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



GENDER
FLAGSHIP

GENDER MAINSTREAMING
IN PUBLIC POLICY
AND BUDGET PROCESSES

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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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INSTITUTE



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

ANVUR National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes

BA Beneficiary Authority

BES Equitable and Sustainable Well-being Indicators

CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CNR National Research Council

DPO Department of Equal Opportunities / Dipartimento delle Pari Opportunità

EF Expertise France

EIGE European Institute for Gender Equality

GAP Gender Action Plan

GB Gender Budgeting

GIA Gender Impact Assessment

GM Gender Mainstreaming

INPS National Social Insurance Agency

ISS National Institute of Health

ISTAT National Institute of Statistics

MAECI Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

MEF Ministry of Economy and Finance

NRRP National Recovery and Resilience Plan

NSGE National Strategy for Gender Equality

RGS State General Accounting Office / Ragioneria Generale dello Stato

SG REFORM Reform and Investment Task Force of the European Commission

TSI Technical Support Instrument

Unioncamere Union of Italian Chambers of Commerce

Executive summary

Italy has participated in the Gender Flagship Project since its launch in July 2022, initially through the Department of Equal Opportunities (DPO), whose involvement focused on the project's shared capacity-building activities. In September 2024, participation was extended to the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) as Beneficiary Authority, opening a second phase focused on Gender Budgeting (GB). Acting through its State General Accounting Office (RGS), the MEF coordinates Italy's national gender budgeting process and submits the annual GB Report to Parliament. Its participation builds on a long-established GB framework anchored in the Public Accounts and Finance Act, Law No. 196/2009, and strengthened by Reform 1.13 of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), which introduced the ex-ante assessment of the gender impact of State expenditure.

The in-depth gender analysis conducted at the start of the project identified the relationship between the MEF and line ministries as the main area for improvement. Gender budgeting expertise remained largely concentrated within the MEF's own team; few ministries had yet built dedicated technical capacity; and the annual GB questionnaires, through which ministries report on their personnel and sectoral policies, were often returned with limited analytical depth. The introduction of an ex-ante assessment under NRRP Reform 1.13 – in addition to the end-of-year expenditure reclassification carried out since 2017 – made closing this gap more pressing, placing new and more demanding analytical responsibilities on individual ministries.

Against this background, the MEF set out to strengthen the operational foundations of Italy's GB system through three complementary lines of action: awareness-raising and communication among line ministries; capacity development to equip ministerial teams to carry out gender analysis of their own expenditure; and technical support to the MEF in reviewing and strengthening the GB Report. The overarching aim was to make gender considerations a routine, institutionalised part of the budget cycle – a competence shared across the institutions that design and implement public spending, rather than a task confined to a single MEF unit.

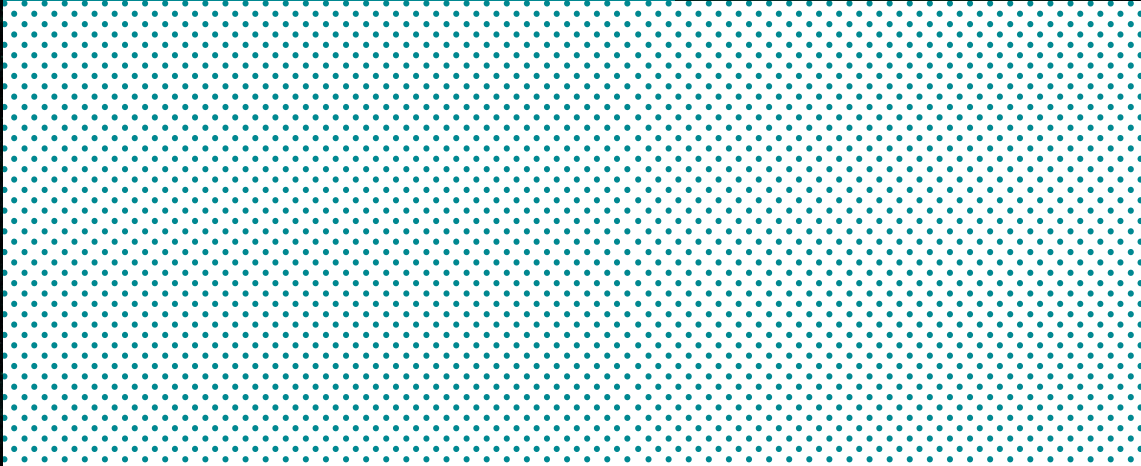
The project delivered this support through two main strands. Tailored support produced ministry-specific Gender Budgeting Dossiers for five pilot ministries (Defence; Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; Agriculture; Labour and Social Policies; and Economy and Finance). It also delivered specialist technical support that strengthened the national GB Report across its 2024 and 2025 editions, and codified the dossier approach into a user-friendly operational guide for replication by other ministries. Capacity-building and inter-institutional engagement were delivered as a progressive programme. A workshop in June 2025 (102 participants) shaped the Gender Action Plan (GAP). A foundational online course in September 2025, held in two sessions, then reached 640 officials across more than 15 administrations, followed by four advanced, sector-specific training sessions in the first half of 2026 (182 participants in total), each anchored in the relevant ministry's Dossier. The advanced session for the MEF has been postponed to September 2026. The project reached a far wider audience through two large public events: the presentation of the national GB Report's main themes by external contributors in March 2026 (3 143 participants) and the closing event in June 2026 (2 275). Together, these activities helped embed gender budgeting more firmly in the MEF's own reporting cycle and helped line ministries take greater ownership of their role in the process.



Section 1



CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR SUPPORT



This section draws primarily on the in-depth gender analysis undertaken at the start of the MEF's participation in 2025, led by Giovanna Badalassi, the project's local expert for Italy, 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 Economy and Finance (MEF), through its State General Accounting Office¹ (RGS), was the Beneficiary Authority of the Gender Flagship Project in Italy. The MEF holds a central role in Italy's public finance architecture: it coordinates the preparation of the annual State budget and Final Accounts², oversees fiscal planning and expenditure classification across all line ministries, and is responsible for submitting the annual Gender Budgeting Report to Parliament.

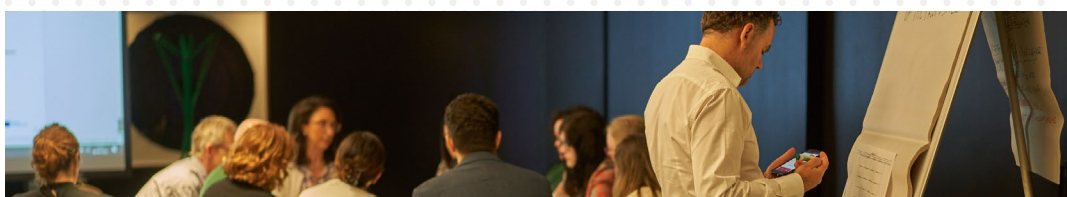
Italy has participated in the Gender Flagship Project since its launch in July 2022, initially through the Department of Equal Opportunities (DPO), whose role focused on participation in the project's shared capacity-building activities. In September 2024, the project was extended to the MEF as Beneficiary Authority, opening a second phase focused on gender budgeting.

The MEF works in coordination with the DPO, which sits within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and holds primary responsibility for coordinating gender equality policy across the Italian public administration.

1.2. Context when joining the project

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

Italy's institutional architecture for gender equality spans multiple levels of governance. At the central level, the principal coordinating body is the DPO, within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (the Italian equivalent of the Prime Minister's Office), which oversees the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality (NSGE) 2021–2026³ and coordinates gender mainstreaming initiatives across ministries. The MEF is responsible for the annual GB process, led by the RGS, which collects information from all central administrations (Ministries and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers), reclassifies State budget expenditure from a gender perspective, and produces the national GB Report submitted to Parliament each year.



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¹ Ragioneria Generale dello Stato

² Rendiconto generale dello Stato – the annual report on budget execution submitted to Parliament

³ <https://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/media/2022/national-strategy-for-gender-equality-2021-26.pdf>

At the time the MEF joined the project, the in-depth gender analysis found that gender mainstreaming had not yet been structurally embedded within individual ministries' planning and budgeting processes. Structured coordination across ministries to improve the quality of GB reporting also remained limited. At that stage, few ministries had yet established dedicated gender focal points or built up specialised technical capacity for gender budgeting. The two annual GB questionnaires, through which the MEF gathers ministries' reporting on their personnel and sectoral policies, were often returned with limited analytical depth. Although annual GB reporting had reached eight editions since 2017, technical expertise had remained largely concentrated within the MEF's own GB team, as the line ministries that manage the bulk of the State budget expenditure have limited knowledge on this topic, their focus resting more on budget management.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Italy's commitment to gender equality rests on a strong constitutional and legal foundation. The principle of formal and substantive equality is enshrined in the Italian Constitution (for example, articles 3, 37, 51)⁴. These provisions task the Republic with removing obstacles to substantive equality and require public institutions, including at the regional level, to promote the full equality of women and men. Italy has further enriched this framework by transposing a substantial body of EU equality legislation and by ratifying key international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)⁵ and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention)⁶. In 2021, Italy adopted its first comprehensive National Strategy for Gender Equality (NSGE) 2021–2026, aligned with the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and integrated within the NRRP. The NSGE sets measurable targets across five priority domains (employment, income, skills, time, and power) and identifies gender budgeting and Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) as cross-cutting tools for achieving its objectives.

The legal basis for gender budgeting is anchored in Law No. 196 of 31 December 2009 (Article 38-septies)⁷, reinforced by Legislative Decree No. 116 of 2018⁸, which strengthened the link between the budget process and Equitable and Sustainable Well-being (BES) indicators. A particularly significant milestone is Reform 1.13 of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)⁹, which requires the gender impact of State expenditure to be assessed ex-ante, at the planning stage, in addition to what is reported afterwards through the annual Gender Budgeting Report¹⁰. The MEF has submitted three informative documents presenting this reclassification to Parliament: in November 2023, 2024 and 2025, accompanying the 2024, 2025 and 2026 budget laws respectively. This marked an important addition to the exclusively ex-post GB methodology that had governed Italian practice since 2017.

⁴ https://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

⁶ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOL_2023_143_L_0003

⁷ <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:2009-12-31;196>

⁸ <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legislativo:2018-09-12;116>

⁹ See pages 192-193: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/d22ac240-cf0c-46fe-8250-011eb2e0b620_en?filename=rrf_operational_arrangements_between_commission_and_italy.pdf

¹⁰ Reform 1.13 foresees the reform of the spending review framework, with one of the milestones being “re-classification of the general State budget, with reference to the environmental expenditure and to the expenditure that promotes gender equality”

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

Italy's engagement with the Gender Flagship Project was driven by the need to bridge a persistent gap between a well-developed formal framework for gender budgeting and the limited operational capacity to apply it across the public administration. While the MEF had built substantial internal expertise and a robust annual reporting process, the in-depth analysis conducted at the beginning of this project identified the relationship with line ministries as the main area for improvement. The annual questionnaires through which ministries report on their personnel and sectoral policies were frequently returned with limited information because of limited knowledge of the evaluation process; a high share of expenditure was classified as gender-neutral, sometimes reflecting limited analytical capacity rather than a detailed assessment of gender relevance. In addition, the expertise needed for meaningful gender analysis remained concentrated in the MEF with a limited knowledge across the institutions that manage State budget.

The requirement introduced by NRRP Reform 1.13 – to add ex-ante, gender-sensitive classification of expenditure alongside the established ex-post review – made addressing these gaps urgent. This additional responsibility is considerably more demanding for individual ministries, which must now consider the gender implications of spending decisions earlier in the budget preparation process. Building the skills, tools and institutional relationships this required called for structured, expert-supported intervention of the kind the Gender Flagship Project was designed to provide. Italy also sought to strengthen communication and awareness among ministerial leadership and to develop practical methodological products – including ministry-specific Gender Budgeting Dossiers (see Section 2.1.1) and a user-friendly gender analysis guide – that could support replication and institutionalisation beyond the project period.



Italy requested to participate in the Gender Flagship Project in order to improve the knowledge of how State resources are used to pursue the objective of gender equality. Italy's experience in this area was already advanced, even if not yet fully shared across the different spending ministries; the opportunity to strengthen knowledge within the public policy evaluation process, including policies aimed at promoting gender equality, provided an incentive to participate.



Representative of the Beneficiary Authority

1.4. Project objectives and aims

Within the Gender Flagship Project, the MEF set out to strengthen the operational foundations of Italy's gender budgeting system, improving the quality, depth and reach of gender analysis across the central public administration. The project was organised around three complementary lines of action. First, awareness-raising and communication: building a shared understanding of GB's purpose and added value among line ministries. Second, capacity development: equipping ministerial teams to interpret the annual GB circular, complete the GB questionnaires with greater rigour, and carry out sector-specific gender analyses of expenditure; this work was also aimed at improving the evaluation as required by NRRP Reform 1.13. Third, technical support: providing the MEF with expert assistance in reviewing and improving the GB Report.

Ultimately, the project sought to make gender considerations a routine, institutionalised part of Italy's budget cycle: not a compliance exercise confined to one MEF unit, but a competence shared across the institutions that design and implement public spending.



Section 2

GENDER
MAINSTREAMING
SUPPORT
PROVIDED

2.1. Tailored support and results achieved

Alongside the administration-wide capacity-building described in Section 2.2, the Gender Flagship Project delivered tailored support built around the MEF's own instruments and the specific needs of individual line ministries. This strand produced three complementary outputs:

- a set of ministry-specific Gender Budgeting Dossiers, which gave individual ministries a focused reading of how the national GB process applied to them (Section 2.1.1);
- specialist technical support to the MEF that strengthened the national GB Report from within by reviewing and refining its content across the 2024 and 2025 editions (Section 2.1.2);
- a user-friendly operational guide that codified this tested approach into a replicable methodological framework, enabling other ministries to develop their own dossiers in the future (Section 2.1.3).

Where the capacity-building strand built a shared foundation across the central administration, the tailored support worked at the level of the individual institution, turning the project's analysis into concrete products owned by the MEF and the ministries themselves.



Within the Gender Flagship Project, we received highly collaborative support from the entire EF team for the launch and planning of activities, as well as for our involvement in joint events with the other beneficiary authorities. As regards the more operational work experience, the approach was highly interactive and collaborative, particularly with the local expert, who worked in close coordination with the MEF team for the various activities.



Representative of the Beneficiary Authority



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2.1.1. GENDER BUDGETING DOSSIERS: STRENGTHENING MINISTERIAL OWNERSHIP OF THE GB PROCESS

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

As part of the awareness-raising and communication strand of the GAP, the Gender Flagship Project supported the development of dedicated Gender Budgeting Dossiers – conceived as ministry-specific “mini case studies” extending the national GB Report – for five pilot ministries. Each dossier gives a single ministry a focused reading of the parts of the national GB process that concern it: because the national GB Report is large and detailed, it is not straightforward for each ministry to see how its own contributions are reflected and used. The dossiers address this by drawing each ministry's gender-related information – its personnel, its sectoral policies, and the gender reclassification of its budget – into a single document that serves both analysis and communication. They build on the national GB Report and on the ministries' own work within the GB process – completing the two questionnaires and verifying the gender classification of their expenditure. Beyond what the line ministries already do as key actors in GB, the dossiers add comparative, contextual and bibliographical inputs developed within the project.

The pilot ministries were identified through the bilateral consultations the project held with line ministries from mid-2025 onward. Three were taken forward first – the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry – once the responsible officials had endorsed their development. The Ministry of Economy and Finance was included de facto, as the institutional owner of the GB process. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies was confirmed in early 2026, following its strong participation in the foundational course held in September 2025 and a second round of consultations. Together, the five form a deliberately varied institutional sample, spanning policy areas with very different relationships to gender equality. They range from the male-dominated defence sector and the historically under-examined agriculture domain, through foreign affairs and the economy and finance ministry itself, to labour and social policies, where gender considerations sit at the centre of the mandate.

Box 1. What a gender lens reveals: examples from the dossiers

Defence. Resources tied to the Carabinieri Corps carry a direct gender dimension through the Corps' statutory role in preventing and responding to gender-based violence – notably under the “Codice Rosso”, Law No. 69 of 19 July 2019¹¹ that fast-tracks domestic- and gender-based violence cases and strengthens victim protection. Italy's Women, Peace and Security commitments (UN Security Council Resolution 1325) also bring in the recruitment, training and deployment of female military personnel.

Foreign Affairs (MAECI). The dossier separates the ministry's central administration from its overseas network, where gender takes distinct forms – protecting staff and families in host countries, navigating gender norms in host cultures, sustaining work–life balance under frequent relocation, and strengthening women's representation in diplomatic and consular roles, with embassies able to act as platforms for gender diplomacy.

Agriculture. In a sector where women remain a minority, the dossier highlights instruments such as “Più Impresa”¹² – a scheme run by ISMEA, the agricultural-market services agency overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture, offering zero-interest loans and grants to help young people and women start or take over farms. It also treats the traceability of EU agricultural funds and the avoidance of indirect disparities in access to support measures as gender concerns in their own right.

Source: Gender Budgeting Dossiers for the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Agriculture, Gender Flagship Project

¹¹ <https://www.poliziadistato.it/statics/27/red-code---law-no.-69-of-july-9--2019.pdf>

¹² <https://www.ismea.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/13521>

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The project developed Gender Budgeting Dossiers for the five pilot ministries, translating its analytical work into concrete, ministry-specific outputs. Each dossier follows a common structure covering:

- the Italian GB legal and methodological framework;
- the importance of a gender perspective in the ministry's specific policy area;
- a gender stakeholder map;
- the evolution of gender gaps among ministry personnel, covering the internal/input side of the ministry's work;
- the equality bodies within the ministry;
- personnel policies from a gender perspective;
- sectoral policies analysed through a gender lens, covering the external/output side of the ministry's work; and
- the gender reclassification of the ministry's budget.

Beyond their analytical content, the dossiers were designed as practical ownership and communication tools: they give each ministry a basis on which to assess the completeness and accuracy of its own GB data, identify areas for improvement, and present its results. In future, the dossiers could also provide a basis for ministries to present GB results to their own parliamentary committees, broadening a discussion that currently takes place mainly in the Budget Committee. The dossiers also provided the primary reference materials for the advanced, sector-specific training sessions delivered to the pilot ministries, directly linking the awareness-raising and capacity-building strands. For ministries whose policy areas – such as defence and agriculture – have historically received limited attention in the GB process, the dossiers were designed to surface indirect gender impacts that are not always immediately visible in budget classifications.

By the end of the project, the five pilot Gender Budgeting Dossiers were formally delivered to the MEF. As Beneficiary Authority, the MEF initiated a review combining internal assessment with consultations with the ministries concerned, in order to make the dossiers available to the five pilot ministries as practical tools for applying GB to their specific policy areas and institutional responsibilities, on the understanding that the content is a reading of each ministry's own data and other information sources through a gender lens. It has framed them not as final products but as living documents: each ministry is encouraged to take ownership of its dossier, adapt and enrich its contents, and decide how best to communicate and use it with its own stakeholders, supporting the gradual institutionalisation of GB practices across ministerial administrations.

The MEF has also committed to continue monitoring and supporting the further development and application of the five pilot dossiers. At the final project event on 12 June 2026, it announced its intention to progressively develop similar dossiers for additional ministries beyond the pilot phase, using its own institutional resources – a clear signal of the value it places on the deliverable and of the dossiers' contribution to strengthening the national GB process.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Preparing the dossiers required substantial analytical effort. The most significant challenges concerned the limited availability of sex-disaggregated data at the administrative ministerial level related to how the policy measures are implemented, and differences in how expenditure had been classified. Both gaps reflected the broader structural data limitations identified in the in-depth gender analysis. A further challenge lay in applying GB methodology to policy areas traditionally treated as gender-neutral, which called for additional analytical work to identify potential indirect gender impacts. These were addressed through close, iterative coordination with the MEF and successive revisions to the structure and narrative of each dossier. The experience also pointed to a wider lesson: ministries particularly valued these tools as an analytical return on the data they submit annually to the MEF.

2.1.2. TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO THE MEF: STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL GB REPORT

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The national GB Report is the cornerstone of Italy's gender budgeting system – the instrument through which the MEF reports gender-relevant expenditure to Parliament each year. Under the technical-support strand of the GAP, the project brought specialist gender budgeting expertise to the national GB Report across its 2024¹³ and 2025¹⁴ editions (published in 2024 and 2025 and covering the 2023 and 2024 State budgets respectively). Because the ex-ante reclassification introduced by NRRP Reform 1.13 uses the same methodology as the Annual Report, this support also indirectly benefited the MEF's own work on that reform. The purpose was not to produce a separate output but to strengthen the Report from within – bringing an independent specialist review and additional expert capacity at the points where the Beneficiary Authority requested it. The project's local expert worked alongside the MEF's GB Report team; the Report itself remained an MEF product throughout.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The independent specialist review from outside the State-budget administration resulted in a strengthened national GB Report across its 2024 and 2025 editions, contributing to improved readability, structure and internal consistency of an already extensive document (more than 650 pages and 184 indicators). Moreover, new content was developed with a dedicated thematic focus, in the 2024 edition, on the spread of gender budgeting at regional and local levels across Italy; and, in both editions, a section documenting the work and results of the Gender Flagship Project.

¹³ https://www.rgs.mef.gov.it/_Documenti/VERSIONE-I/Attivit--i/Rendiconto/Bilancio-di-genere/2023/Relazione-al-Bilancio-di-Genere-2023.pdf

¹⁴ https://www.rgs.mef.gov.it/_Documenti/VERSIONE-I/Attivit--i/Rendiconto/Bilancio-di-genere/2024/BDG-Conto-del-bil-Stato-2024.pdf; Summary and main findings in English: https://www.rgs.mef.gov.it/_Documenti/VERSIONE-I/Attivit--i/Rendiconto/Bilancio-di-genere/2024/versione_inglese/Summary-and-main-results.pdf

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The main technical challenge lay in the GB Report itself. Built up across successive editions into a document of more than 650 pages, several of its chapters had become dense and, in places, lost a clear narrative line. Improving their readability, structure and internal consistency – without compromising technical accuracy or the comparability of indicators, and against tight finalisation deadlines – was the central difficulty.

The key lesson was the value of an independent, external reading carried out in close collaboration with the MEF and embedded directly in its own reporting cycle: it brought a fresh perspective on content that had accumulated over years, while keeping the Report an institutionally owned product rather than a separate output.

2.1.3. USER-FRIENDLY OPERATIONAL GUIDE: SUPPORTING REPLICATION OF THE GB DOSSIER METHODOLOGY

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

As part of the technical support provided under the Gender Flagship Project, a user-friendly operational guide was developed to support the replication and institutionalisation of the Ministerial Gender Budgeting Dossier methodology. Building on the experience gained through the preparation of the five pilot dossiers, the guide translates the lessons learned into a structured, practical methodological framework that other ministries can apply in the future. Rather than introducing a new GB tool, it systematises an already tested approach and explains how existing GB information can be reorganised and analysed at ministerial level. It anchors the dossier in the national legal framework and provides a common methodological reference that can be adapted to the different institutional mandates and policy responsibilities of individual ministries.

The document illustrates the rationale, structure and functions of the dossier, providing guidance on the different analytical components, including the institutional framework, gender issues and stakeholders' analysis, internal organisational assessment, policy analysis, budget reclassification and the use of data and sources. It also highlights the methodological innovations introduced by the dossier approach, such as the identification of ministry-specific gender issues, the mapping of relevant gender stakeholders, the integration of gender budgeting with the performance cycle through an input-output-outcome perspective, and benchmarking against international experiences, including methodological references developed by EIGE.

It also describes the operational process for developing a dossier and discusses its potential applications in policy-making, strategic planning, accountability and institutional learning, strengthening ministries' analytical capacity and supporting the progressive integration of gender mainstreaming into ministerial decision-making.



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RESULTS ACHIEVED

As one of the project's key methodological outputs, the operational guide is the principal means of sustaining the dossier approach after the project ends. It sets out the conceptual foundations, analytical logic, data requirements and implementation process behind the five pilot dossiers, and by establishing a common methodological framework that preserves consistency while allowing adaptation to different ministerial contexts. This equips other ministries to develop their own dossiers with reduced reliance on external technical support and strengthens the link between the national Gender Budgeting Report and ministry-level analysis. In doing so, the guide creates the conditions for extending the methodology to ministries beyond the original pilot phase – directly strengthening the sustainability of the project's results.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The preparation of the guide highlighted the importance of balancing methodological rigour with usability. One of the main challenges was to codify a methodology that had originally been developed through an experimental and highly collaborative process. At the same time, the guide had to remain sufficiently flexible to accommodate the diverse responsibilities, organisational structures and policy domains of different ministries, serving as a common methodological reference while remaining adaptable to different institutional contexts.

A key lesson learned is that the effectiveness of the dossier methodology depends not only on the availability of GB data, but also on the ability to connect financial information with policy analysis, organisational assessment and gender-sensitive evidence. The experience also confirmed that the dossier does not necessarily require the production of new information (although additional evidence can further enrich the analysis), but rather the systematic reorganisation and integration of existing gender budgeting, administrative and statistical evidence into a coherent analytical framework. The pilot experience also showed that successful replication rests on a set of institutional preconditions – coordination across budget, human-resources and equality bodies, adequate staff competences, and the availability of gender-disaggregated administrative data on how public policies are implemented. Above all, it demonstrated the value of producing ministry-specific analytical tools capable of bridging the gap between the national GB Report and the operational reality of individual administrations while strengthening organisational learning and ministries' ownership of the gender budgeting process. For this reason, the guide was designed not as a rigid procedural manual, but as a practical framework that ministries can progressively adapt, refine and integrate into their regular GB processes.



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2.2. Capacity-building activities

Capacity-building was a central strand of the Gender Flagship Project in Italy. It opened with a workshop in June 2025 (102 participants) that presented the in-depth gender analysis and shaped the project's GAP, and then ran as a progressive programme moving from a shared foundation to ministry-specific depth: a foundational online course that established a common language across the central administration, followed by advanced, sector-specific training sessions tailored to individual ministries. Each advanced session was anchored in the relevant ministry's Gender Budgeting Dossier (the tailored product described in Section 2.1.1), which gave it a ready-made diagnostic to work from. This design responded directly to the July 2025 ministerial consultations, which had revealed varying levels of familiarity with GB methodology across the administration and a clear demand for both shared conceptual grounding and practical, sector-specific tools.

In all, the foundational course reached 640 officials across more than 15 administrations, while the four advanced, ministry-specific sessions provided deeper training to a targeted group within each pilot ministry, reaching 182 participants. The strand also reached a far wider audience through two large public events: the presentation of the national GB Report's thematic focuses on 6 March 2026 – the contributors' event – which drew 3 143 participants; and the project's final event on 12 June 2026, which brought the project's institutions and the five pilot ministries together to share results and reflect on sustaining GB beyond the project's end, attracting 2 275 participants.

Throughout, the programme was run jointly with the MEF's gender budgeting team (RGS) – the Beneficiary Authority responsible for the national GB process – which co-delivered the training and managed the operational organisation and hosting of the sessions and events.



The capacity-building activities implemented under the Gender Flagship Project were designed to combine a broad-based approach, aimed at reaching a wide audience through general foundational training, with a more targeted approach, intended to engage specific professional profiles through advanced training opportunities. In our view, both objectives were successfully achieved, as also reflected in the direct experience of the participants. Participation was extensive and well diversified, taking into account both the different sizes of the administrations involved and the varying degrees of relevance of gender-related issues to their respective institutional responsibilities. The satisfaction questionnaires provided further valuable evidence in this regard, confirming a measurable improvement in knowledge when comparing the ex-ante and ex-post assessments.



Representative of the Beneficiary Authority



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2.2.1. OPENING WORKSHOP: SHAPING THE GENDER ACTION PLAN

On 13 June 2025, the project held its opening workshop in Rome. It publicly presented the final results of the in-depth gender analysis and set out the programmatic directions for the project's GAP, and was deliberately paired with the launch of the MEF's new annual GB circular – a pairing that anchored the project in Italy's existing GB process and helped secure a strong turnout. Opened by senior representatives of the MEF and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – DPO, it marked the start of the project's operational phase. In total, 102 officials took part, drawn from the MEF, other ministries, the DPO and other central administrations.

The proposed GAP priorities and activities were put to participants to confirm, adjust or add to, and the discussion fed directly into a revised, more detailed version of the plan that better reflected the needs raised by the ministries. In doing so, the workshop also opened a dialogue with the central administration that would later implement the GAP, laying the groundwork for the operational planning that followed.

The workshop was the start of the planning process. Over the following weeks, the project held a first round of meetings with individual ministries to work through how the GAP would apply to each of them; on the basis of these discussions, several agreed to take part as pilot administrations. The revised Gender Action Plan was then formally approved at the project's first Steering Committee meeting, held online on 25 July 2025, with representatives of the pilot ministries, the Department for Equal Opportunities, the Court of Auditors and the project's institutional partners taking part.

2.2.2. FOUNDATIONAL TRAINING: THE INTRODUCTORY ONLINE COURSE

The foundational course on gender budgeting was the first concrete capacity-building activity, delivered online across two sessions on 23 and 29 September 2025. It was designed to establish a shared foundation in gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting principles across the central public administration – a need made more pressing by staff turnover in ministries, which had interrupted the continuity of expertise built up over earlier GB cycles. The programme moved from gender equality principles and an introduction to GB and its Italian legal basis, through gender context analysis and the GB reclassification methodology, before turning to sectoral policy applications.

The course reached a broad cross-section of the administration – 640 participants drawn from more than 15 ministries and agencies. Participants showed measurable gains in knowledge between the pre- and post-training tests, and participants' feedback was positive on both the trainers' expertise and the relevance of the content. The course also surfaced a clear demand for advanced, sector-specific follow-up and more practical reclassification tools – a finding that directly shaped the next phase of the programme.

2.2.3. ADVANCED, SECTOR-SPECIFIC TRAINING SESSIONS

Building on the foundational course, between February and June 2026, the project delivered advanced, sector-specific training sessions for four out of the five pilot ministries: the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry. For organisational reasons, the advanced training for the Ministry of Economy and Finance has been postponed to September 2026, just before the start of the State budget session. Each session brought together the ministry's own officials and the MEF staff seconded to the ministry through the MEF's central budget office, on a smaller and more targeted scale than the foundational course – 31 for Defence; 34 for Foreign Affairs; 67 for Labour and Social Policies; 50 for Agriculture.

The four training sessions shared a common design that reflected the programme's progressive logic. Each training session built directly on two earlier steps – the foundational course and the ministry's own Gender Budgeting Dossier (Section 2.1.1), which served as the session's primary reference material – and each followed the same structure: a recap of the national GB framework and reclassification methodology, an in-depth module on the ministry's own gender issues across personnel and sectoral policies, and a hands-on analysis of its budget reclassification. Delivered in person, online or in hybrid form, the sessions were designed to translate the foundational concepts into each ministry's specific policy area and expenditure profile, equipping its officials to identify and report gender-relevant spending more accurately.

Strengthening internal capacity across the deliberately varied policy areas of the five pilot ministries (Section 2.1.1) was designed to improve the quality of ministries' contributions to the national GB process at their source.



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2.2.4. PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL GENDER BUDGETING REPORT: EXTERNAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL EXCHANGE

On 6 March 2026, the MEF held a public event at its Rome headquarters to present the thematic focuses of the 2025 edition of the national Gender Budgeting Report (covering the 2024 State budget). Its purpose was to recognise and strengthen the network of national bodies that feed thematic analysis into the Report. These included ISTAT, the MEF's Department of Finance, and research and sector institutions such as the National Research Council (CNR), the National Institute of Health (ISS), the National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR) and the Union of Italian Chambers of Commerce (Unioncamere). The event gave them a platform to present their work, encouraged shared reflection on how to improve the Report's thematic sections, and reinforced data exchange across central administrations. Presentations spanned a range of gender equality themes within contributors' fields – among them gender medicine, labour-market dynamics, gender-based violence, women in STEM, and the EIGE Gender Equality Index. Engagement was high: total attendance reached 3 143 participants.

2.2.5. FINAL PROJECT EVENT: RESULTS, EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

The project culminated in its final event, hosted by the MEF in Rome on 12 June 2026. Drawing together the workshop, the training, the dossiers and the technical support that had come before, it took stock of what the project had achieved and consolidated institutional ownership of GB.

The pilot ministries – the administrations that had been through the training and for which the dossiers were developed – shared their experiences, good practices and challenges in applying GB and reflected on how to sustain it. Reaching 2 275 participants, the event disseminated the project's outputs and methodological tools and helped consolidate the understanding of gender budgeting as a strategic governance tool across central administrations. It also strengthened cooperation among the institutions involved and opened a shared reflection on embedding GB in Italy over the longer term.



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Section 3

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of the Gender Flagship Project in Italy has demonstrated that GB can evolve from a reporting exercise into a strategic governance tool – building on the classification of expenditure to also inform how policies are planned and assessed. The pilot Gender Budgeting Dossiers show how: by linking a ministry's budget to its sectoral policies, mapping the relevant gender stakeholders and using statistical data and indicators, they let administrations identify gender gaps and act on them, while the operational guide (GB Dossiers methodology) makes the method reusable beyond the pilots.

The **first recommendation** is to expand the use of ministerial GB Dossiers to all ministries and progressively integrate them into the annual budgeting and reporting cycle. The pilot dossiers were among the project's most distinctive outputs, translating the national GB framework into ministry-specific analytical tools connected to concrete policies, expenditure and institutional responsibilities. Beyond offering a new reading of each administration's contribution to gender budgeting, they introduced several methodological innovations. These include a structured mapping of ministry-specific gender stakeholders and their relevance along the policy cycle; the integration of the performance cycle with the analysis of gender budgeting inputs, outputs and outcomes; the systematic identification of gender issues linked to each ministry's institutional mission; and benchmarking against international experiences, including examples and methodological references developed by EIGE. Their wider adoption would strengthen ministerial ownership, improve the quality of GB information and increase the visibility of the gender dimension within sectoral policies.

The **second recommendation** focuses on consolidating a permanent and multi-level training system on GB and gender mainstreaming. The project's training reached more than 800 participants across the central administration and confirmed a strong demand for both introductory and advanced training. Future efforts should ensure continuity through regular annual training cycles, combining a common foundational curriculum with ministry-specific advanced modules tailored to different policy areas and administrative responsibilities.

The **third recommendation** concerns disseminating the operational guide developed during the project and fostering its use. This guide transforms the experience gained through the pilot dossiers into a replicable methodology that ministries can apply independently and update year by year in light of experience. Beyond supporting the preparation of future dossiers, it provides a framework for strengthening analytical capacities, improving policy evaluation and promoting a more strategic understanding of GB as a governance tool rather than solely an expenditure-classification exercise.

The **fourth recommendation** highlights the need to strengthen interministerial coordination and peer-learning mechanisms. The project showed that ministries often face similar challenges regarding data collection on the administrative side, expenditure classification, impact assessment and stakeholder engagement. Regular opportunities for technical exchange, mutual learning and collective discussion would help spread good practices, reduce fragmentation and reinforce the institutional visibility and legitimacy of GB across the administration.

Finally, the **fifth recommendation** proposes the gradual establishment of dedicated GB focal points within ministries. GB activities frequently require contributions from multiple departments and technical units, making coordination a critical success factor. Designated focal points, supported through appropriate training and technical assistance, could strengthen institutional memory, improve communication with the MEF, support internal awareness-raising activities and ensure greater continuity in the implementation of GB processes.

Taken together, these five recommendations outline a coherent pathway towards a stable, coordinated and integrated GB system embedded within the ordinary processes of planning, budgeting, reporting and policy-making.

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



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