback on their plans and to consult with the other CoP members on bottlenecks and obstacles to implementation.

Sounding board: The BMMs have functioned as the sounding board for WP-specific policy advice development: WP leaders have been invited to make use of the BMM to present initial ideas for the policy advice and receive feedback from the CoP members.

Overall, this approach has empowered policy makers to become effective advocates for gender equality, fostering a supportive network that collectively works towards creating positive change and advancing gender equality in research and policy.

Mutual learning workshops

MLWs have been primary events for input and training on specified project topics (correlating to and relevant for the different WPs) with input from both internal and external trainers and based on participatory and interactive methods. MLWs have thus provided CoP-members with an input-based training in a collaborative learning environment with exchange of best practices, knowledge and skills development among policy makers. The MLWs have been planned as half-day or full-day events. Ten MLWs have been organised for the policy CoP during the project lifetime; six of these have been joint



events for both the policy and RFO CoP members, while four were organised exclusively for members of the policy CoP. Four events were organised online and six onsite.

Table 2 - Overview of mutual learning workshops for the policy CoP

No.	Topic	Format	Date
1	Stakeholder and Citizen Engagement*	Online	17 January 2023
2	Building a national GE discourse in R&I	Online	25 April 2023
3	Gender Dimension in Research and Innovation*	Online	26 April 2023
4	Intersectionality*	Onsite, Vienna	24 – 25 May 2023
5	GEP impact monitoring	Online	13 & 18 December 2023
6	Gender-based violence	Onsite, Brussels	12 February 2024
7	Dealing with Resistances*	Onsite, Madrid	13 – 14 June 2024
8	Strategic framing for gender equality	Onsite, Brussels	11 February 2025
9	Looking back / looking ahead *	Onsite, Brussels	13 February 2025
10	Co-creating the future together*	Onsite, Vienna	19 – 20 May 2025

* The mutual learning workshops marked with * have been joint events for both the policy and RFO CoP members.

The capacity building and mutual learning programme delivered in the GENDERACTIONplus project incorporated a range of inputs designed to enrich the learning experience and enhance the skills and knowledge of the CoP members:

- **External expert presentations:** external experts were invited to deliver lectures that enriched the capacity building programme. These experts brought diverse perspectives, shared best practices, and provided insights from their own experiences and research. By incorporating inputs from external experts, consortium members benefitted from a broader range of expertise and gained exposure to different approaches and strategies for promoting gender equality.
- **Best practice sharing:** the MLWs, both online and on site, provided a platform for CoP members to share their own best practices and experiences. The majority of MLWs included interactive sessions where consortium members had the opportunity to present successful gender equality initiatives, case studies, and practical examples from their respective contexts. These inputs allowed CoP members to learn from each other, exchange ideas, and identify effective strategies that can be applied in their own organisations and processes.



- **Interactive practical exercises** to provide hands-on learning experiences. These exercises focused on building specific skills, such as communication techniques, stakeholder engagement, or addressing resistances to gender equality. By actively participating in these workshops, consortium members enhanced their practical capacities and developed strategies for effectively integrating gender equality into their work.
- **Reflective sessions and group discussions:** Allocating dedicated time for reflection and group discussions was an important input to the capacity building programme. These sessions allowed participants to digest the information they received, critically reflect on its relevance to their own work, and collectively develop a shared understanding of gender equality issues. By providing a space for CoP members to discuss barriers, challenges, and practical implementation strategies, these sessions fostered a supportive and collaborative learning environment within the two CoPs.

These inputs were carefully curated to provide diverse perspectives, practical insights, and opportunities for collaborative learning. This allowed participants to engage in a comprehensive learning journey aimed at deepening their understanding of gender equality issues and strengthening their capacities for integrating gender perspectives into their work. By leveraging these inputs, the capacity building programme empowered consortium members to drive positive change and advance gender equality within their respective contexts.

2.1.3. Assessment of delivered actions

Tools for data collection

Exit survey

To assess the effectiveness and participant satisfaction of each MLW conducted under the GENDERACTIONplus project, an exit questionnaire was distributed to participants at the end of each workshop to gather their reflections on various dimensions of the event. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, allowing for quantitative ratings and qualitative comments.

Some of the key elements of the questionnaire were:

- Overall satisfaction: participants were asked to rate their satisfaction level on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 stood for “not satisfied at all”, and 5 for “very satisfied”
- Relevance and usefulness: questions focused on whether participants found the content relevant to their work and useful in advancing their knowledge or practice
- Expectations and structure: some items assessed whether the workshops met participants’ expectations and if the structure and flow facilitated learning and exchange
- Future needs and topics: open-ended questions were included to allow participants to express what they would like to see covered in future workshops, helping tailor the initiative’s forward planning



- Suggestions for improvement: space for participants to comment on how the workshops could be improved in terms of content, delivery, or logistics.

This format ensured a balance between measurable indicators and open qualitative feedback, providing a multifaceted view of the events' impact and areas for enhancement.

The consistent use of the same feedback tool (adapted to the theme and content of individual MLWs) across learning events further allowed the WP7 team to compare results. While quantitative results offered a snapshot of satisfaction and perceived value among participants, qualitative feedback provided context-specific insights (e.g. how participants plan to use the newly acquired knowledge and what would prevent them from applying this knowledge).

Direct feedback during/at the end of the MLWs

In addition to the online exit surveys, feedback from participants was also collected directly, both during as well as at the end of the learning sessions. In the majority of cases, participants were asked to reflect on the learning outcomes and take-aways and either express their feedback verbally or write it in the form of notes (either digitally via a poll function in the case of online workshops or on post-its in the case of onsite workshops). In some MLWs (e.g. the onsite MLW on Gender-based violence organised on 12 February 2024 in Brussels), participants were asked to respond directly to a set of guiding questions about their experiences. This approach allowed for the collection of immediate, qualitative insights regarding what participants found most valuable, what could be improved, and what additional aspects they felt were missing. Questions such as "What went well?", "What should be kept?", "What could be improved?" and "What did not get enough attention?" prompted participants to think critically about the content, delivery, and practical relevance of the session.

Policy CoP questionnaire (August 2024)

While this online questionnaire was not aimed specifically at evaluating the capacity building actions (but rather the functioning of the CoP itself), it did include open-ended questions on:

- what participants perceive as useful or valuable in the BMMs and MLWs
- what are the potential areas for improvement in the BMMs and MLWs

The survey was distributed online to all policy CoP members and was filled in by eight respondents in August and September 2024.

Results

This section builds on the feedback received from the members of the policy CoP either directly (during or at the end of each MLW) or through the exit surveys and policy CoP planning questionnaire. In what concerns the results of the MLWs, this section reflects only the feedback received with relation to the five workshops that were organised exclusively for the members of the policy CoP, namely:

- Building a national GE discourse in R&I (online, 25 April 2023)
- GEP impact monitoring (online, 13 & 18 December 2023)
- Gender-based violence (onsite, Brussels, 12 February 2024)



- Strategic framing for gender equality (onsite, Brussels, 11 February 2025)
- Co-creating the future together (onsite, Vienna, 19-20 May 2025)

Across the reviewed MLWs, participants consistently reported high levels of satisfaction. Quantitative data collected through post-event surveys showed that satisfaction scores for various aspects of the workshops regularly exceeded 4.0 on a 5-point scale. For instance, the Gender-Based Violence workshop received especially high ratings, with averages above 4.6 for content, moderation, speaker quality, and timekeeping. Similarly, the workshop on GEP monitoring reported satisfaction scores of 4.25 or higher for interaction, reflection, and expert feedback. Even in cases where areas for improvement were noted (e.g., pre-event communication or session pacing), overall participant sentiment was positive.

The workshops effectively contributed to participants' understanding and confidence in addressing complex policy topics. For example, in the GEP Impact and Monitoring MLW, participants rated the plenary content and expert feedback particularly highly (4.63/5), noting that it enhanced their capacity to conceptualise and operationalise monitoring systems. Likewise, the introduction of a homework exercise was well-received, with respondents appreciating the opportunity to present country-specific reflections and receive expert input. In the GBV workshop, participants reported greater familiarity with national responses and protocols, and a clearer understanding of successful practices from other countries, such as Ireland, France, and Spain.

Overall, respondents regarded as most useful and interesting:

- The opportunity to exchange information (both in plenary sessions as well as in breakout rooms / group reflection sessions) and ask questions (*"The group was a safe space for discussion"*)
- The presentation of concrete national cases (e.g. Austria, Ireland, France, Spain etc.)
- The presentation of practices and examples that may be regarded as inspirational and may be adapted to other organisational and national contexts
- The presentation of tools and models developed in other projects (e.g. GEAM tool, CASPER model)

Moreover, some regarded the MLWs as a call to action for future gender equality work: *"It's time to stop discussing & start acting."*

The positive results from the MLW exit surveys were also echoed by the qualitative feedback expressed through the policy CoP planning questionnaire. The results of this questionnaire reflect a number of key elements that were particularly appreciated by participants:

- Onsite MLWs:
 - The trustful and engaged working atmosphere
 - Updates about each other's work, sharing of insights, get to know each other in person
 - Great group work activities, time to work concretely together
 - Good plenary discussions



- Practical, hands-on sessions that allow participants to apply concepts in real-time
- Communication/information in advance
- Sticking to the schedule
- Online MLWs:
 - are included in the daily schedule, so easier to join
 - possibility of returning to important issues (recording)
 - clear and concise presentations
- Some respondents appreciated that while the online MLWs were certainly valuable, the onsite events performed better in terms of opportunities for networking, engagement and interaction:
 - *“Being together in person is one of the best parts of GENDERACTIONplus. the in-person MLW can be much more engaging and interactive than the online MLWs and BMMs”*
 - *“Collaboration is stronger when we are in person and it is easier to address challenging topics”*
 - *“Face to face is best for networking; mutual learning works best onsite”*

In fact, a number of improvement suggestions were put forward, both in the exit surveys, as well in the policy CoP planning questionnaire, regarding the online workshops:

- Ensure that presentations are engaging and do not lead to information overload
- Ensure more active facilitation in breakout rooms, since some participants may find it harder to share their insights in online environments (as compared to onsite sessions).

Overall, the workshops, both onsite and online, were seen not only as opportunities to acquire new knowledge but also to reflect on how to apply it in their national contexts, with many participants expressing motivation to bring ideas from the workshops into their ongoing work.

With regards to the BMMs, respondents expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to have open discussions with other policy makers and hear about developments in their respective countries. Some respondents suggested that even more time is needed to share information on national contexts and discuss institutional barriers, and that discussions should not only focus on examples of where things are going well, but also on situations in which policy makers face challenges.

2.1.4. Lessons learnt

Some of the **lessons learned** in the design and delivery of the capacity building actions include:

Diverse inputs facilitate learning

The use of external guest speakers, national case studies, and tools from other EU-funded projects (e.g. GEAM, CASPER) enriched the learning experience by providing diverse perspectives and showcasing adaptable best practices. Participants found particular value in learning from concrete, context-specific examples that could inspire and inform their national work.



Onsite events maximise engagement and mutual learning

While both online and onsite MLWs were positively evaluated, onsite workshops consistently offered greater opportunities for networking, collaboration, and meaningful interaction. The trustful atmosphere, informal exchanges, and shared physical presence were seen as conducive to deeper engagement, particularly when tackling sensitive or complex topics.

Online formats need enhanced facilitation

Online workshops are easier to attend and offer the advantage of recordings for future reference. However, they require strong facilitation, particularly in breakout rooms, to maintain energy, encourage participation, and avoid superficial engagement. Some participants found it harder to contribute in virtual settings without active moderation and clear expectations.

Capacity building must be action-oriented

Participants appreciated that workshops didn't merely present theoretical concepts but also addressed how to apply knowledge within varying national or institutional contexts, including under conditions of limited political support or resistance. The workshops encouraged critical thinking about transferability and practical next steps.

These insights highlight the importance of thoughtful design, a diversity of inputs, and formats tailored to different learning environments. Importantly, the emphasis on practical application and mutual learning proved central to the perceived value of the workshops.

2.2. Research Funding Organisations Community of Practice

The capacity building activities designed for and delivered to the RFO CoP aimed to enhance the gender knowledge of all members—regardless of whether they were at an advanced stage or just beginning to implement gender policies—both at a general level and in relation to specific thematic areas. The capacity building activities for the RFO CoP were carefully tailored to address the specific needs identified in the needs assessment, which highlighted members' strong interest in the role of RFOs in promoting gender equality, the integration of the gender dimension in research, and intersectionality and gender+ approaches.

2.2.1. Objectives

Starting from the results of the needs assessment, the work in the RFO CoP was designed to address the following specific objectives:

1. **Equip CoP members with up-to-date knowledge and insights aligned with the thematic work packages (WPs)**, enabling them to address innovative and complex topics in gender equality policy and practice.



2. **Provide structured opportunities for reflection and peer exchange**, allowing participants to critically engage with the content, share perspectives, and deepen their understanding through dialogue.
3. **Support the practical application of acquired knowledge**, by encouraging participants to identify concrete takeaways and strategies for integrating new concepts and tools into their daily work and institutional contexts.

Through these targeted objectives, the RFO CoP activities were structured to empower members with the necessary skills and knowledge to drive meaningful, sustained change toward gender equality within their organisations and beyond.

2.2.2. Capacity building formats

The building of capacities in the RFO CoP was based on a series of guiding ideas, curated by JR as the responsible partner for capacity building in the RFO CoP:

- All participants are experts in their work, RFO members as well as other stakeholders and researchers: all questions can be raised, from the most theoretical to the most practical ones. By combining different forms of experiences and knowledge, awareness and understanding can be expanded. It helps transforming research findings into practical knowledge.
- As cross-cutting issue in all activities, focus was put on strengthening the gender knowledge of RFO participants, as a certain level of gender knowledge / awareness is supporting the implementation of gender policies in practice. As time of RFO members is scarce, meetings were planned not to be too long, but highly beneficial for the participants. They should provide inputs as well as space for sharing experiences and exploring new approaches, arguments, skills etc. Exchange between members in small groups (break out rooms) is crucial to learn from each other.
- It takes time for the group to get used to working together and sharing experiences. Different forms of peer learning can be offered, starting from mutual learning exercises in breakout rooms to establishing buddy-tandems in which advanced CoP members collaborate with CoP members just starting their gender activities (in various specific topics, like gender in research, gender bias etc.).
- It is suggested that in RFO CoP meetings some de-briefing takes place, providing space for reflection and discussing how to bring the learnings back to RFO structure (how to involve the CoP working modalities and capacity building instruments

The capacity building activities focused on enhancing the understanding, knowledge, and skills of partners in the GENDERACTIONplus consortium and included (1) bi-monthly meetings (BMM) and (2) Mutual Learning Workshops (MLW), serving distinct but complementary purposes:

Bimonthly meetings

BMM are regular online meetings of 2-hour duration, focusing on specific topics and themes that align with the project's overall progress and outputs. The BMM had a twofold objective: 1) to ensure collective



learning and exchange promising practices, and 2) to support practical implementation of policy output and impact from the thematic work packages (WP2-5) and beyond (MLW 7, 8, 9). BMMs were taken place online on the fourth Thursday, every second month from September 2022 to the end of the project.

For the RFO CoP bimonthly meetings organised during the project, see Table 3.

Table 3 - Overview of RFO CoP bimonthly meetings

Year	Topic	Format	Date
YEAR 1	Kick-off meeting with the RFO CoP	Onsite, Prague	09 June 2022
YEAR 1	Expectations and RFO CoP coordination	Online	20 September 2022
YEAR 1	Swedish Research Council presents Policy Brief; Promoting Gender Equality in Research	Online	01 December 2022
YEAR 1	The Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research; The role of RFO in mitigation gender-based violence in R&I funding process	Online	26 January 2023
YEAR 1	Gender bias in R&I and the implementation of GEPs	Online	30 March 2023
YEAR 1	RFO CoP member presentations on gender equality activities in the R&I funding process	Onsite, Vienna	22 May 2023
YEAR 2	Intersectionality and inclusion	Online	31 August 2023
YEAR 2	Gender-based violence continue	Online	25 October 2023
YEAR 2	In depth focus topic with WP 2 & 3	Online	14 December 2023
YEAR 2	The gender dimension in R&I	Online	29 February 2024
YEAR 2	Implementing GEP	Online	25 April 2024
YEAR 3	Resistance	Online	29 August 2024
YEAR 3	Progress and achievement during GENDERACTIONplus	Online	24 October 2024
YEAR 3	Bias in R&I	Online	12 December 2024



YEAR 3	Guidelines on research assessment	Online	24 April 2025
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Mutual learning workshops

MLWs were designed as primary events for input and training on specified project topics (WPs) with input from both internal and external trainers and based on participatory and interactive methods. Further, topics with specific relevance for RFOs (Bias, Research assessment) were addressed. MLWs provided CoP members with inputs-based training in a collaborative learning environment with exchange of best practices and skills development among participants, taking incoming and / or new knowledge into account. The MLWs were designed as half-day or full-day events. Eleven MLWs were organised throughout the project's implementation: five online and seven onsite. Out of the eleven MLWs, five were joint events for both the policy and RFO CoP members.

Table 4 - Overview of mutual learning workshops for the RFO CoP

No.	Topic	Format	Date
1	Stakeholder and Citizen Engagement*	Online	17 January 2023
2	Gender Dimension in Research and Innovation*	Online	26 April 2023
3	Intersectionality *	Onsite, Vienna	24 – 25 May 2023
4	Role of RFO mitigating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in ERA	Onsite, Milan	14-15 September 2023
5	Role of RFOs in GEP implementation	Online	21 March 2024
6	Dealing with Resistances *	Onsite, Madrid	13 – 14 June 2024
7	Gender bias in the research and innovation funding process	Online	28 November 2024
8	Research assessment	Onsite, Brussels	11 February 2025
8A	Looking back / looking ahead *	Onsite, Brussels	13 February 2025
10	How to proceed after GENDERACTIONplus	Online	30 April 2025
11	Co-creating the future together*	Onsite, Vienna	19 – 20 May 2025

* The mutual learning workshops marked with * have been joint events for both the policy and RFO CoP members.



Specific **capacity building instruments** were used throughout the BMMs and MLWs:

Content delivery: as part of the MLWs, targeted content was provided to address participants' knowledge needs in gender equality. This content was delivered by thematic inputs by JR as responsible partner for capacity building and also through presentations/lectures held by internal project partners (e.g., leaders of thematic work packages within GENDERACTIONplus) and external experts (e.g., EC representatives).

External expert presentations: Inviting external experts to deliver lectures during MLWs significantly enriched the capacity building programme. These experts brought diverse perspectives, shared promising practices, and provided insights from their own experiences and research. By incorporating inputs from external experts, MLWs provided participants with the opportunity to widen their range of expertise and gain exposure to different approaches and strategies for promoting gender equality.

Interactive exercises: All MLWs included practical exercises and/or group discussions. These sessions allowed participants to practically apply the information they have learned, critically reflect on its relevance to their own work, and collectively develop a shared understanding of gender equality issues. By providing a space to discuss barriers, challenges, and practical implementation strategies, these inputs fostered a supportive and collaborative learning environment and created a link between new knowledge, personal (private and professional) experiences and potential next steps in CoP members' own organisations.

Homework ("preparatory work"): was used in the RFO CoP in order to deepen and reflect on the new content delivered in MLWs. RFO CoP members were asked to complete homework between the MLW and the following BMM CoP meeting in order to reflect on the topic of the MLW and think about ways of transfer it into daily work practices. This was also preparation for interactive Breakout-Room sessions in the BMMs. The preparatory work was not designed as a burden for the CoP members but rather as a way to support them in transferring the content of the workshop to the RFO and start a discussion in the organisation.

These tools not only enriched the training experience but also enabled participants to critically reflect on their own institutional contexts and begin translating new knowledge into practice. By combining theoretical insights with practical application and peer exchange, the capacity building approach successfully fostered a dynamic and empowering learning environment for RFO CoP members.

2.2.3. Assessment of delivered actions

Tools for data collection

Similarly to the policy CoP, both exit surveys as well as collection of direct feedback were used to collect data on participants' satisfaction and perceived value. Thus, structured questionnaires were administered at the end of workshops to gather participants' reflections on various aspects of the event. The questionnaire incorporated both closed-ended questions (allowing for quantitative ratings) and open-ended questions (allowing for qualitative comments).



In addition to the exit survey, direct feedback was collected during and at the end of the learning sessions. Participants reflected on learning outcomes and takeaways, expressing their feedback verbally or in writing (e.g., via Miro boards for online workshops or post-it notes for in-person workshops). In some MLWs, participants responded to guiding questions about their experiences, providing immediate qualitative insights regarding what they found most valuable, what could be improved, and what additional aspects they felt were missing. Questions such as “What went well?”, “What should be kept?”, “What could be improved?” and “What did not get enough attention?” prompted participants to think critically about the content, delivery, and practical relevance of the session.

The “expectation tree” was also used in some MLWs. Participants “hung” their expectations for the workshop on the tree in the form of notes or virtual leaves, encouraging co-ownership of learning outcomes. At the end of the event, participants revisited the tree to indicate which expectations were met, partially met, or still pending. This tool proved valuable for capturing feedback in a friendly manner, allowing facilitators to conduct a quick visual assessment of the workshops’ alignment with participants’ goals.

Results

This section builds on the feedback received from the members of the RFO CoP either directly (during or at the end of each MLW) or through the exit surveys. Also, the section reflects only the feedback received with relation to the five workshops that were organised exclusively for the members of the RFO CoP, namely:

- Role of RFO mitigating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in ERA (onsite, Milan, 14-15 September 2023)
- Role of RFOs in GEP implementation (online, 21 March 2024)
- Gender bias in the research and innovation funding process (online, 28 November 2024)
- Research assessment (onsite, Brussels, 11 February 2025)
- How to proceed after GENDERACTIONplus (online, 30 April 2025)

Similarly to the MLWs delivered for the policy CoP, RFO CoP members consistently expressed high levels of engagement and satisfaction:

- *“The MLW was very useful, clearing up concepts and structuring steps.”*
- *“The MLW was very balanced, with lots of food for thought, refreshing concepts and structured questions.”*
- *“Speakers were very interesting in their approaches.”*

Where quantitative evaluation was conducted, satisfaction scores regularly exceeded 4.0 on a 5-point scale. For example, the MLW on GEP implementation in RFOs received an average satisfaction score of 4.2, with respondents praising the comprehensiveness of the presentations and the clarity with which the workshop explained the potential of GEPs as tools for structural change. Similarly, in the MLW on Gender Bias (average satisfaction score of 4.75 on a scale from 1 to 5), participants described the



workshop as “very useful,” highlighting its effectiveness in mapping the funding cycle, clarifying drivers of bias, and presenting the role of RFOs as active mitigation agents. The session was also appreciated for balancing conceptual input with practical discussion.

In addition to quantitative metrics, the direct feedback collected onsite, particularly for the workshops on Gender-Based Violence (Milan) and Research Assessment (Brussels), reinforced these positive results. Participants valued the opportunity to collaboratively explore complex issues, share real-world examples, and co-create ideas in a supportive and stimulating learning environment. The interactive formats - such as breakout groups, World Café discussions, and Expectation Tree exercises – facilitated mutual learning and fostered a sense of community.

Several key elements emerged as particularly useful and impactful across workshops:

- The presentation of concrete practices from RFOs across Europe (e.g. Ireland, Sweden) and discussion on national cases in breakout rooms
- The use of interactive methods and reflective spaces, allowing participants to apply new ideas to their own contexts.

Members of the RFO CoP also praised the MLWs’ power to build awareness within the CoP and beyond:

- *“The most valuable takeaway is the awareness that there is so much to do and that it is possible to move forward in very tangible ways.”*
- *“The MLW paves the way for creating awareness within the institution, to catch the interest of leaders, of reviewers, of the staff.”*

Participants also identified areas for improvement, particularly in online formats. Respondents who had filled out the exit questionnaire noted that the agenda of online MLWs was too tightly packed, limiting time for reflection and deeper discussion. Recommendations included reducing the number of speakers, increasing the focus on best practices, and building in longer breaks. These insights underscore the need to continue balancing content delivery with space for interaction and integration.

Overall, the MLWs were seen not only as learning opportunities but also as catalysts for institutional reflection and change. Many participants indicated intentions to bring new ideas into their daily work, whether through updating GEPs, improving applicant guidance, piloting inclusive review practices, or initiating broader internal dialogues on gender and bias.

2.2.4. Lessons learnt

One core learning in facilitating capacity building with the RFO CoP was that information provided in MLWs was often difficult to remember and “digest” for the CoP members. Building on this experience, facilitators acted in three directions:

- Firstly, reducing complexity and stress by having fewer speaker inputs provided in each MLWs (2 instead of 3). At the same time, more time was offered for discussing the inputs in small groups (break-out rooms).
- Secondly, the way in which capacity building was organised was modified in a 3-step-approach



- Step 1: MLWs were organised based on the project's WPs and the needs and interests of CoP members, including inputs from CoP members, CoP facilitators and external experts. The aim was primarily to provide new insights, food for thought and additional material to explore the topic further (references, tools).
- Step 2: Preparatory work ('homework') thematically related to MLW topics was developed by facilitators and sent to CoP members to work on. The aim here was to reflect on what was learnt and to link it to CoP members' daily work, sometimes also involving colleagues in their RFO in the topical work. CoP members were invited to send this preparatory work back to facilitators as basis for preparing the second hour of the BMMs.
- Step 3: The second hour of each BMM was used to reflect on this preparatory work and to discuss collectively on CoP members' experiences back home. This step also supported CoP members to develop next steps for applying the learnings in everyday practices.
- Thirdly, RFO CoP members expressed their desire to have concrete guidance of what to do. This is why JR together with the WG lead on bias condensed all inputs related to bias (MLW7) and research assessment (MLW8) in the funding cycle into a guideline for RFOs, called *Inclusive Funding: A co-created guideline for mitigating bias along the research funding cycle*. It addresses all steps of the funding cycle and outlines the challenges and bias risks, mitigation strategies, good practices, and available tools and resources and can be downloaded from the website.

Another important lesson learned was that successful CoP engagement depends significantly on fostering trust among participants, enabling open discussion, critical reflection, and the establishment of a safe and supportive environment. Onsite meetings organised back-to-back with consortium meetings provided essential opportunities to build this trust, subsequently enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the subsequent online BMMs.

Given the broad composition of the CoP, comprising 34 members with varying levels of engagement and expertise, participants assigned specific responsibilities, such as leading working groups or undertaking detailed tasks, demonstrated higher levels of commitment to CoP activities. The variability in members' engagement required active facilitation and management to maintain overall participation and prevent disengagement. A valuable recommendation for future CoP activities is assigning each member the responsibility of hosting at least one BMM, fostering greater accountability and deeper engagement with CoP objectives.

These insights offer clear guidance for future capacity building activities: focus on interaction, ensure relevance through concrete examples, and maintain a balanced agenda that allows time for reflection and exchange. The lessons learnt in the RFO CoP not only improve the effectiveness of learning formats but also contribute to deeper institutional change by empowering participants to apply new knowledge in meaningful, actionable ways.



2.3. Joint mutual learning events

Several MLWs were organised jointly for the RFO and policy CoPs, aimed at strengthening the capacity of both communities of practice to advance gender equality in research and innovation. Each workshop focused on a thematic priority and combined expert inputs, practical exercises, and peer learning to deepen knowledge and support implementation across the project.

Table 5 - Overview of joint events for both the policy and RFO CoP members

No.	Topic	Format	Date	Short description
1	Stakeholder and Citizen Engagement	Online	17 January 2023	Focused on principles, methods, and tools for effective engagement of stakeholders and citizens, providing participants with practical strategies for planning and conducting engagement activities
2	Gender Dimension in Research and Innovation	Online	26 April 2023	Explored how sex and gender impact research and innovation, showcasing the European Commission's approach and good practices by Research Funding Organizations (RFOs), and providing concrete measures for integrating GiRI in funding processes.
3	Intersectionality	Onsite, Vienna	24 – 25 May 2023	Established a common understanding of intersectionality within the CoPs, discussed emerging practices, and mapped dimensions relevant to policy and funding cycles, emphasizing how to incorporate an intersectional lens into gender equality work.
4	Dealing with Resistances	Onsite, Madrid	13 – 14 June 2024	Through a "Resistance Lab" format, participants explored the origins of resistance to gender equality work, developed practical strategies for handling it, and reframed resistance as a marker of impactful change.
5	Looking back / looking ahead	Onsite, Brussels	13 February 2025	Reflected on achievements across the project, with a focus on cross-CoP learning, storytelling of significant changes, and setting directions for future actions.



6	Co-creating the future together*	Onsite, Vienna	19 – 20 May 2025	Included a review of recent achievements and future challenges under the ERA Policy Agenda, discussions on current political and social developments affecting inclusive gender equality in Europe and globally, and dedicated sessions to develop input for the ERA Forum Sub-group's position paper on inclusive gender equality and academic freedom.
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Across these sessions, participants engaged in a combination of keynote presentations, case studies, interactive group discussions (often supported by Miro boards in the case of online formats), and exercises such as empathy mapping and double diamond process design.

Content-wise, the workshops addressed both theoretical and practical aspects of gender equality work: from designing stakeholder engagement strategies and implementing gender analysis in research projects, to tackling systemic resistances and operationalizing intersectionality. Emphasis was placed on the exchange of experiences between more and less experienced members, fostering mutual support and learning.

2.3.1. Approaches used in building capacities

The MLWs were carefully designed to provide an effective learning environment for the members of both CoPs. The capacity-building strategy was centred on interactive, peer-driven, and expert-supported learning formats designed to strengthen participants' knowledge and practical abilities in advancing gender equality in R&I. Several key instruments were systematically employed to ensure effective skill development and knowledge transfer:

Presentations from Work Package (WP) experts

A core instrument across all MLWs was the inclusion of structured presentations delivered by WP experts from within the GENDERACTIONplus consortium. These presentations provided participants with specialized, up-to-date knowledge on thematic priorities such as stakeholder engagement, gender dimension in research and innovation (GiRI) and intersectionality. By combining theoretical foundations with applied insights, expert inputs helped participants deepen their understanding of complex issues and critically reflect on how to translate new knowledge into their own professional contexts.

Sharing of promising and emerging practices

In addition to formal expert inputs, the MLWs promoted mutual learning through the sharing of practical experiences. Members of the two CoPs regularly presented successful gender equality initiatives, national case studies, and organizational practices. This peer-to-peer learning approach allowed participants to exchange actionable strategies, discuss challenges and solutions, and adapt promising models to their own organizational or national settings.

Interactive exercises and collaborative tools

The workshops made extensive use of interactive exercises, such as empathy mapping, persona development, double diamond framework exercises, and structured reflection sessions. Tools like Miro



boards facilitated collaborative brainstorming, idea clustering, and group presentations, making the sessions dynamic and participatory. This hands-on approach encouraged active engagement and helped internalize theoretical concepts through practical application.

Facilitated group discussions and breakout sessions

Small group discussions and breakout rooms were a standard feature across MLWs, offering participants the opportunity to dive deeper into specific topics, share experiences in a more intimate setting, and foster peer-to-peer support. These discussions were often tailored to the specific needs of each CoP, allowing for targeted exchanges relevant to participants' roles and institutional responsibilities.

External expert contributions

External speakers, such as senior policy officers from the EC and academic researchers specializing in gender equality and intersectionality, were invited to several MLWs. These external perspectives complemented internal consortium expertise and provided participants with broader, policy-level and research-driven insights into current trends and challenges.

Together, these capacity-building instruments created a multi-layered learning environment, combining expert knowledge, peer exchange, practical exercises, and strategic reflection. This comprehensive approach supported participants in strengthening both their theoretical understanding and their practical skills in promoting systemic change toward gender equality.

2.3.2. Assessment of delivered action

Data collection tools

The evaluation of the MLWs was based on two primary data collection tools:

- **Exit surveys:** After each MLW, participants were invited to complete an anonymous online questionnaire designed to assess various aspects of the workshop, including satisfaction with content, facilitation, opportunities for interaction, and perceived learning outcomes. Responses were collected using a standardized scale, typically from 1 (very unsatisfied or no contribution) to 5 (very satisfied or very high contribution).
- **Collection of direct Feedback:** In addition to the structured surveys, participants provided spontaneous verbal and written feedback during and after the workshops. This qualitative feedback captured immediate impressions, suggestions for improvement, and reflections on the applicability of the knowledge gained.

Assessment results

Across all workshops, participants consistently appreciated the quality and relevance of the thematic content, particularly the inputs from WP experts and external keynote speakers. Sessions focusing on practical tools and real-world applications, such as the Double Diamond framework, empathy mapping exercises, and the sharing of emerging practices, were especially well-received. Participants found these interactive formats highly valuable for translating theoretical knowledge into actionable strategies.

Workshops scored highly for organization, timekeeping, facilitation, and opportunities for interaction, with many participants highlighting the careful structuring of sessions and the openness encouraged in



discussions. Specific aspects such as schedule management and opportunities for engagement frequently achieved scores above 4.5 out of 5, demonstrating the effectiveness of the workshop design.

However, evaluations also indicated some areas for improvement. While participants valued the depth of content, there were recurring suggestions to allow more time for discussions, reflection, and peer exchanges, especially in breakout rooms. Some workshops, such as the one on the GiRI, received feedback that discussions in smaller groups could have been more focused and fruitful. Similarly, although practical exercises were well-rated, a few participants noted that more structured or technically detailed follow-up guidance would strengthen the long-term application of the concepts learned.

Regarding perceived learning impact, most workshops achieved strong results, particularly in building understanding around complex topics like stakeholder engagement, intersectionality, and resistance to gender equality initiatives. Participants reported feeling better equipped with new tools and strategies, although in some cases - particularly in the context of applying resistance management techniques - further capacity-building would be necessary to move from conceptual understanding to concrete implementation.

Some of the most important take-aways are reflected in the feedback below:

- *“The keynote was fantastic and very inspiring.”*
- *“It was good to include external speakers with examples, different perspectives.”*
- *“Practical examples of implementation, challenges, approaches are always interesting and beneficial.”*
- *“We felt a sense of more community in the consortium after the MLW.”*

Overall, the evaluations suggest that the MLWs were successful in fostering knowledge exchange, mutual support, and collective capacity building within the GENDERACTIONplus consortium. The workshops not only delivered significant immediate learning benefits but also laid the groundwork for sustained application of gender equality principles in participants' respective national and organizational contexts.

2.3.3. Lessons learnt

Several important lessons emerged from the delivery and evaluation of the workshops:

Interactive formats enhance engagement

Interactive elements, such as breakout rooms / group reflection, expectation trees, and real-time feedback were especially successful in fostering mutual learning. Participants appreciated the opportunity to apply concepts, share institutional experiences, and co-create strategies in a collaborative and trust-based environment.

Concrete practices and national examples strengthen relevance

The inclusion of practical cases from RFOs was consistently highlighted as a valuable aspect of the workshops. These examples made the sessions more relatable and provided tangible inspiration for participants to adapt and implement changes in their own institutions.



Workshops serve as catalysts for awareness

Participants reported that the MLWs were not only educational but also motivational, encouraging them to reflect on internal practices and plan changes in areas such as GEP development, inclusive review processes, and gender bias mitigation. Many noted that the workshops helped raise awareness and provided tools to engage decision-makers and staff in their respective organisations.

Avoid content overload in online events

Feedback indicated that overly packed agendas hindered reflection and deep engagement. Participants recommended fewer speakers, more time for discussion, and longer breaks. This emphasizes the importance of pacing and designing sessions that prioritize interaction over volume of content.

Conceptual clarity combined with practical application is key

Workshops that balanced theory with practical tools and examples were especially well received. For instance, sessions on gender bias and GEP implementation successfully clarified complex concepts while offering structured guidance on how to apply them within the funding cycle.

Overall, these insights from the MLWs clearly illustrate that effective capacity building in gender equality requires thoughtfully designed interactions that balance theoretical depth with practical application. Future initiatives should integrate these lessons by prioritizing interactive and engaging formats, showcasing relatable national examples, ensuring balanced agendas, and emphasizing actionable knowledge. Continuing to foster strong collaborative networks and sustained reflective practices will further strengthen the long-term impact and systemic integration of gender equality within research and innovation across Europe.



3. EUROPEAN GENDER EQUALITY TASKFORCE (EGET)

3.1. Overview

The focus of the EGET was to develop gender equality and inclusiveness in R&I, using gender mainstreaming as a strategy for structural change. It was possible for partners within a country or from different countries to cooperate on EGET initiatives. EGET also supported the partners in implementing actions from their NIPs in T8.4, based on the work done in WP2-WP6, as well as disseminated and implemented knowledge developed in GENDERACTIONplus more broadly. EGET actions were centred on planning and moderating on-site and digital seminars and workshops.

The EGET twice invited all participating MS and AC in the GENDERACTIONplus project – in the periods 2023 and 2024-25 – to submit requests for support on NIP implementation during the project period. EGET was led by KILDEN, with UGOT as co-leader, during June 2022-December 2023, and was led by UGOT from January 2024 until the end of the GENDERACTIONplus project.

3.2. Capacity building formats

A specific aim of EGET capacity building was to set the content in direct relation to the ongoing work in national contexts using NIP implementation. This meant always engaging as many relevant stakeholders as possible and using different approaches during the interventions. This was due to the shifting preconditions in different national contexts, the content of the interventions, whether the interventions took place on-site or digitally, and the needs assessment performed by stakeholders in charge of facilitating the intervention. Every intervention was designed in close dialogue with the national representatives. This strengthened participant recruitment and made the content as relevant for the participants as possible by choosing a viable pedagogical approach. In terms of content, the interventions performed covered the following aspects: setup and organisation of a national GE infrastructure, GEP monitoring, institutional change through GEPs, intersectionality and inclusiveness in policy development on GE, and addressing the issue of gender-based violence among staff and students.

The list of interventions that were conducted by the EGET as well as those that were originally indicated but in the end did not take place is summarised in Table 6 below:

Table 6 - EGET interventions performed and expressions of interest without realisation

Country	Date	Intervention
CZ	03.10.23	Infrastructure for GE in national context, in relation to ongoing STRATIN project
MT	12-13.03.24	GEP monitoring and implementation, special focus on eligibility for EU funding as well as enabling a sustained framework for GE in the R&I system
EE	04.04.24	Institutional change through GEPs



AT	27.02.25	Knowledge support for national stakeholders on intersectionality in ongoing NIP implementation.
EE	06.05.25	GBV and institutional change
SK	Expression of interest	First meeting held, interest on NIP implementation through GEPs, focusing on initial steps. Inhibited by partner due to political restraints.
NO	Expression of interest	Interest on targeted GBV intervention
IL	Expression of interest	Interest put forward on NIP implementation
RO	Expression of interest	Interest put forward on NIP implementation

Two interventions performed by the EGET can serve as examples of different approaches to optimise capacity building as described above, from Malta and Estonia respectively:

Malta: EGET Visit on Gender Equality Plans under Horizon Europe, 13-14 March 2024

The EGET intervention was structured in two parts: a stakeholder workshop on Day 1 and a follow-up-workshop on Day 2. Both days were planned and led by the EGET in close collaboration with several Maltese stakeholders present. During the workshop on Day 1 on the EGET provided up to date knowledge and information on GBV and SH on the policy level in both ERA and different local contexts. Further, the EGET presented best practices and identified needs and challenges in implementing GEPs and support systems for GEPs. The workshop attracted 40 participants representing academia, public entities, RFOs and Ministries. The workshop was structured in four parts: an introductory session, a panel with four case study presentations, a breakout session with four roundtables and a plenary with reporting back.

The follow-up-workshop on Day 2, in which the EGET provided expert knowledge and support throughout, focused on key options and challenges in setting up a national support system for certifying, monitoring and evaluating GEPs, and main elements of such a system, including structure, processes and actions. The workshop brought together the key stakeholders in the Maltese R&I system, including Ministry of Education (MEYR), Human Rights Directorate (HRD), National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) and Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST).

Estonia: EGET Visit on Gender Equality Plans under Horizon Europe, 4 April 2024

This EGET intervention consisted of planning the content of and moderating an online meeting between the National Gender Equality Task Force and several Estonian stakeholders on gender equality in research, development, and innovation. Almost all key stakeholders in the Estonian R&I system participated, with representatives from the Estonian Research Council, Ministry on Science and Education, Commissioner for Equal Opportunities Office, Estonian Business and Innovation Agency,



Department of Equality Policy at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication, as well as additional representatives from relevant stakeholders.

The key aim was to enhance the understanding of the importance of an infrastructure for GEP implementation and monitoring in the Estonian R&I system, especially focusing on key concepts and examples and best practices from other ERA countries. During the intervention a specific focus also entailed developing the content of the Estonian NIP and possible measures and relevant keyholders for the implementation process of the NIP in the future.

3.3. Assessment of delivered actions

All EGET actions were assessed by the GENDERACTIONplus partners responsible for the specific interventions in their respective national contexts. Overall, EGET interventions achieved a new or renewed engagement among a majority of stakeholders, especially on institutional change and concrete NIP implementation. Furthermore, the responses from individual stakeholders on the evaluation questionnaires indicated the importance of external advisory experts enriching the policy formation processes in specific national context (Malta, Austria, Estonia). In some cases, an initial dialogue on an EGET intervention were promising, but did not result in a full intervention, mainly due to political restraints and other structural changes in specific national contexts (such as in Romania and Slovakia)

As an average result, the evaluation of the intervention in Malta can serve as a good example, as described below:

Example of an assessment of an EGET intervention: Malta

The evaluation report from the intervention in Malta develops a Q&A format on the current and future challenges on gender equality in R&I. A concrete output from the assessment spurred the following recommendations (cited from the Malta evaluation report on the EGET intervention in March 2024:

“Malta has made substantial progress and is moving fast on the gender equality agenda as a whole, and in particular on gender and R&I. The level of ambition is high. However, this is not matched by the appropriate structures and levels of resources. In order to advance, we need to deepen and sustain our efforts on a number of fronts:

- Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) are in place in a number of public entities; however, further efforts are needed to ensure that the GEPs are addressing all the required aspects and that they are doing so appropriately in conformity with EU requirements. This extends to new criteria which will become mandatory in 2025.
- It is important to introduce a strategic problem framing in the GEPs, in order to focus efforts and provide direction to data collection and analysis and in the design of the required actions and measures. The framing of the problem needs to be undertaken through transparent co-design processes involving key stakeholders in formulating and updating GEPs. The rationale for collecting data and the monitoring and self-evaluation mechanisms needs to be clearly specified.



- The formulation of GEPs is not a one-off exercise and it may be necessary and advisable to develop annual action plans which identify weaknesses and gaps and focus efforts on remedial actions to be taken in the short-term. The EC is regularly introducing updates on its requirements with regard to GEPs - for example it is envisaged that in January 2025 actions addressing gender-based violence and the gender dimension on R&I will become requirements for GEPs. Iterations and updates of GEPs will be needed over time.
- The formulation of GEPs is not a copy and paste exercise. It is ideally not just the vision and work of one person or unit in the organisation. However, the experiences of other institutions provide important insights and good practices. Each type of institution, whether academia, research funder, government entity or agency, including some with combined functions, will need to adapt their GEP accordingly and there is no set one-size-fits-all formula.
- There are substantial ongoing efforts to collect gender disaggregated data among key public entities. The data, however, is not being analysed for gaps, inconsistencies and policy interpretation. Coordinated efforts across entities are recommended to set common indicators and KPIs in relation to GEPs. The ongoing cooperation with the National Statistics Office and the SHE Figures provide an important basis for evidence-informed GEP design and implementation which needs to be further reinforced and consolidated.
- Malta currently lacks a GEP certification and monitoring system. The EC will shortly be launching a GEP monitoring system and it will be possible to draw on the logic and the principles it is using, to develop and adapt the national monitoring system.
- Malta currently lacks the structure and resources to provide knowledge and process support on GEPs. Separating these functions by assigning them to different entities is recommended to ensure that these functions are effectively addressed.
- There is scope and urgency to consolidate efforts at the national level. It is very clear that a national support setup needs to be in place, led by a national authority (new or existing entity), to oversee the certification, monitoring and evaluation of GEPs."

The evaluation of the EGET intervention in Malta highlighted both the commendable progress made on gender equality in research and innovation and the critical systemic challenges that remain. While Malta has demonstrated high ambition and has established important foundations, the absence of adequate structures, resources, and coordinated support mechanisms risks undermining these achievements. The recommendations emerging from the assessment emphasize the need for a more strategic and sustained approach: strengthening the quality and adaptability of GEPs, enhancing data collection and analysis systems, creating national frameworks for certification and monitoring, and establishing a dedicated national support structure. Moving forward, addressing these gaps will be essential to ensure that Malta's gender equality efforts are not only compliant with evolving EC requirements but also effective, resilient, and impactful in the long term.



4. SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNT

The GENDERACTIONplus project has generated valuable insights through the implementation of its capacity-building activities, particularly via the Mutual Learning Workshops (MLWs), Bimonthly Meetings (BMMs), and the interventions by the European Gender Equality Taskforce (EGET). The lessons learnt have significant implications for future initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and inclusivity within research and innovation frameworks.

Diverse inputs and real-world examples enhance learning – The integration of external experts, national case studies, and tools from other EU-funded projects (such as [GEAM](#) and [CASPER](#)) enriched learning experiences and provided valuable context-specific insights. Participants particularly appreciated concrete, practical examples that could be directly adapted to their institutional or national contexts.

Interactive and engaging formats are crucial – Interactive elements such as breakout discussions, World Café sessions, expectation trees, and hands-on exercises proved effective in fostering deeper engagement and mutual learning. These formats facilitated meaningful peer-to-peer exchanges, allowing participants to collaboratively develop solutions and enhance their practical skills.

Onsite workshops foster deeper engagement – Participants consistently highlighted onsite workshops as superior in promoting networking, trust-building, and deeper interaction compared to online events. Face-to-face meetings created a supportive atmosphere, enabling participants to engage openly and constructively, particularly when addressing sensitive topics or complex issues.

Effective facilitation enhances online engagement – While online workshops offer accessibility and flexibility, they require strong facilitation to maintain participants' engagement and to ensure productive interactions. Participants recommended fewer presentations, more structured discussions, and active moderation in breakout rooms to maximize the effectiveness of virtual learning environments.

Balancing content delivery and interaction prevents overload – Feedback consistently pointed to the need for balanced agendas that prioritize quality interaction over content volume. Overly dense online sessions risk information overload, limiting opportunities for reflection and meaningful dialogue. Adjustments to pacing, reduced number of speakers, and strategic use of breaks were recommended for future sessions.

Trust and accountability enhance CoP effectiveness – Building trust among CoP members is crucial for fostering open dialogue and reflective practice. Regular in-person meetings scheduled alongside consortium gatherings significantly contributed to this trust-building. Additionally, assigning specific roles or tasks, such as hosting responsibilities for BMMs, enhanced participant engagement and accountability.

EGET interventions require sustained, strategic support – The EGET interventions demonstrated that tailored, context-specific support greatly facilitates the national implementation of gender equality initiatives. However, these interventions highlighted systemic challenges, such as the need for sustained structural support, clearer national certification and monitoring mechanisms, and adequate resource allocation to ensure effective long-term integration and compliance with European standards.



Overall, the capacity-building efforts of GENDERACTIONplus have generated a tangible shift in how gender equality is understood and acted upon within institutions and national contexts. By equipping participants with both theoretical foundations and practical tools, the project has contributed to a deeper institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming practices. Notably, participants reported increased confidence in communicating gender equality objectives internally, influencing policy agendas, and advancing implementation of GEPs and related frameworks.

The project also contributed to enhancing the visibility of gender equality as a core pillar of research excellence and responsible innovation. The cross-national peer exchanges enabled the transfer of successful strategies and innovations across borders, fostering a community of practice that is likely to endure beyond the lifetime of the project. As a result, GENDERACTIONplus has not only addressed knowledge gaps but also activated a broader cultural and structural shift toward more inclusive research and policy systems.



5. CONCLUSIONS

The capacity-building and mutual learning activities implemented in GENDERACTIONplus have demonstrated a strong and lasting impact on enhancing participants' knowledge, skills, and practical capacities to promote gender equality in R&I systems. Through a carefully designed combination of structured content delivery, peer-to-peer exchange, and interactive learning methods, the project fostered a dynamic environment that supported both individual growth and collective progress across the CoPs.

Evaluation results show consistently high levels of satisfaction across both Policy and RFO CoPs, with participants valuing the quality of thematic inputs, the relevance of case studies, the application of practical tools, and the opportunities for meaningful exchanges. Both online and onsite events contributed significantly to developing participants' understanding of complex issues such as stakeholder engagement, intersectionality, gender-based violence, resistance to gender equality initiatives, and the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation. Importantly, the workshops also helped participants build a sense of community, mutual trust, and shared responsibility for advancing change.

At the same time, lessons learned during the project underline critical success factors for future initiatives: the need to balance expert inputs with active reflection and practical application; the value of tailoring capacity-building activities to participants' varying levels of experience; the importance of fostering interactive and inclusive spaces, especially in online settings; and the crucial role of sustained engagement through preparatory work, follow-up discussions, and mentoring practices.

Overall, GENDERACTIONplus has not only strengthened the knowledge base of national authorities and RFOs but also laid important foundations for deeper institutional change. By empowering participants with conceptual clarity, practical tools, and peer support, the project has enhanced the potential for continued implementation of gender equality policies, both at national and European levels. Future efforts should continue to build on these achievements by reinforcing cross-CoP collaboration, expanding mentoring and reflective practices, and fostering mechanisms that translate learning into sustained systemic impact.



ANNEX 1. OVERVIEW OF MUTUAL LEARNING WORKSHOPS

1. *Stakeholder and citizen engagement (online, 17 January 2023) - joint event for both CoPs*

The mutual learning workshop (MLW) was designed to provide partners with a common understanding and increased knowledge and inspiration about how to undertake stakeholder and citizen engagement to enable them to start planning and undertaking engagement activities throughout the project. The workshop was addressed to both CoPs, in line with the results of the needs assessment survey.

The workshop was developed and delivered by VA, the national expert hub for public engagement, citizen science and science communication in Sweden with many years of experience in running engagement activities both within EU-funded and national projects. The programme was designed to be a combination of presented material combined with interactive group exercises. Interactions were planned throughout the workshop to practically demonstrate different methodologies and exercises that can be used in online workshops to engage participants. A Miro board was also prepared in advance, on which participants could input ideas and suggestions in a series of exercises, some performed individually and others together in breakout groups. In addition, VA collated a wide range of additional resources and guidance for partners' use during the project.

The workshop was attended by 25 participants. Overall, the majority of participants were very satisfied or satisfied with the event delivery. They would have ideally liked more time for discussions and exchange, which was slightly limited by the length of the workshop and the online nature of its delivery. However, responses to the feedback questionnaire indicated that the workshop was successful in broadening participants' knowledge of new tools, methods, approaches that would be applicable to their work.

2. *Building a national gender equality discourse (online, 25 April 2023) - policy CoP*

The MLW was delivered by IHS (AT), and was aimed at discussing the relevance of a national policy discourse for the successful implementation of gender equality policies in R&I. The workshop provided an opportunity to reflect on the need for and advantages of embedding the national gender equality discourse in the European discourse, and the ways in which the EU and national levels can support developments in each.

Three main types of methods were used to facilitate learning and foster awareness: (1) Inputs from experts, (2) Practice inputs (good practices), and (3) Discussion in breakout groups.

Presentations were prepared and held by experts within the project consortium (Angela Wroblewski from IHS) as well as by external experts (Petra Kurtovic, Policy Officer at European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual & Reproductive Rights). These inputs focused on providing answers to questions such as:

- What is a policy discourse?



- What could the active role of national policy makers look like?
- Illustrate the relevance of a national discourse for gender equality in R&I in the context of anti-gender movements
- Who should be involved in the policy discourse (e.g. European stakeholders, national stakeholders like RFOs)?

Moreover, inputs were provided on instruments supporting a policy discourse: steering instruments, monitoring and indicators, common exchange formats and platforms.

In terms of practice inputs, the workshop included the presentation of two good practice examples of a policy discourse at national level (Ireland and Austria). Speakers (Ross Woods - Senior Manager Centre of Excellence for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Higher Education Authority in Ireland and Gerald Rauch, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research in Austria) were asked to give a presentation on the discourse in their countries, who is involved, how relevant actors have been involved (concrete role, tasks) and factors that supported the discourse.

The workshop was attended by 30 participants. Feedback was largely positive and the level of satisfaction reported by participants was relatively high, with the average score above 4 for most dimensions included in the evaluation form (overall satisfaction, content, speakers' performance, event delivery, discussions in the breakout rooms etc.). Thus, the presentations and practices showcased as part of the workshop provided a good and comprehensive picture of how to build a national gender equality discourse.

3. *Gender dimension in Research and Innovation (GiRI) (online, 26 April 2023) – joint event for both CoPs*

The MLW was delivered by JR and Vinnova. The main aim of this webinar was to get a clear(er) picture about the GiRI approach. Therefore, the EC concept as well as various approaches from RFOs were presented and reflected. The potential agency of RFOs along the funding cycle was highlighted to get a better understanding of the concrete measures that RFOs can implement to support applicants and reviewers to integrate GiRI in their work. Participants were encouraged to share experiences and to learn from other RFOs in small group discussions.

The webinar was designed and addressed to RFO CoP members, but all other GENDERACTIONplus partners were welcomed as well.

Overall, the webinar provided an overview on:

- Where is GiRI addressed in funding cycle? In which way?
- Which GiRI policies are already in place in RFO CoP members (report on the benchmarking results, best-practices from RFOs)?
- What are challenges when implementing GiRI in practice?

A Miro board was used to structure ideas shared in the small group discussions and further report/present them to the wider audience.



The results of the evaluation survey distributed to participants following the workshop shows that they were largely satisfied with the content of the workshop and that presentations provided a good and comprehensive picture of GiRI chances and challenges. Learnings from the webinar will be further integrated in the development of a follow-up workshop. Moreover, feedback from participants was used by VA to prepare a document with tips and tricks to be used in the organization of future webinars (planning and running).

The feedback collected through the post-event evaluation questionnaire reflected a generally high level of satisfaction among participants. Out of the six respondents—five from RFOs and one from another organisation—the overall satisfaction score was 4.2 out of 5, indicating that the workshop was well-received. Participants also expressed satisfaction with the delivery of the event and the breakout room discussions, though some noted that the discussions could have been more in-depth. Key highlights mentioned included the keynote presentation by Anne Pépin and the insights from Vinnova, particularly around common misunderstandings of the GiRI concept among researchers. While the content and structure were appreciated, participants suggested improvements such as shortening the introductory segment, reducing the number of speakers to avoid time pressure, and allowing more time for meaningful exchange in the breakout rooms. These recommendations will inform the design of future GiRI-related workshops to ensure an optimal balance between content delivery and interactive learning.

4. Intersectionality (onsite, 22-24 May 2023 in Vienna) – joint event for both CoPs

The MLW was jointly organized by UEFISCDI with the help of a dedicated task force composed by consortium members from various WPs and delivered by KIF. The workshop was organised on-site in Vienna on 24-25/05/2023, back-to-back with the consortium meeting.

The workshop was highly interactive and several methods were used to facilitate learning and foster awareness:

- Inputs from experts, e.g. Anne Pépin, Senior Policy Officer, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission and Yvonne Benschop from Radboud University
- Inputs from consortium members on project activities i.e. overview of benchmark results by Heidi Holt Zachariassen and Ella Ghosh, Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research, NO
- Practice inputs (good practices) - presentation of two examples from GENDERACTIONplus consortium (Ireland and the Netherlands)
- Discussion in breakout groups, with each session focusing on one of the two CoPs and taking place in separate venues.

The workshop was positively received and reviewed by participants, as reflected in the results of the exit survey. Of the 15 respondents, which included members of both Communities of Practice (Policy and RFO) and supporting organisations, the majority rated the workshop highly across multiple dimensions. On a scale from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), the overall satisfaction with the workshop, the quality of event delivery and organization, and the breakout discussions all received average scores above 4. This indicates a strong level of appreciation for the structure, content, and



facilitation of the workshop. Participants particularly valued the opportunity for in-depth discussions, the relevance of the keynote presentations, and the inclusion of real-world examples from consortium countries such as Ireland and the Netherlands.

One of the key conclusions from the workshop was the importance of recognising and valuing diverse perspectives and expertise. The event also emphasised the need for collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches within research organisations to effectively address intersectionality.

5. Role of RFO mitigating gender-based violence in ERA (onsite, Milan, 14-15 September 2023) - RFO CoP

The MLW on the role of RFOs in mitigating gender-based violence in the European Research Area (ERA) was organised on-site in Milan on 14–15 September 2023. The event was coordinated by Joanneum Research and Vinnova, with active contributions from UGOT and FRRB, and brought together members of the RFO CoP and representatives of the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the United States.

The workshop combined expert insights, peer exchange, and interactive sessions to explore how RFOs can contribute to the prevention and mitigation of GBV within research environments. The programme featured presentations on current practices and challenges, including an overview of GBV-related benchmark results from the GENDERACTIONplus project and an in-depth session with NSF representatives. NSF shared their experience in implementing binding policies requiring institutions to report incidents involving funded Principal Investigators, highlighting both progress and persisting challenges related to compliance, reporting, and institutional responsibility.

Participants engaged in structured discussions based on real-world cases, as well as practical exercises designed to formulate strategies for change, incorporating the UniSAFE 7P model recommendations. A key focus was placed on defining the logic of RFO responsibility in addressing GBV and identifying actionable entry points. The inclusion of international perspectives, particularly from the NSF, added valuable comparative insights and spurred critical reflection.

Based on the direct feedback collected from participants during the event, the workshop was positively received by participants, who appreciated the depth of the discussions and the opportunity to collaboratively explore solutions. One key takeaway was the recognition that while RFOs can act as drivers of change, they require appropriate mandates, resources, and mechanisms to effectively fulfil this role. The event reaffirmed the importance of continued exchange, the use of concrete cases in training formats, and the integration of GBV prevention into the broader framework of responsible research funding and institutional accountability.

6. GEP Impact Monitoring (online, 13 and 18 December 2023) – policy CoP

The MLW was delivered through a joint collaboration between ISAS, SDU, UEFISCDI and WP5 and WP6 leaders and focused on GEP Impact and Monitoring, in line with both the project work plan as well as the results of the needs assessment survey and discussions in the policy CoP meetings and the WP7 meetings.



The workshop was designed to cover the issue of indicators, monitoring and evaluation of gender equality, and was tied to Work Packages 5 and 6 of the GENDERACTIONplus project (the results of WP 5 and WP 6 benchmark reports were presented in the workshop).

The objective of the workshop was to discuss and start building a common understanding of what sort of impact we want to achieve in advancing gender equality and how to measure it. The workshop was organized online (via Zoom) and was highly interactive. In order to facilitate learning, several methods were used:

- Inputs from external experts (e.g. Alain Denis, Yellow Window)
- Inputs from consortium members on project activities / benchmark results (Angela Wroblewski – IHS; Jennie Rothwell – HEA)
- Practice inputs (national practices from Ireland and Austria)
- Individual and group reflections

The workshop was structured in two sessions of 3.5 hours each. The first session introduced participants to various national approaches to GEP monitoring and evaluation, including examples from Austria and Ireland. It also showcased tools and models from other EU-funded projects, such as the GEAM tool, the CASPER scenarios, and the INSPIRE indicators for inclusive GEPs. In addition to expert and practice inputs, individual reflections and breakout discussions encouraged participants to contextualise learning in their own national environments.

To build on this knowledge, the second session focused on participants' reflections on their country contexts through a structured homework assignment. These presentations were followed by expert feedback and small-group discussions, allowing for deeper exploration of suitable indicators, challenges in implementation, and strategies for building supportive monitoring systems. The sessions integrated interactive elements such as online polls, group reflections, and expert feedback loops.

The workshop was attended by approximately 20 participants. Evaluation data revealed a high level of satisfaction, with all surveyed aspects scoring above 4 out of 5. The highest-rated element was the quality of plenary presentations and expert feedback (average score of 4.63), followed by schedule and time-keeping (4.5), pre-event organisation (4.38), and opportunities for interaction and discussion (4.25). Participants also rated the structured homework exercise and associated feedback positively, with scores of 4.63 for expert input and 4.38 for peer learning from other country contexts. While the volume of information in the first session was considered dense by some, the overall experience was seen as enriching and impactful. Participants especially appreciated the mix of theoretical input, practical tools, and comparative examples, as well as the focus on real-world applicability. The workshop successfully contributed to strengthening participants' understanding of monitoring systems, the use of indicators, and approaches to assess the long-term impact of GEPs within the ERA policy framework.

7. Gender-based Violence (onsite, 12 February 2024 in Brussels) – policy CoP

The MLW on gender-based violence (GBV) was organised onsite in Brussels by ISAS and SDU, with support from UEFISCDI. Addressed to members of the policy CoP, the workshop focused on strengthening participants' understanding of policy responses to GBV in R&I, and on fostering mutual learning around promising national practices. The workshop was held back-to-back with the GENDERACTIONplus mid-term event and was part of the WP7 capacity-building activities.



Through a combination of expert inputs, case studies, and interactive group reflections, the session explored how policy makers can develop effective measures to counteract GBV in their national contexts. Participants became familiar with the 7P framework from the UniSAFE toolkit and engaged with concrete examples from France, Ireland, and Spain, which showcased recent developments in GBV prevention and institutional accountability. Group discussions allowed participants to reflect on their own countries' challenges and opportunities, covering topics such as stakeholder engagement, inter-institutional coordination, political will, and reporting mechanisms.

Approximately 20 participants took part in the session. Feedback collected onsite and via an online survey indicated a high level of satisfaction. Feedback collected onsite and via an online survey indicated a high level of satisfaction, with all respondents rating the workshop positively: 54% declared themselves very satisfied and 46% satisfied. The average satisfaction scores across key dimensions were consistently high, ranging from 4.62 to 4.69 out of 5—for example, 4.69 for moderation/facilitation, time-keeping, and the quality of examples and practices showcased. Participants particularly valued the exchange of good practices, small-group discussions in a safe environment, and the relevance of case studies from Ireland, Spain, and France. While the overall experience was rated very positively, suggestions for improvement included enhancing support for online participation, providing discussion questions in advance, and allocating more time for group exchanges. Despite these minor logistical issues, the workshop was perceived as a valuable and inspiring capacity-building session, equipping participants with practical knowledge to advance GBV-related work within the ERA framework.

8. *Role of RFOs in GEP implementation (online, 21 March 2024) - RFO CoP*

The MLW on the role of RFOs in Gender Equality Plan (GEP) implementation was organised online by JR and Vinnova, with support from UEFISCDI. The event was developed as part of WP7 capacity-building activities for the RFO CoP and responded directly to priorities identified through the project's needs assessment. The workshop aimed to increase awareness of the role GEPs play in RFO-internal transformation, as well as their potential to promote gender equality externally through the funding cycle.

The MLW was designed and addressed to RFO CoP members, but other GENDERACTIONplus partners were welcomed as well. The formats and methods were chosen to meet the following specific objectives:

- 1) Get everyone in the CoP on the same page concerning the understanding of the role of RFOs in GEP implementation (through presentations in the plenary)
- 2) Developing trust and a culture of openness to share experiences and enable mutual learning (by working together on concrete cases in the breakout rooms)

Designed as a half-day interactive session, the workshop combined expert presentations, case examples, and breakout discussions. It featured inputs from the CALIPER project, the Irish Research Council, and national agencies such as HEA and Formas, and covered topics including inclusive GEP design, monitoring and evaluation, and the integration of intersectionality and gender-based violence measures. Breakout groups focused on real-world implementation challenges submitted by participants in advance, such as lack of management support or difficulties with data collection and inclusiveness.



Approximately 20 participants attended the session. Evaluation results indicated a high level of satisfaction (overall satisfaction score was 4.2 on a scale from 1 to 5). Key highlights included the presentation of promising practices, peer learning through breakout groups, and exposure to resources such as SPEAR, ERC, GRANTeD, INSPIRE, and KALIPO. Participants appreciated the workshop's depth and breadth but noted that the agenda was dense, with recommendations to reduce the number of speakers, improve time management, and allow more space for reflection. Overall, the event was regarded as a meaningful contribution to strengthening the capacity of RFOs to use GEPs as tools for structural and systemic change in the ERA.

9. Resistance (onsite, 13–14 June 2024 in Madrid) – Joint event for both CoPs

The MLW on resistance, held onsite in Madrid, brought together over 50 participants from both the Policy and RFO CoPs, as well as supporting organisations. Designed and facilitated by the external consultancy Transformera, the event responded to a strong need identified through the GENDERACTIONplus needs assessment: equipping participants with practical strategies to navigate and address resistance to gender equality efforts in their institutional and national contexts.

The workshop was structured as an interactive “Resistance Lab,” applying the Double Diamond process model (discover – define – develop – deliver) to help participants explore resistance not as an obstacle but as a sign of impactful change. The format blended short theoretical inputs with experiential exercises and creative group work. Through this design, participants were encouraged to reflect on how resistance arises, how it manifests in different organisational settings, and how it can be met with confidence and strategic clarity.

Key tools included:

- **Empathy mapping**, which supported participants in stepping into the shoes of stakeholders who resist gender equality work, and reframing the challenges from their perspectives;
- **Use case analysis**, drawing on real-life examples collected in advance through a consortium-wide survey;
- **“How might we” exercises**, used to spark collaborative solution development;
- **Letter-to-self reflections** and peer mentoring prompts, designed to sustain motivation and accountability beyond the event.

The agenda spanned two days. The first day focused on building a shared understanding of resistance, identifying common dilemmas, and exploring stakeholder reactions. The second day transitioned to strategy development, allowing participants to co-create concrete arguments, tools, and approaches to address resistance in their work, culminating in the formulation of “top ten arguments and strategies” for moving forward.

Feedback from the 22 evaluation respondents reflected a high degree of satisfaction. Participants rated the schedule and time-keeping (4.68 on a scale from 1 to 5), facilitation (4.5/5), and opportunities for interaction (4.5/5) especially highly. The use of the Double Diamond framework (4.05/5) and practical use cases (3.91/5) were positively received, though slightly less so than other elements, suggesting room to refine these tools in future workshops.



Participants appreciated the openness of the discussions, the trust built within the group, and the realization that their challenges are shared across diverse national and institutional contexts. They highlighted the empathy mapping and reflection exercises as particularly valuable. Nonetheless, suggestions for improvement included allocating more time for structural-level discussions, expanding attention to intersectionality, and providing more concrete policy-oriented tools.

Overall, the Resistance Lab provided a safe and creative environment for deep reflection and peer learning, while also surfacing the need for continued capacity building on institutional strategies, norm-critical approaches, and intersectional thinking in addressing resistance to gender equality in R&I.

10. Gender Bias in the R&I Funding Process (online, 28 November 2024) - RFO CoP

The MLW on Gender Bias in the R&I Funding Process was held in response to a key need identified in the needs assessment, namely mitigating bias. Organised by JR together with Vinnova and IRC, the workshop was designed to engage RFO CoP members in co-creating a more inclusive and bias-mitigating approach to research funding. The event featured a mix of expert inputs, good practice examples, and co-creative breakout sessions focused on designing the “perfect” unbiased funding call.

The workshop was structured in two main sessions. The first focused on bias in pre-call procedures and launch strategies, featuring presentations by Helene Schiffbänker and Emer Cahill, including a case study from Ireland. Breakout discussions explored ways to target underrepresented applicants and enhance reviewer diversity and training. Participants shared a wide range of current practices, from inclusive language and extended eligibility windows to mentorship programmes and the use of national reviewers sensitive to cultural contexts. These exchanges sparked thoughtful reflection, including nuanced debate around intentional positive bias and the implications of terms like “science” and “excellence.”

The second session examined the role of artificial intelligence in mitigating or reproducing bias in research assessment. An insightful keynote by Prof. Ericka Johnson introduced the inherent risks of bias in AI-driven systems, underscoring that “AI is biased because the world is biased.” Discussions explored the practical use of AI tools in peer review and language analysis, their limitations, and their potential to enhance awareness of systemic bias. Participants shared examples of emerging practices from Vinnova, FCT, and others, along with reflections on the evolving regulatory landscape surrounding AI in funding.

The workshop was positively reviewed by participants. Based on eight responses to the exit survey, **satisfaction scores were high across all dimensions**, with an average score above 4 out of 5. Participants highlighted the usefulness of the workshop in clarifying the drivers of bias along the funding cycle and identifying intervention points. The event was described as “very balanced” and “full of food for thought,” offering both conceptual depth and structured, practical insights. The role of RFOs as mitigation agents and the discussion on the promise and pitfalls of AI were noted as particularly valuable takeaways.



11. Strategic Framing (onsite, 11 February 2025 in Brussels) – policy CoP

The MLW on strategic framing brought together members of the policy CoP for an in-person session in Brussels, hosted at the South Denmark European Office. The workshop focused on equipping policymakers and civil servants with practical tools for strategically framing gender equality in research and innovation, aligning such efforts with institutional priorities, stakeholder interests, and broader policy narratives.

The session opened with an expert introduction by Lut Mergaert (Yellow Window), who presented the core concepts of strategic framing and how narrative choices influence public discourse and institutional transformation. This was followed by interactive group work in which participants explored organisational values and policy drivers relevant to gender equality in their respective contexts. The discussion focused on how these values can be leveraged to frame gender equality work in a way that resonates with political and institutional agendas.

In the second half of the workshop, Anne Pépin (CNRS, former Head of Gender Sector at DG RTD) shared practical examples of strategic framing in action, drawing from European policy experience. Participants then applied these insights in small group exercises, developing tailored framing approaches to support gender equality in their national strategies.

The workshop concluded with a structured reflection session, allowing participants to identify key takeaways, reflect on relevance to their own contexts, and consider next steps in refining national communication strategies on gender equality in research and innovation.

12. Research assessment (onsite, Brussels, 11 February 2025) - RFO CoP

The MLW on Research Assessment was designed to explore how RFOs can align with the principles of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) while integrating equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), particularly the sex and gender dimension, into assessment processes. The event brought together RFO CoP members for an in-depth and interactive onsite exchange on promising practices, shared challenges, and actionable strategies.

The workshop began with an Expectation Tree exercise, where participants expressed diverse motivations for attending, from seeking clarity on integrating gender into research assessment to exchanging CoARA-related experiences and enhancing institutional practice. The sessions combined plenary contributions, a World Café discussion format, a Gallery Walk, and hands-on activities. Participants addressed challenges and solutions across three key stakeholder levels: applicants, reviewers, and RFO staff. Discussions touched on capacity-building needs, resistance to policy changes, incentives, best practices, and the potential use of AI in assessment systems. There was particular emphasis on developing practical tools, training modules, and clearer communication of gender-related requirements in funding calls.

Instead of a formal exit survey, evaluation was conducted through real-time collection of direct feedback, integrated throughout the workshop. Feedback highlighted that RFO CoP members found the workshop highly relevant. Key takeaways included strategies for supporting applicants with inclusive resources, reinforcing reviewer competencies through regular training and certification, and promoting organisational change through CoARA-aligned actions. Also, participants appreciated the co-creative



atmosphere and left the workshop with practical insights into how RFOs can operationalise fairer and more inclusive research assessment practices.

13. Looking Back / Looking Ahead (onsite, 13 February 2025 in Brussels) – Joint event for both CoPs

This event brought together members of both the Policy and RFO CoPs for an in-person session in Brussels. Organised back-to-back with the project's final conference, the workshop aimed to reflect on key transformations in gender equality work during the project and to strengthen cross-CoP exchange. The session provided a space for participants to consolidate learnings, articulate institutional change, and explore pathways for sustained impact.

The workshop centred on a participatory storytelling exercise titled "**Most Significant Change**", introduced by Helen Garrison and Maria Hagardt (VA). Participants were invited to prepare short narratives in advance, highlighting personal or institutional changes experienced during their engagement in GENDERACTIONplus. These stories were shared in small, facilitated groups using a structured storytelling framework, encouraging reflection on context, actions taken, outcomes, and lessons learned. The exercise was followed by a plenary discussion, drawing out common themes and challenges, and reinforcing shared understanding across the two CoPs.

Another key element of the workshop was the **CoP cross-pollination session**, where participants engaged in facilitated dialogue about their takeaways from the other community of practice. This session fostered mutual learning by highlighting diverse approaches to advancing gender equality across funding and policy institutions. The workshop concluded with a structured reflection session where participants identified key insights relevant to their institutional or national contexts.

A total of **32 participants** attended the event, with a balanced representation from the policy CoP (13), the RFO CoP (14), and supporting organisations (5).

The "Looking Back / Looking Ahead" MLW was received positively by participants, with feedback highlighting the quality of facilitation, the value of peer exchange, and the effectiveness of the structured, reflective format. On a scale from 1 to 5, the overall satisfaction with the workshop was rated at 4.25, suggesting that participants found the session both engaging and meaningful.

Participants particularly appreciated the organisation and structure of the event. Time management and opportunities for interaction stood out as strengths, both receiving the highest average score of 4.625. The format allowed for dynamic engagement, combining individual reflection with group learning and fostering a participatory atmosphere throughout the day.

Participants highlighted several aspects of the workshop as especially meaningful. These included the opportunity to share and hear personal stories, the realisation that challenges are often shared across countries and institutional roles, and the renewed motivation to continue gender equality work in difficult contexts. The open environment enabled honest conversations, while the interactive structure allowed for both introspection and collaboration.



14. After GENDERACTIONplus – How to Proceed? (online, 30 April 2025) – RFO CoP

The MLW brought together members of the RFO CoP for a forward-looking session focused on consolidating progress and identifying next steps. Held online, the workshop served as both a retrospective and a strategic planning exercise, highlighting key takeaways from across the project and stimulating reflection on the future role of RFOs in advancing gender equality in research and innovation.

Instead of revisiting the gender dimension in research and evaluation—already thoroughly addressed in MLW8—the final workshop concentrated on cross-cutting priorities and outputs from four central work packages: intersectionality (WP2), gender-based violence and sexual harassment in ERA (WP3), the integration of the gender dimension in R&I (WP4), and institutional change through GEPs (WP6). Each WP lead was invited to present a summary of their activities and results with a specific focus on future steps for RFOs.

- **Ella Ghosh (KD/KIF)** presented insights on intersectionality and inclusiveness, outlining how RFOs can adopt intersectional approaches and embed inclusive principles in funding mechanisms.
- **Fredrik Bondestam (UGOT)** addressed the evolving role of RFOs in tackling gender-based violence and sexual harassment, pointing to emerging policy needs and institutional responsibilities.
- **Lydia González Orta (FECYT)** discussed the integration of the gender dimension in research content and design, with a focus on how RFOs can support researchers and reviewers in this process.
- **Jennie Rothwell (HEA)** reflected on how RFOs can further institutional change through the implementation and monitoring of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs), identifying both enablers and barriers.

These presentations were followed by two reflection rounds and a dedicated breakout session titled “How to proceed after GA+”. Participants discussed challenges, strategic opportunities, and potential collaborations to carry forward the project’s legacy. The session concluded with feedback from the breakout rooms and a collective discussion on translating GENDERACTIONplus outcomes into sustained action at institutional and European levels.

The workshop provided a comprehensive and pragmatic overview of the progress made during the project and successfully opened a space for RFOs to reflect on their evolving roles in the ERA, setting the stage for future policy engagement and collaboration beyond the project’s lifetime.

15. Co-creating the Future Together (onsite, 19–20 May 2025 in Vienna) – RFO CoP and policy CoP in separate and joint sessions

This final onsite mutual learning workshop brought together members of both the Policy and RFO Communities of Practice (CoPs) to explore how collaboration can be sustained beyond the lifetime of the GENDERACTIONplus project. Organised as a two-day event at the Impact Hub in Vienna, the workshop aimed to consolidate achievements, discuss future challenges for inclusive gender equality, and develop joint recommendations for upcoming European policy agendas.



The programme included interactive sessions on the evolution of the European Research Area (ERA) Policy Agenda, current threats and opportunities for gender equality in Europe and the USA, and the future role of national authorities and RFOs in advancing inclusive gender equality. Participants engaged in structured group discussions, including CoP-specific reflections and joint plenary sharing.

A key objective of the workshop was to provide input for a position paper on inclusive gender equality and academic freedom, currently being developed by the ERA Forum Sub-group. In dedicated small group sessions, participants formulated messages and recommendations based on national and institutional experiences.

Through a mix of plenary presentations, targeted discussions, and strategic foresight exercises, the event offered participants a space to reflect on their readiness and capacity to continue advancing gender equality, identify shared challenges, and co-create a forward-looking agenda for collaboration in the post-project phase. The workshop closed with individual reflections on key insights and actionable next steps.

