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CASE STUDY **PARTICIPATION OF CYPRUS** **IN THE GENDER FLAGSHIP** **PROJECT** **2024-2026**



GENDER
FLAGSHIP

GENDER MAINSTREAMING
IN PUBLIC POLICY
AND BUDGET PROCESSES

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The data collection for this case study was completed by June 2026. Developments that occurred after this date may not be reflected in this document.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This case study was developed by the Gender Flagship Project team under the supervision of Dilek Elveren, team leader. The authors wish to extend their sincere gratitude to Dr Alexia Panayiotou, local project expert; Andri Charalambous, Andrie Elia, Ninos Kefalas, Marios Hadjidamianou, Daniella Neocleous, Constantina Pavlou – representatives of the Beneficiary Authority; and Josie Christodoulou, Commissioner for Gender Equality and Niovi Georgiade, representative of the OCGE, for their review and inputs. Special thanks also go to SG REFORM colleagues for their contribution to the review of the case study. The case study also benefited from the gender expertise of Rezart Xhelo and Imane El Rhomri El Fatmi, Expertise France key experts; the graphic design work of Victor Jouanneau; and the communication expertise of Marine Mathé.



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About the project

This case study was prepared as part of the project “Gender mainstreaming in public policy and budget processes” (hereafter referred to as the “Gender Flagship Project”, funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument (TSI). The project is implemented by Expertise France (EF) with the support of the European Commission, SG REFORM, in partnership with the European University Institute (EUI) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).



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Implementation period: 49 months (June 2022 to July 2026)

Beneficiary Member States: Cyprus, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Spain

Key activities: Technical methodological support, capacity building through trainings, workshops and study visits, dissemination and capitalisation

Implementation:

Funder: EU (SG REFORM) through TSI

Implementer: Expertise France, in collaboration with European University Institute (EUI) and European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

The Gender Flagship Project aims to support public authorities from EU Member States at national and local level, in understanding how to advance gender equality by better mainstreaming gender into their policies and budgeting, as well as address any related gaps. It offers technical support for analysing policies and budgets with a focus on gender mainstreaming, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of gender, have the opportunity to fully participate in and contribute to a fair society.

The project works with twelve Beneficiary Authorities (BAs) across nine Member States over a 49-month period (2022-2026). Each BA receives:

- In-depth analysis of current practices and development of tailored Gender Action Plans (GAP);

- Technical support from dedicated Local Experts and core Gender Flagship Project team experts to build capacity and implement tools, such as developing and improving their equality-related programmes and indicators, enforcing gender mainstreaming through developing specific processes (e.g. circulars), developing gender-responsive budgeting methodologies.

In addition, the Gender Flagship Project provides capacity development through general online training and specific in-person training on the latest trends, methodologies and tools for effective gender mainstreaming. The project also facilitates peer learning and exchanges between countries through study visits and workshops, helping Member States to enhance their targeted approaches in specific sectors, policy areas and/or regions.



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BA	Beneficiary Authority
CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
CYSTAT	Cyprus Statistical Service
DBFC	Directorate of Budget and Fiscal Control
DGG	Directorate General Growth
EF	Expertise France
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EUI	European University Institute
FRBSL	Fiscal Responsibility and Budget System Law (No. 20(I)/2014)
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GEO	Gender Equality Officer
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
GIA	Gender Impact Assessment
GM	Gender Mainstreaming
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NSGE	National Strategy for Gender Equality
OCGE	Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCN	Project Concept Note
QIA	Qualitative Impact Assessment
SG REFORM	Reform and Investment Task Force of the European Commission
TSI	Technical Support Instrument

Executive summary

Cyprus joined the Gender Flagship Project in 2024 as part of the project's second cohort. The Ministry of Finance (MoF), acting through its Directorate of Budget and Fiscal Control (DBFC), was the principal Beneficiary Authority, in partnership with the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality (OCGE). Cyprus' participation responded to a clear political commitment to Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB): the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2024–2026 (NSGE) places gender budgeting as its first priority, and the Commissioner for Gender Equality and Related Matters Law of 2024 institutionalised the OCGE and the Committee of Gender Equality Officers (GEOs) across government.

The in-depth gender analysis conducted at the start of Cyprus' participation in the project confirmed a gap between this high-level commitment and day-to-day practice. Coordination between the MoF and the OCGE on budget matters was not yet formalised; GEOs often had limited time and mandate; sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive expenditure information remained limited; and GRB was not yet embedded in the budget cycle. The analysis also identified concrete entry points for Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) within the existing Fiscal Responsibility and Budget System Law (FRBSL), notably its Project Concept Note and Cost-Benefit Analysis procedures.

Building on these findings, a Gender Action Plan (GAP) was co-designed with stakeholders at the outset of the project to serve as the roadmap for the support delivered under it. Under this plan, the project produced a coherent package

of tools tailored to the Cypriot context: *the Gender-Responsive Budgeting: Indicative Best Practices Guide* (the GRB Guide); *the Gender Equality Plan Guide* (the GEP Guide) with an accompanying Monitoring Checklist; and a GIA Toolkit to support gender impact analysis across the budget cycle – usable both within the FRBSL's appraisal procedures and more broadly as a gender lens on policies and legislation.

To strengthen institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming and GRB, tailored training was delivered to line ministries – reaching the Gender Equality Officer of every ministry and deputy ministry, together with budget and strategy officers – as well as the DBFC and the Directorate General Growth (DGG), the MoF's investment-appraisal reviewer, drawing on Cyprus-specific examples.

Together, these activities helped lay the institutional foundations and produced the applied instruments needed to support the progressive operationalisation of GRB in Cyprus. Following the adoption of the Gender Mainstreaming Law of 2026¹, which enables public bodies to assess the gender impact of policies and budget decisions, and requires them to keep and use sex-disaggregated statistical data, the full resource package is expected to be disseminated to all ministries and deputy ministries to equip them to meet these new obligations. The experience points to close cooperation across the MoF, the OCGE and the line-ministry triad of gender, budget and strategy officers as the decisive enabling factor, positioning Cyprus to move towards a more formalised GRB process. The immediate next steps are to put the tools into use – disseminating the resource package and embedding the GIA Toolkit within the existing budget-appraisal procedures – alongside continued capacity-building and stronger sex-disaggregated data. Over the longer term, fuller operationalisation will also depend on broader reform of the budget structure, including a move towards activity-based budgeting.

¹ N. 54(I)/2026 https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2026_1_54.html

Section 1

CONTEXT AND
RATIONALE FOR
SUPPORT

This section draws primarily on the in-depth gender analysis undertaken at the beginning of the project in 2025, led by Dr Alexia Panayiotou, the project's local expert for Cyprus, with technical guidance and input from Rezart Xhelo and Imane El Rhomri El Fatmi – Expertise France key experts.

1.1. Beneficiary Authority (BA)

The Ministry of Finance (MoF), through its Directorate of Budget and Fiscal Control (DBFC), was the principal Beneficiary Authority of the Gender Flagship Project, acting in partnership with the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality (OCGE). The MoF holds a constitutionally grounded role in Cyprus' public finance system: the Minister of Finance has final authority over which policy proposals enter the budget, making the Ministry a pivotal actor for embedding gender-responsive budgeting. The OCGE, formally institutionalised by the Commissioner for Gender Equality and Related Matters Law of 2024², coordinates gender mainstreaming across all ministries and deputy ministries and oversees the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality (NSGE) 2024–2026.³

1.2. Context when joining the project

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

Cyprus' governance structure for gender equality centres on the OCGE, which coordinates gender mainstreaming across government and chairs the Committee for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality⁴. Formerly an inter-ministerial committee, this body has been formalised and expanded to bring together representatives of all 11 ministries and six deputy ministries, alongside other public bodies such as the Cyprus Statistical Service (CYSTAT), the Directorate General Growth and Cyprus Sports Organisation, with several ministries represented by more than one official. At the MoF, the DBFC leads budget preparation and fiscal oversight, while the Directorate General Growth serves as the independent reviewer of public investment proposals. Although these structures form a functional framework, coordination between the OCGE and the MoF on budget-related gender matters was not yet formalised when Cyprus joined the project. The evaluation of the previous National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2019–2023)⁵ had also pointed to areas for strengthening, including closer inter-ministerial coordination, clearer mandates and dedicated time for GEOs, further training, and greater visibility of gender-related actions across the public sector.



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² https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2024_1.108.html

³ <https://www.gov.cy/media/sites/3/2025/07/NATIONAL-STRATEGY-FOR-GENDER-EQUALITY-2024-2026.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.gov.cy/genderequalitycommissioner/en/national-strategy-for-gender-equality-implementation-committee/>

⁵ *Evaluation Report on the progress of the implementation of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2019-2023 (NAP), October 2023.*

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Cyprus' gender equality commitments rest on a growing legal and policy foundation. The Commissioner for Gender Equality and Related Matters Law of 2024 formally institutionalised the OCGE and defined the roles of GEOs across government. Earlier legislation on combating sexism (2020)⁶ and violence against women and domestic violence (2021)⁷ – the latter among the first in Europe to criminalise femicide as a distinct offence – demonstrated a progressive legislative trajectory. When Cyprus joined the project, the Gender Mainstreaming Law was still under preparation. It was subsequently enacted in 2026, establishing a statutory framework for gender mainstreaming. Under it, public bodies across the administration may act on the basis of gender impact analysis when developing or evaluating legislation, the annual state budget, policies and measures, and public procurement, and must keep and use sex-disaggregated statistical data to readjust their policies; the Commissioner is responsible for monitoring implementation and reporting annually to the House of Representatives' Committee on Legal Affairs.⁸ On the budgetary side, the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget System Law (FRBSL)⁹ already provided appraisal procedures that could serve as entry points for GIA: the Project Concept Note (PCN), which is required at the pre-selection stage for public investment projects of EUR 2 million or more, and – for projects of EUR 15 million and above – the fuller appraisal, including a Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA). Both stages require a mandatory Qualitative Impact Assessment (QIA), which includes a social assessment under which the effects of a project on gender equality can be considered. This provides an existing point at which a gender dimension could be incorporated, though it had not yet been used systematically for that purpose. Despite this legislative momentum, gender impact analysis was not yet systematically applied, and gender-sensitive expenditure information remained unavailable.



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⁶ https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2020_1_209.html

⁷ No. 115(I)/2021. https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2021_1_115.html

⁸ No. 54(I)/2026. https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2026_1_54.html

⁹ No. 20(I)/2014. https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2014_1_20.html

1.3. Reasons for the beneficiary's participation in the project

Cyprus' participation was driven by the need to bridge the gap between high-level political commitment and day-to-day administrative practice. While strategic direction was clear, the practical tools, capacity and methodologies for GRB were still to be developed. GEOs often had limited dedicated time, while formal expertise requirements and structured support were not yet fully in place. In addition, the MoF and OCGE had not yet developed a formalised working relationship for GRB purposes. The project offered Cyprus a structured, expert-supported pathway for building this capacity, developing the necessary tools, activating existing legal entry points for GIA, and drawing on the experience of more advanced GRB systems in peer Member States.



Given that gender equality was a horizontal priority of the government, we explored how to substantially contribute to embedding a gender equality culture. The Gender Flagship Project was identified as a key tool in this direction, so we took the opportunity to fully utilise it.



Representative of the Beneficiary Authority

1.4. Project objectives and aims

Within the Gender Flagship Project, Cyprus set out to lay the operational foundations for GRB: building institutional capacity, developing practical tools, strengthening gender data and monitoring, and activating gender-mainstreaming entry points within the existing budgetary framework. The support was structured around three components: diagnosing current practices and needs; building capacity and developing practical tools for GRB and institutional Gender Equality Plans (GEPs); and embedding new practices for replication across institutions. Ultimately, Cyprus sought to make gender considerations a routine, institutionalised part of the policy and budget cycle.



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Section 2

GENDER
MAINSTREAMING
SUPPORT
PROVIDED

2.1. Tailored support and results achieved

The Gender Flagship Project provided Cyprus with targeted technical assistance focused on building the institutional foundations for GRB, addressing the recognised gap between the country's political commitments and the operational capacity to implement them. This support was structured around three closely linked core deliverables. It was complemented by two further outputs being finalised at the time of writing: a Guide for the Collection and Use of Sex-Disaggregated Data – supporting line ministries and other public bodies in collecting and using such data to inform policy and improve services – and Recommendations for Revising the Budget Circular. The three core deliverables are:

- the *Gender-Responsive Budgeting: Indicative Best Practices Guide* (hereafter the GRB Guide), designed to inform and orient key decision-makers and officials on international approaches to GRB and the conditions for successful implementation;
- the *Constructing a Gender Equality Plan: A Short Guide* (hereafter the GEP Guide) and GEP Monitoring Checklist, developed as a practical tool to support ministries and governmental offices in constructing their own GEPs in a structured and sustainable manner;
- the *Gender Impact Assessment Toolkit* (hereafter the GIA Toolkit), developed to give GEOs and budget officers a shared, practical method for assessing the gender impact of individual projects and budget measures prior to budget approval.

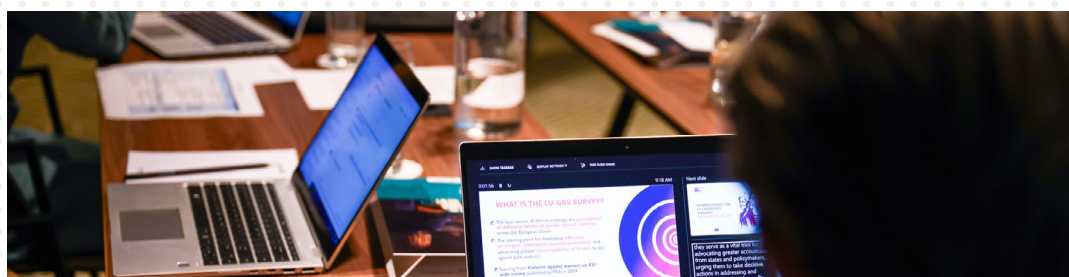
Together, these outputs provide a coherent reference framework – drawing on both international evidence and the Cyprus-specific institutional context – to support the progressive embedding of gender mainstreaming across the public administration.



We recognise that gender budgeting is not just a technical tool; it is a transformative approach. Indeed, all the support provided contributed to this transformation. Even the process of providing feedback and finalising the deliverables was extremely valuable. We developed a better understanding of the tools and contributed to making them readily adaptable to the Cyprus public service.



Representative of the Beneficiary Authority



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2.1.1. GRB GUIDE: ORIENTING CYPRUS' GRB REFORM THROUGH INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The GRB Guide was developed to help strengthen institutional coordination and mandates. It is intended as a reference document for government decision-makers and officials, in particular GEOs and officers in the budgeting and strategy sections of ministries, deputy ministries and governmental agencies. The GRB Guide was produced by the Gender Flagship Project expert team in collaboration with the MoF and the OCGE. It responds to a need identified in the in-depth gender analysis: at the start of the project, Cypriot public officials did not yet share a common understanding of what GRB involves in practice. The Guide therefore sets out the conditions that enable successful implementation, and explains how other countries have introduced GRB within different institutional and legal frameworks.

The GRB Guide is structured around seven internationally recognised best-practice principles, each illustrated with concrete country examples drawn from OECD and EU Member State experiences. These principles cover:

- the central role of the budget authority in leading GRB implementation;
- the importance of legislation and a robust institutional framework as long-term enablers;
- the need to integrate GRB throughout the entire budget cycle rather than at isolated stages;
- the centrality of sex-disaggregated data and intersectional analysis;
- the necessity of connecting gender equality planning with central budgeting processes;
- the role of transparency, feedback loops and civil society engagement in reinforcing accountability;
- the importance of capacity building to support GRB implementation.

Country cases illustrate how these principles have been operationalised in diverse settings (see Box 1), underscoring that there is no single best model and that context-appropriate implementation is therefore essential.

Box 1. Selected international practices informing the GRB Guide

- Iceland: Ministry of Finance-led gender impact assessments of budget measures, regularised through the 2016 Public Finances Act.
- Spain: ministries submit a gender impact report with the budget to parliament, guided by a "Reality, Representation, Resources" analytical framework.
- Canada: the Gender Budgeting Act of 2018 requires gender and diversity impact reporting on all budget measures, backed by major investment in sex-disaggregated data.
- Austria: gender-responsive budgeting constitutionally mandated since 2009 and applied at every stage of the budget cycle, with Court of Audit oversight and a binding gender objective for every ministry.
- Colombia: a statutory requirement (2007, strengthened 2020) for gender impact assessments and a gender budgeting report submitted with the annual state budget.
- Sweden: gender-responsive budgeting required across all government offices, supported by a five-step gender mainstreaming/GRB toolkit and training for all civil servants.
- Ireland: equality budgeting since 2017, with departments setting equality targets reported through a one-page summary each in the annual performance report.
- Mexico: a legal requirement to embed gender across the National Development Plan and the budget, with Ministry of Finance gender-budgeting manuals and training for budget managers.

Source: Gender Flagship Project, *Gender-Responsive Budgeting: Indicative Best Practices Guide*. Lead author: Dr Alexia Panayiotou; contributing authors: Rezart Xhelo and Imane El Rhomri El Fatmi.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The GRB Guide offers a concise, evidence-based orientation to GRB that is directly relevant to the Cypriot institutional context. It grounds international best practices in the specific challenges identified for Cyprus: the expenditure-based budget structure, the need to activate existing FRBSL entry points, and the importance of MoF leadership in coordination with the OCGE. On that basis, it is intended to serve as both an awareness-raising tool and a strategic reference for the early stages of GRB implementation. It equips officials with a comparative framework to understand how other administrations have managed the transition to GRB, what preconditions enabled success, and what pitfalls to anticipate. In doing so, it aims to build a common language and institutional readiness across the MoF, line ministries and gender equality actors for the more applied phases of GRB implementation that follow.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The development of the GRB Guide highlighted a number of considerations relevant to the Cyprus context. First, while the diversity of international models is illustrative, it also underscores that the transferability of any single approach is limited by structural differences in public finance systems, legal frameworks and institutional capacity. For Cyprus, this points to the importance of developing GRB tools that are tailored to the existing budgetary architecture rather than modelled directly on more advanced systems. Second, the GRB Guide reinforces a finding from the in-depth analysis. As acknowledged by stakeholders, including the Ministry of Finance, the current expenditure-based budget structure limits the applicability of some of the international best-practice approaches presented in the Guide. Fully realising the potential of GRB will therefore require a longer-term structural reform agenda, including a move towards activity-based budgeting. Third, international experience confirms that data availability is a foundational prerequisite for GRB. This reinforces the importance of improving sex-disaggregated data collection and gender-sensitive expenditure information in Cyprus, particularly in light of the Gender Mainstreaming Law of 2026.



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2.1.2. CONSTRUCTING A GENDER EQUALITY PLAN: A SHORT GUIDE

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The **GEP Guide** was developed as a practical, accessible tool to help ministries, deputy ministries and other governmental offices develop their own Gender Equality Plans (GEPs). It responds to a need identified through the project's in-depth gender analysis and through consultations with the authorities – that institutional gender-equality planning across government remained uneven and methodological guidance was lacking – and supports the wider national commitment to gender mainstreaming reflected in the Cabinet decision of January 2024¹⁰. The GEP Guide adapts the six-step GEP methodology recommended by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)¹¹ to the specific administrative context of Cypriot ministries and governmental offices.

The GEP Guide walks officials through the full GEP cycle: from initiating the process and communicating the importance of a GEP to internal stakeholders, through analysing the status quo using sex-disaggregated data and organisational assessments, to setting objectives, implementing planned measures, monitoring progress and building successive GEP cycles. It includes concrete guidance on what a status quo analysis should cover, from workforce profiles and leadership gender balance to workplace culture and the extent to which gender mainstreaming is integrated into the Ministry's policies. It also provides illustrative examples of typical GEP priority areas and a model action plan table linking objectives, actions, responsible units, timelines, indicators and resources. A practical checklist helps officials navigate the full process from inception to implementation.

Complementing the GEP Guide, a dedicated **Gender Equality Plan (GEP) Monitoring Checklist (hereafter the GEP Monitoring Checklist)** was developed as a companion instrument to support ministries, deputy ministries and other services in the ongoing implementation and oversight of their GEPs. Structured around five stages – governance and preparation, drafting, content, communication, and implementation and monitoring – the checklist provides a practical, step-by-step verification tool that officials can apply throughout the GEP life cycle. It covers key governance conditions such as securing senior management support and adequate resources, as well as substantive content requirements including sex-disaggregated staff data collection, workplace culture assessments, and alignment with the NSGE and the Gender Mainstreaming Law of 2026. In practice, each GEP is expected to connect to the priorities of the NSGE 2024–2026 and to support the Gender Mainstreaming Law of 2026 – the institution's collection of sex-disaggregated staff data helping it to meet the Law's data requirements, and the GEP advancing gender mainstreaming within the body's own actions and operations. The GEP Monitoring Checklist includes a dedicated item to verify this alignment.



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¹⁰ No. 95.789, 11.1.2024 <https://www.gov.cy/media/sites/59/2025/12/4896.pdf>

¹¹ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/what-gender-equality-plan-gep>

RESULTS ACHIEVED

Together, the **GEP Guide** and **GEP Monitoring Checklist** offer the Cypriot public administration a standardised, nationally contextualised framework for developing Gender Equality Plans. By translating EIGE's established methodology into a format adapted to Cyprus' administrative structures and aligned with the NSGE 2024–2026 and the Gender Mainstreaming Law of 2026, these tools are intended to support a more consistent and accountable approach to GEP development across the public sector. Their combined emphasis on senior management engagement, the central role of GEOs, iterative monitoring and regular progress reporting reflects the structural challenges identified earlier. At the time of writing, these tools had been finalised but not yet circulated. Rather than release them piecemeal, the Beneficiary Authority plans to disseminate them together as a single resource pack issued by the OCGE – drawing the project's outputs together and linked to the newly enacted Gender Mainstreaming Law of 2026.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The development and anticipated uptake of the GEP Guide (and GEP Monitoring Checklist) highlighted several important considerations. The persistent challenge of GEO workload and clarity of their roles in practice – documented throughout the in-depth analysis – directly affects the feasibility of GEP implementation: without dedicated time, clearer expertise requirements, proper training and senior management backing, GEPs may not fully realise their potential as drivers of institutional change. The GEP Guide addresses this explicitly, but the enabling conditions for meaningful implementation will need to be reinforced through complementary measures, including clearer role definitions for GEOs and stronger accountability mechanisms at the level of individual ministries. Additionally, the requirement for a robust status quo analysis – including sex-disaggregated data on staffing, leadership and on staff roles in policy design and implementation – was not yet consistent across all ministries, further reinforcing the systemic data challenge identified elsewhere in the project. Finally, the diversity of institutional contexts across Cyprus' 11 ministries and six deputy ministries means that a standardised guide, while necessary, will need to be supplemented by targeted support to individual institutions as they progress through the GEP development process.



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2.1.3. GIA TOOLKIT: EMBEDDING GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN THE BUDGET CYCLE

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The GIA Toolkit was developed to operationalise one of the central recommendations of the in-depth gender analysis: that gender impact assessment should be systematically embedded within Cyprus' existing budgetary and public investment appraisal procedures, in particular through the Qualitative Impact Assessment mechanism, which includes a social assessment under which a project's effects on gender equality can be considered, provided for under the FRBSL. The toolkit comprises two complementary instruments: **a set of guided questions for GIA, and a one-page GIA Checklist designed for use prior to budget approval.**

The guided questions provide officials with a structured analytical framework organised around nine thematic areas – from problem definition and data requirements through to budget allocation, implementation responsibilities and monitoring arrangements – culminating in an overall assessment of whether a project advances, maintains or undermines gender equality. The one-page checklist translates this framework into a concise verification instrument, reformulated as actionable checkboxes for use at the pre-approval stage, enabling budget officers and GEOs to systematically confirm that gender considerations have been addressed before a project proceeds.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The GIA Toolkit, built on EIGE's resources, provides Cyprus with applied instruments for examining the gender impact of individual projects and budget measures within the existing budgetary framework, without requiring immediate legislative reform. The two instruments are designed to function in tandem: the guided questions support a thorough assessment during project preparation, while the checklist provides a rapid verification step prior to budget approval. Together, they offer GEOs and budget officers a shared, standardised procedure for gender analysis – an entry point for embedding gender considerations in budget decisions, supporting the OCGE–MoF collaboration that gender-responsive budgeting requires.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

As newly developed instruments, the GIA Questions and Checklist have not yet been applied systematically across ministries. Their effective uptake will depend on consolidating the conditions identified throughout the project – clear roles for GEOs and budget officers, the systematic collection and use of sex-disaggregated data, and the capacity and confidence among officials to apply the tools in practice. It will depend in particular on equipping the Directorate General Growth: as an independent reviewer of public investment proposals, the DGG is ultimately positioned to assess the gender dimension of projects, and a dedicated training session was delivered to support it in that role. The next step is to move from tool development to routine use within project appraisal and budget preparation.

2.2. Capacity-building activities

As part of the Gender Flagship Project's capacity-building component, Cyprus took part in two complementary strands: project-wide activities open to all beneficiary administrations, and Cyprus-specific training. At the project level, Cypriot officials joined online training sessions organised by the European University Institute (EUI), cross-country workshops and study visits, promoting peer learning and exposure to practices from other administrations. These were complemented by tailored national sessions, discussed below.

These flowed directly from the Gender Action Plan, which was co-designed with stakeholders at a workshop in Nicosia on 10 June 2025. The workshop brought together 17 participants – most of them GEOs, alongside the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality and the Head of the DBFC – to validate the findings of the in-depth analysis and collaboratively define the GAP's activities. The consultation emphasised that the Committee of Gender Equality Officers (GEOs), budget and treasury officers, and strategic planning officers across ministries and deputy ministries lacked a common conceptual framework and the practical methodological tools required to apply GM and GRB within their institutional functions. The consultation also confirmed the need to strengthen the working relationship among officials most directly responsible for GRB implementation within each Ministry, as well as between these actors and the Directorate of Budget and Fiscal Control (DBFC) of the Ministry of Finance.

Training was delivered in Nicosia in February 2026: two one-day workshops for line ministries' officials and a dedicated one-day session for the DBFC. A further session for the Directorate General Growth – the Ministry of Finance directorate that independently reviews public investment proposals – was held in June 2026, extending the same approach to a key actor in the budget-appraisal chain. All sessions were facilitated by the Gender Flagship Project expert team. They drew directly on the project's own tools – the GRB Guide, to build a shared understanding of gender mainstreaming and GRB, and the GIA Toolkit, using both the guided questions and the one-page checklist – applied to real Cyprus policy examples and case studies.



When we started the training, we had only a general understanding of what gender budgeting is. A few weeks later, the shift in our way of thinking was remarkable. We gained a thorough understanding of the concept, supported by concrete case studies. The tailored support we received later helped us reflect, adapt, and align our approach with the specific realities and context of our country, which makes this support even more valuable and easily implementable.



Representative of the Beneficiary Authority

2.2.1. GM/GRB TRAINING FOR LINE MINISTRIES AND OTHER BODIES

The one-day training sessions brought together 35 participants from across ministries, deputy ministries, and other services. Their aim was to build a shared operational understanding of GM and GRB among the officials who will ultimately apply the tools – within each ministry, the triad of gender equality, budget and strategy officers responsible for GRB – and to strengthen the working relationships between them. They also introduced participants to the requirements of the Qualitative Impact Assessment (QIA) under the FRBSL, as a concrete entry point for GIA.

The programme followed a consistent daily structure, combining conceptual framing with applied exercises. Each day opened with an overview of GM and GRB concepts, international good practices and Cyprus' current position, presented by the OCGE. This was followed by two hands-on case studies drawing on real Cyprus policy examples, such as vocational education and training, housing schemes and population-wide cancer-screening programmes: the first on identifying gender mainstreaming entry points in a sectoral policy, the second on applying GRB tools and GIA guided questions, concluding with a structured plenary discussion.

Participant feedback was positive: a large majority reported strong satisfaction and substantial knowledge gains across all topics, with the clearest improvement in applying gender analysis to sectoral policy. The most consistent message, however, was a clear demand for further training: participants across ministries called for more applied, sector-specific follow-up, including real budget examples, sectoral GIA applications and continued capacity-building, reflecting both their engagement and a strong sense that sustained training will be essential to translate awareness into practice.

2.2.2. GM/GRB TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE: THE DBFC AND THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL GROWTH

The one-day training for the DBFC responded to a distinct institutional requirement. As the body responsible for preparing and implementing the annual government budget and overseeing the quality of all public investment proposals, the DBFC occupies a structurally critical position for the operationalisation of GRB in Cyprus. Its engagement is a prerequisite for activating the GIA entry points available under the FRBSL – specifically through the Project Concept Note and Cost-Benefit Analysis procedures – yet DBFC officers had not previously received targeted training on GM or GRB. The session was attended by 13 participants.

The session followed the same structural logic as the ministerial training but was tailored to the DBFC's specific mandate. Building on a conceptual overview of GM and GRB, it worked in detail through the GIA Toolkit – the guided questions and the one-page checklist – applied to real Cyprus case studies, so that participants could practise assessing the gender impact of concrete budget measures. This was anchored in the existing QIA under the FRBSL: a mandatory appraisal step into which a gender dimension can be embedded without requiring immediate legislative reform. Positioning GRB as an extension of existing analytical obligations rather than an external imposition was central to the session's design.

A second session was delivered on 19 June 2026, extending the same approach to the Directorate General Growth – the MoF body that independently reviews public investment proposals – together with officers from the Auditor General's Office and other interested civil servants. Bringing in the DGG was a deliberate step: as the independent reviewer of public investment proposals, it is structurally placed to assess the gender dimension of projects at the appraisal stage, making it a natural point at which the GIA can enter the Project Concept Note and Cost-Benefit Analysis procedures. Following the same structure as the earlier sessions, it combined a conceptual overview of GM and GRB with a hands-on case study and a focused session on the GIA Toolkit and its guided questions, applied to Cyprus examples. The session was attended by 14 participants.

2.2.3. CLOSING EVENT: CONSOLIDATING AND DISSEMINATING RESULTS

The capacity-building and dissemination effort culminated in a closing event held at the Ministry of Finance in Nicosia on 18 June 2026, attended by 48 participants. Opened by the Commissioner for Gender Equality and the Head of the DBFC, the event brought together gender focal points and officials from across ministries and deputy ministries to take stock of what the engagement had achieved, showcase good practices and reflect on lessons learned. Discussion then turned to the way forward: connecting the project's results to the National Strategy for Gender Equality and to wider gender-equality priorities, and identifying pathways for scaling up and sustaining gender mainstreaming and GRB. The Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, in particular, framed the close of the project as the start of the national effort to apply the Gender Mainstreaming Law of 2026, embed the tools in everyday practice and strengthen gender statistics – with the forthcoming National Strategy for Gender Equality 2027–2029 expected to carry this forward. In doing so, the event consolidated institutional ownership of the tools and practices developed and set the direction for the next steps outlined below.



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Section 3



FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Cyprus ends the project with the institutional foundations and the practical tools in place to take gender-responsive budgeting forward. The reflections below point to where that momentum could most usefully be directed next.

The most immediate direction concerns putting the tools developed under the project to use. The Beneficiary Authority already intends to disseminate the full resource package – the GRB Guide, the GEP Guide and its Monitoring Checklist, and the GIA Toolkit – as a single pack issued by the OCGE, accompanied by explanatory guidance and linked to the Gender Mainstreaming Law of 2026. Carrying this through would be a natural and credible next step, moving the outputs from “developed” to “in use.” The GIA Toolkit, in particular, could find its most direct application within the existing FRBSL appraisal procedures – the Project Concept Note and Cost-Benefit Analysis procedures – so that gender analysis becomes a routine part of project preparation and pre-approval. As an independent reviewer of public investment proposals, the Directorate General Growth would be a natural actor in this respect; building on the dedicated session already provided, it has itself pointed to a continuing need for GIA-specific training to support such a role.

Sustaining this momentum points clearly towards continued capacity-building. The demand for further training was consistent across stakeholders, and a training-of-trainers session in particular stands out as a way to embed expertise durably within the administration. In the nearer term, the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2027–2029, currently being prepared, is expected to carry this forward – with continued GM and GRB training for gender equality, strategy and budget officers among its priorities. On the budget side, the circular for the preparation of the 2029 Budget is expected to mark the practical start of gender-responsive budgeting in Cyprus. In this initial phase, the DBFC and the OCGE are well placed to collaborate closely as the DBFC develops its capacity to bring a gender lens into budget scrutiny. Strengthening the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data will be equally central – a requirement now embedded in the Gender Mainstreaming Law of 2026, which obliges public bodies to keep and use sex-disaggregated data to readjust their policies, and identified throughout the project as a foundational prerequisite for GRB. Here the Guide for the Collection and Use of Sex-Disaggregated Data, also developed under the project and being finalised at the time of writing, is designed to equip CYSTAT, together with ministries, deputy ministries and services, with an initial set of tools to begin systematic gender data collection.

Looking further ahead, a few broader directions are likely to take shape gradually rather than at once. Wider engagement, including with civil society, would help reinforce the transparency and accountability that mature GRB systems rely on. And, as stakeholders including the Ministry of Finance have acknowledged, the fuller potential of GRB ultimately connects to the structure of the budget itself: over the longer term, a move towards activity-based budgeting would allow gender objectives and indicators to be linked more directly to allocations. These remain longer-term questions rather than current workstreams, but they mark the horizon towards which the foundations laid during the project point.



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Expertise France is the French interministerial agency in international cooperation and development, part of the French Development Agency (AFD) Group.



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