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PARTICIPATION OF ROMANIA IN THE GENDER FLAGSHIP PROJECT

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**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).



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 the 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;

- 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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CONTENTS

List of abbreviations and acronyms	6
Executive summary	7
1. Context and rationale for support	8
1.1 Beneficiary Authority	9
1.2 Context when joining the project	9
1.3 Reasons for the beneficiary's participation in the project	11
1.4 Project objectives and aims	11
2. Gender mainstreaming support provided	12
2.1 Tailored support and results achieved	13
2.2 Capacity-building activities	20
3. Future directions and recommendations	21
ANNEX. SPOTLIGHT PRACTICE: NATIONAL PLAN FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT (NPWEPE)	23
Purpose and added value	24
Novelty	24
Implementation in practice	25
Guidance for adaptation	26

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANES National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men

BA Beneficiary Authority

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

COJES County Commissions for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men

CONES National Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men

EF Expertise France

EIGE European Institute for Gender Equality

EU European Union

EUI European University Institute

GAP Gender Action Plan

GE Gender Equality

GIA Gender Impact Assessment

GM Gender Mainstreaming

GRB Gender-Responsive Budgeting

INS National Institute of Statistics

MFTES Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities

NPWEPE National Plan for Women's Economic and Political Empowerment

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PBB Performance-Based Budgeting

SDG(s) Sustainable Development Goal(s)

SGG General Secretariat of the Government

SG REFORM Reform and Investment Task Force of the European Commission

TSI Technical Support Instrument

Executive summary

The National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES) in Romania joined the Gender Flagship Project to address persistent challenges in the implementation of Gender Equality (GE) policies. Despite a well-established legislative framework and formal coordination structures, implementation remained constrained by capacity limitations, fragmented institutional cooperation, and a low level of technical understanding of Gender Mainstreaming (GM) across government.

Through the project, Romania aimed to strengthen institutional capacity and promote a more consistent and practical approach to gender equality. The support focused on four areas: developing a standardised methodology for practical functioning for county-level equality commissions (COJES); preparing the first National Plan for Women's Economic and Political Empowerment (NPWEPE); designing modular training packages on gender mainstreaming, impact assessment, and budgeting; and drafting a technical proposal to introduce gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) into the national budget process. These practical tools were complemented by an extensive capacity building effort, which included designing and implementing comprehensive training programmes on gender mainstreaming, impact assessment, and budgeting for over 2100 participants from ANES, CONES, COJES, line ministries, and national agencies.

These tools enhanced planning and reporting practices supported the application of national equality commitments at local level and clarified ANES's coordination role. A particularly strategic output was the NPWEPE 2025–2029, a comprehensive action plan for advancing women's participation, which was developed through extensive consultation and is currently pending formal adoption.

Although rollout has been shaped by administrative and political cycles, Romania's experience under the Gender Flagship Project illustrates the importance of translating legal commitments into operational tools that can be adapted across governance levels. The co-development of practical instruments—grounded in national context and institutional realities—helped lay the groundwork for more systematic and coordinated implementation.

Section 1

CONTEXT AND
RATIONALE FOR
SUPPORT

This section is mostly informed by the in-depth gender analysis undertaken in the beginning of the project, led by project's local experts Prof. Ionela Băluță and Anca Maria Dumitru, with technical guidance and input from Rezart Xhelo, key expert. 2023.

1.1 Beneficiary Authority (BA)

The primary beneficiary of the Gender Flagship Project in Romania is the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES)¹. ANES is a specialised administrative body that was transferred under the coordination of the General Secretariat of the Government (SGG)² in December 2024, following a key recommendation from the in-depth institutional analysis conducted under this project, and provided by the project's local experts. The institutional reform, which repositioned ANES under the Prime Minister's Office, was based on project analysis findings presented at a public government event in July 2023 and through consultations with SGG and Prime Minister's Cabinet representatives. This change has strengthened ANES's institutional standing and policy influence, as ANES fulfils regulatory, representational, and monitoring functions, and serves as the national authority mandated to ensure the integration of gender perspectives in public policy.

ANES is responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing governmental strategies and policies in the fields of gender equality and the prevention of domestic violence. Its responsibilities are defined under Government Decision No. 177/2016³.

1.2. Context when joining the project

Romania has committed to gender equality through national legislation and international frameworks such as the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the Sustainable Development Goals, CEDAW, and the Istanbul Convention. However, these commitments have not consistently translated into implementation. Gender inequality persists across multiple domains, with Romania ranking among the lowest EU Member States in the EIGE Gender Equality Index (2022, 2023, and 2024) and placing 90th globally in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report, particularly due to low female political representation. Labour force participation gaps remain stark—20.3% in 2021, the highest in the EU—and women occupy only 17.2% of board-level positions in listed companies. In elected office, women hold fewer than 5% of mayoral posts, and their representation in the European Parliament declined from 34% to 21% between 2014 and 2019.

¹ Agenția Națională pentru Egalitatea de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați

² Since December 2024, the Ministry of Family (Ministerul Familiei, Tineretului și Egalității de Șanse) has been dissolved, and ANES has been retained and placed under the coordination of the Prime Minister's Office. This change, recommended in the prior analysis, is expected to strengthen ANES's institutional standing and policy influence.

³ Hotărârea Guvernului nr. 177/2016 pentru aprobarea Regulamentului de organizare și funcționare a Agenției Naționale pentru Egalitatea de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați (ANES).

While progress has been made, several challenges continue to shape the implementation of gender equality measures. Structural and institutional barriers persist, with political prioritisation of gender equality remaining limited in several areas. There is also a recognised need to strengthen technical expertise within public administration to support gender mainstreaming effectively. Improving inter-institutional coordination and raising awareness across sectors are essential steps, particularly in addressing cultural norms that may hinder progress. Although legal mandates are in place, aligning them with available institutional capacities remains an ongoing task. Furthermore, enhancing the availability and quality of disaggregated data is critical to support evidence-based policymaking, monitoring, and budgeting in the field of gender equality.

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

Romania's institutional framework for gender equality includes the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES), the National Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (CONES)⁴, and the County Commissions for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (COJES)⁵. ANES is a special body (national agency), which is assigned, by law, to coordinate national policy, monitor implementation, and represent Romania internationally.

Although the institutional framework for gender equality is in place, there remains scope to strengthen implementation capacity. ANES operates with a dedicated but small team and a modest budget, often supplemented by external funding sources. There is an opportunity to enhance coordination across levels of government to ensure more coherent and effective action. The role of equal opportunities officers — mandated under Article 2 of Law No. 202/2002⁶ for institutions with more than 50 employees — could be reinforced through more consistent appointment of these officers and targeted training. Increasing the visibility and engagement of CONES and COJES in policy planning and reporting would also support more comprehensive gender mainstreaming across sectors.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Romania's legislative foundation for gender equality is set by Law No. 202/2002, with 2015-2019 amendments introducing gender mainstreaming as a guiding principle and clarifying institutional roles in sectors such as employment, education, health, and political participation. These commitments are further reflected in the 2022–2027 National Strategy for Promoting Equal Opportunities and Preventing Domestic Violence, which aligns with international standards.

The strategy's action plan provides a foundation, though improvements in indicators, institutional responsibilities, and budgetary support would strengthen its impact. While gender budgeting is briefly referenced in legislation, its consistent application across sectors is still developing. OECD assessments highlight continued progress toward performance and programme budgeting, and better use of sex-disaggregated data would further support evidence-based policymaking and evaluation.

⁴ *Comisia Națională pentru Egalitatea de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați*

⁵ *Comisiile Județene pentru Egalitatea de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați*

⁶ *Legea nr. 202/2002 privind egalitatea de șanse și de tratament între femei și bărbați*

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

Romania joined the Gender Flagship Project to overcome persistent implementation challenges in advancing gender equality, despite having a robust legal and institutional framework in place since 2002. Key obstacles included limited technical capacity, insufficient training, coordination gaps across government levels, and low awareness of gender mainstreaming practices.

The national coordination structure, while formally established, was hampered by frequent political changes and the dual political-technical composition of institutions, leading to disruptions in continuity. These dynamics underscored the urgent need for practical tools and rapid training solutions to help stakeholders understand and fulfil their roles effectively.

Moreover, the absence of a unified reporting framework for COJES hindered coherent monitoring and implementation of the national gender equality strategy. Romania's low ranking in the EIGE Gender Equality Index - particularly in political and economic participation - further reinforced the urgency of action.

1.4. Project objectives and aims

The project aimed to support Romanian authorities in adopting a more structured and strategic approach to gender equality by providing targeted technical assistance to ANES and other key stakeholders. Beyond general capacity-building, the focus was on developing tools and methodologies that could be sustainably embedded across government systems. Key objectives included:

- developing practical tools and methodologies for integrating gender perspectives into public policies;
- strengthening ANES's coordination role across central and local government bodies;
- improving the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data;
- promoting knowledge exchange with institutions in other EU Member States;
- contributing to the operationalisation of the 2022–2027 National Strategy for Promoting Equal Opportunities and Preventing Domestic Violence;
- delivering targeted training to various staff categories to build institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming and implementation.



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Section 2

GENDER
MAINSTREAMING
SUPPORT
PROVIDED

The Gender Flagship Project provided targeted support to Romania in strengthening its institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming through the co-creation of practical deliverables. In close cooperation with the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES), the project developed a methodology for county-level gender equality bodies (COJES), a national plan on women's empowerment (NPWEPE), a modular training package on gender equality tools, and a technical proposal for integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the national budget process. These outputs were informed by extensive stakeholder consultations, peer learning, and iterative feedback, ensuring contextual relevance and institutional ownership. The section below presents the main components of this support, and the results achieved.

2.1. Tailored support and results achieved

2.1.1. METHODOLOGY FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING BODIES - STANDARDISED TOOLS FOR COJES PLANNING AND REPORTING

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The methodology was developed to support County Commissions for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (COJES) in implementing gender equality and domestic violence legislation at the local level. It responds to persistent gaps in planning and reporting, identified through earlier assessments and voiced directly by COJES themselves. The initiative also builds on lessons learned from the previous national gender equality strategy⁷, highlighting the need for practical, standardised tools.

Grounded in Law No. 202/2002 and relevant government decrees, the methodology offers clear guidance aligned with COJES' legal mandate. Its development was led by a national expert in collaboration with ANES and technical partners. Although the 2024 electoral calendar limited in-person consultations, stakeholder feedback was gathered via online sessions and informal exchanges. The State Secretary, actively involved in the project, is currently reviewing the final version prior to formal approval.



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⁷ National Strategy on promoting equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2018-2021. <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocumentAfis/203938>

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The final methodology provided COJES with a comprehensive and practical guidance document tailored to their legal mandate and operational context. Its main achievement lies in standardising institutional practices across counties while reinforcing vertical coordination with ANES.



This is why we focused on introducing gender impact assessment (GIA) and Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) tools, as well as a methodology to support the practical functioning of the COJES. They are responsible for reporting on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy, but there was no unified reporting framework in place. All COJES need to report using the same structure, so establishing a common framework was essential. This need emerged both from the findings of the previous report on the Gender Equality Strategy and from colleagues, who consistently emphasised its importance.



Project beneficiary - Gianina Dimitrescu - Deputy Director, National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men

The methodology is structured in two main parts:

- Part I outlines the general and legal framework of COJES, including roles, responsibilities, and links to national strategies and EU policy frameworks.
- Part II introduces standardised planning and reporting tools to guide annual operations.

The core content is complemented by three annexes:

- **Annex 1** - Model for Local Action Plan on Gender Equality and Prevention of Domestic Violence - A step-by-step guide that helps COJES develop a concrete annual action plan. It includes sections on objectives, specific actions, responsible institutions, expected results, indicators, and timeframe. The format aligns with national strategic goals and allows local contextualisation.
- **Annex 2** - Template for Quarterly Activity Reports - A standard reporting form enabling COJES to monitor and communicate progress. It captures completed activities, obstacles, planned actions, and lessons learned, structured per priority objective.
- **Annex 3** - Template for Annual Implementation Reports - A consolidated summary format that builds on the quarterly reports to provide an annual performance overview. It facilitates comparative analysis across counties and enhances reporting to ANES.

These tools aim to enhance consistency across county commissions, strengthen vertical coordination with ANES and promote strategic, measurable implementation at the local level. The methodology also includes guidance on nomination procedures for committee members—responding to the lack of standardisation across counties—and provides templates to organise activities and report progress.

Although not yet officially rolled out, COJES have expressed strong interest in using the tools—an encouraging sign for voluntary uptake once formal approval is granted.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The main challenge was the inability to conduct in-person consultations, limiting institutional responsiveness. In the interim, implementation relies on voluntary uptake, which appears promising given strong interest from COJES.

The process also underscored the importance of adaptable planning during politically sensitive periods and highlighted the value of institutional mechanisms—such as circulars or mandates—to reinforce systematic use.

2.1.2. NATIONAL PLAN FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT (NPWEPE) – STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The National Plan for Women's Economic and Political Empowerment (NPWEPE) 2025–2029 was developed by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES), with support from national and international experts under the Gender Flagship Project. Designed as Romania's central policy tool for advancing women's economic and political participation, the Plan was shaped through an extensive consultation process between July 2023 and early 2024. Stakeholders engaged in the drafting included ministries, local authorities, civil society organisations, political parties, academia, and trade unions.

The action plan was developed in response to a low place of Romania in EIGE's Gender Equality Index and key recommendation from the OECD, which Romania committed to address as part of its efforts to increase women's participation in public life.



EIGE had classified Romania last in terms of gender equality, primarily due to the insufficient representation of women in political and economic sectors. This assessment highlighted the urgency of action and led to the development of a National Plan for Women's Economic and Political Empowerment aimed at transforming political will into concrete public policy measures.



Project beneficiary - Diana Neaga - Personal Advisor at the State Secretary Cabinet, National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The participatory process resulted in a final policy document, validated by the National Steering Committee on 6 March 2024 and endorsed by ANES on 12 April 2024. **It is structured around five thematic pillars: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, political participation, work-life balance, and prevention of violence against women.** The final version includes:

- Defined objectives, targets, and indicators for each priority area;
- A proposed governance and coordination mechanism to support implementation;
- Commitments to annual monitoring and a midterm review in 2027;
- Increased inter-institutional cooperation and engagement, particularly between ANES and sectoral ministries.

While the plan has been endorsed, formal adoption is still pending due to administrative restructuring following the 2024 elections. The next step is securing interministerial signatures. A coordination committee under the General Secretariat was also created, which will begin operating once the plan is formally adopted.

The action plan has been recognised as a model of participatory policymaking and is among the few gender equality priorities elevated to a strategic level by the Romanian government. Several regional and county-level actors have expressed interest in replicating the NPWEPE locally.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Progress was constrained by the lack of formal cooperation with the Permanent Electoral Authority, which limited access to disaggregated data on political participation. The 2024 electoral cycle further reduced the availability of key stakeholders, delaying validation timelines. Additionally, the parallel development of a gender budgeting guide was postponed, limiting the integration of robust financial mechanisms. Despite these challenges, the process strengthened cross-sectoral engagement and laid a solid foundation for future implementation.

For further details, see Annex. Spotlight Practice: National Plan for Women’s Economic and Political Empowerment (NPWEPE).



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2.1.3. TRAINING MODULES – CAPACITY BUILDING TOOLS FOR EMBEDDING GENDER PERSPECTIVES ACROSS PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

One of the core activities of the Gender Flagship Project was the development of a modular training package on gender equality (GE), gender mainstreaming (GM), Gender Impact Assessment (GIA), and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) to enhance the capacity of Romanian public administration to integrate gender perspectives into policymaking and budgeting.

The package comprises three modules:

- GE & GM – introduces fundamental principles and legal frameworks.
- GIA – offers practical tools to assess the gender impact of policies.
- GRB – focuses on gender analysis in budgeting, with tools tailored to the Romanian context.

Each module includes learning objectives, presentations, facilitator notes, exercises, and pre/post-tests. Content is adaptable for different institutional levels (e.g., ministries, CONES, COJES), and assumes a basic level of prior knowledge, particularly in the GRB module.

Pilot sessions held in 2023–2024, including a full training package test in June 2024 with eight ministries, informed revisions based on participant feedback.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The training package is comprehensive and customisable for varied audiences and contexts. Key outcomes include:

- Tailored modules with content for both central and local institutions;
- Pilot sessions that improved awareness across administrative levels;
- Use of assessments to adapt content to participants' needs;
- Integration of Romanian case studies aligned with EU/OECD standards.

While efforts to formally include the training modules in the National Institute of Administration's official offer were hindered by the political context in 2024, detailed modules on gender equality, gender mainstreaming, gender impact assessment, and gender-responsive budgeting have been developed and are ready for future use. These modules are intended to be made available to public officials, with an online format considered particularly feasible – their rollout being a question of timing rather than technical capacity. Nevertheless, the training is expected to support institutions in strengthening their internal capacities and aligning with recommended national and European standards.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

A key challenge was the low level of baseline knowledge among civil servants. Many participants were unfamiliar with key concepts such as gender impact assessment and gender-responsive budgeting, which required adapting the training content to a more introductory level.

Efforts to institutionalise the training—particularly through its formal inclusion in the National Institute of Administration’s catalogue—faced delays, partly due to political considerations and procedural limitations. While the online format is recognised by ANES for its accessibility and potential scalability, participation during virtual sessions could be improved.

These observations suggest that exploring complementary in-person training formats—particularly for audiences requiring a higher degree of interaction—could strengthen learning outcomes and reinforce institutional understanding of gender equality principles.

2.1.4. PROPOSAL TO THE BUDGET CIRCULAR – GRB ENTRY POINTS FOR NATIONAL BUDGET PLANNING

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

As part of the Gender Flagship Project, a proposal was developed to introduce **gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)** references into Romania’s **2025 Budget Circular**. The objective was to enhance the integration of gender perspectives in public budgeting and policy planning by offering a structured, actionable approach aligned with international standards and Romania’s legal and strategic commitments.

Drafted with the support of international experts, the proposal builds on Romania’s **adoption of performance-based budgeting (PBB)** and recommends embedding GRB at multiple stages of the **Institutional Strategic Planning** cycle. The proposed text and accompanying tools cover:

- gender relevance assessments;
- gender impact assessments (GIA);
- classification codes for expenditures by gender impact;
- and monitoring and compliance mechanisms.

The proposal draws on good practice examples from Austria, Canada, Sweden, and Spain, adapted to Romania’s context. It was submitted to the Ministry of Finance in 2024 and complements national efforts such as the 2022–2027 National Strategy for Promoting Equal Opportunities and Preventing Domestic Violence and the pending National Plan for Women’s Economic and Political Empowerment (NPWEPE).



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RESULTS ACHIEVED

The proposal presented a detailed and context-specific framework for gender-responsive budgeting, built around **six technical pillars**:

1. Gender relevance assessment;
2. Gender impact assessment (GIA);
3. Gender budgeting entry points in institutional planning;
4. Gender-relevant classification of expenditures;
5. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
6. Compliance and accountability provisions.

It included a **model reference text** for the Budget Circular, along with **tools and procedural suggestions** for ministries to:

- identify gender equality objectives;
- assess the gender impact of budget measures;
- and track gender-related expenditures.

The proposal was formally shared with the Ministry of Finance during the second half of 2024, marking a concrete step toward aligning budgeting practices with gender equality objectives.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

A proposal for integrating gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) into the 2025 Budget Circular was developed with the support of international experts and finalized in December 2024. The document outlines practical entry points for embedding GRB within institutional strategic planning, aligned with Romania's performance-based budgeting framework. While the proposal is intended to inform future dialogue with the Ministry of Finance, there is no formal confirmation of its submission by the end of the reporting period. This reflects the broader challenge of aligning GRB initiatives with ongoing budget reform efforts, particularly in the absence of a clear procedural mechanism or institutional mandate for uptake. Strengthening early engagement with key stakeholders and ensuring alignment with budget planning cycles will be important for future progress.



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2.2. Capacity-building activities

A comprehensive series of local-level capacity building activities was implemented in Romania to strengthen institutional knowledge and operational capacity in the areas of gender equality (GE), gender mainstreaming (GM), gender impact assessment (GIA), and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). These activities targeted a broad range of stakeholders, including representatives from ANES, line ministries, national agencies, CONES, and COJES. **Notably, over 2100 participants were trained** across various levels of expertise and thematic focus areas, with a strong representation of women. The training programme included both online and in-person modalities to enhance accessibility and engagement.

Key interventions included introductory and advanced training on GIA and GRB, delivered to both beginner and intermediate groups, as well as tailored sessions for ANES staff and representatives of line ministries. Introductory sessions on GE and GM were also held specifically for ANES staff, while CONES and COJES members benefited from targeted sessions to support their role in policy implementation and reporting. Additionally, high-level promotional and sensitisation events were organised, engaging participants from the Prime Minister's Cabinet, the General Secretariat of the Government, ministries, professional associations, and NGOs. These events and training sessions significantly contributed to strengthening institutional readiness for gender mainstreaming and supported the operationalisation of national gender equality commitments.



The training sessions were a success, particularly thanks to the international experts provided through EF. Their international expertise was very well received, and colleagues expressed a high level of satisfaction. The workshops, which included group activities, proved especially valuable – participants were able to share experiences in real time. It was important that all Beneficiary Authorities were involved, as this significantly intensified the exchange of expertise. The involvement of EIGE and the OECD was also very positive and contributed meaningfully to the overall quality of the process.



Project beneficiary - Luminița Popescu, State Secretary, National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men



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Section 3

FUTURE
DIRECTIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS



Romanian authorities intend to fully implement the tools developed under the Gender Flagship Project, followed by an impact assessment to evaluate their effectiveness and inform future policy decisions. A significant institutional shift – the placement of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES) under the coordination of the General Secretariat of the Government (SGG) – presents a strategic opportunity to enhance ANES’s visibility and its coordinating role across ministries.

Closer collaboration with the SGG’s Public Policy Directorate, which oversees performance-based budgeting, can facilitate more effective integration of the 2022–2027 National Strategy for Promoting Equal Opportunities and Preventing Domestic Violence into the strategic planning frameworks of line ministries. Moreover, through sustained engagement with the Public Policy Directorate and the Ministry of Finance, gradual institutionalisation of gender impact assessments (GIA) and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) practices can be achieved across government structures.

Ongoing and tailored training will be essential to consolidate institutional capacity. Ensuring that training content aligns with participants’ levels of knowledge will be critical for effectiveness. As public officials deepen their understanding of gender equality and its operational mechanisms, institutional implementation is expected to become more systematic and coherent. The planned inclusion of training modules in the National Institute of Administration’s curriculum represents a critical milestone, but continued political support and regular capacity-building efforts will be necessary, particularly amid ongoing administrative restructuring.

In parallel, Romania is exploring the introduction of a national gender equality label for enterprises, modelled on the Italian system. Dialogue with Italian counterparts is ongoing. This voluntary certification is envisioned as a tool to promote private sector engagement in gender equality and align corporate practices with national policy goals.

The recent ratification of ILO Convention No. 190 (March 2024), the implementation of the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, and the adoption of Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence present additional avenues to strengthen Romania’s legal and institutional framework for gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

Notably, a marked increase in femicide cases in 2025 triggered nationwide public protests and initiated a consultation process aimed at introducing the legal classification of femicide in Romanian legislation. In this context, ANES is encouraged to work closely with political allies, civil society organizations, and academic institutions to advocate not only for this legislative amendment but also for the institutionalization of gender equality education and training as a key strategy to prevent violence against women.



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Annex

ANNEX. SPOTLIGHT
PRACTICE: NATIONAL
PLAN FOR WOMEN'S
ECONOMIC
AND POLITICAL
EMPOWERMENT
(NPWEPE)

Purpose and added value

The National Plan for Women's Economic and Political Empowerment (NPWEPE) 2025–2029 was developed under the coordination of ANES as part of the Gender Flagship Project, with the aim of strengthening women's participation in Romania's economic and political life. The action plan seeks to translate national and international commitments into a coordinated, measurable framework for implementation across institutions. It responds to key recommendations from international bodies, including the OECD and the Council of Europe, regarding the promotion of gender equality in public life. **Structured around five thematic pillars: (1) access to education and training, (2) employment and entrepreneurship, (3) political representation and decision-making, (4) work-life balance, and (5) prevention of violence against women**—the plan is designed to align with both domestic policy frameworks and European standards.

The document also integrates horizontal principles such as non-discrimination and inclusion of vulnerable groups. These priorities are reflected across the five pillars to support the needs of marginalised women, including those in rural or minority communities.

Novelty

The NPWEPE was developed through an extensive consultative process involving national ministries, local authorities, civil society, trade unions, academia, and political parties. A dedicated consultation period took place in July 2023 and early 2024, coordinated by ANES, national expert and an international expert. Also, in 2024, over two weeks of consultations and a focus group gathered input from NGOs working on women's economic empowerment, trade unions, and representatives from the entrepreneurship sector. Political parties were engaged through informal channels, primarily via NGO–parliamentary networks.

Following this process, the draft plan was finalised and submitted to the National Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (CONES) on 8 May, matching with National Gender Equality Day. It was also sent to COJES, from which feedback was received. In line with transparency requirements, the draft was published on the Ministry's website. No major comments were received, which was attributed to the strong early involvement of stakeholders and the quality of the draft.

The consultation process also included a tailored questionnaire on barriers to women's leadership. Results from this exercise informed the development of specific objectives under the pillar on political participation.

The plan includes defined objectives, indicators, timelines, and responsibilities for each thematic area. Indicators were developed using existing data sources such as Eurostat, the National Institute of Statistics (INS), and administrative registries, with the aim of ensuring feasibility and alignment with institutional monitoring systems.

Implementation in practice

The draft NPWEPE was validated by the National Steering Committee on 6 March 2024 and endorsed by ANES on 12 April 2024. Following endorsement, it was shared with COJES and relevant ministries. However, formal adoption is still pending due to administrative restructuring following the 2024 electoral cycle. ANES was moved under General Secretariat of the Government, and several ministries were reorganised. The next step involves securing interministerial signatures.

Despite these procedural delays, the plan remains a political priority. No objections have been raised, and final approval is considered a matter of timing.

In addition to its policy content, the plan foresees the creation of a coordination committee under the General Secretariat of the Government to oversee implementation. This committee is not yet operational and is expected to begin functioning once the plan is formally adopted.



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Guidance for adaptation

The NPWEPE has already attracted interest from county-level stakeholders and women's rights organisations interested in adapting the plan to the local context. Its structured format—with thematic pillars, time-bound indicators, and clearly assigned responsibilities—facilitates localisation while maintaining alignment with national priorities.

Factors that could support adaptation in other contexts include:

- A coordinating institution with a formal mandate (such as ANES);
- Early and inclusive consultation processes using various formats (e.g. workshops, focus groups, surveys);
- Validation through formal mechanisms such as interministerial committees.

The plan includes guidance for alignment with local development strategies and proposes annual progress reporting by county institutions to ANES.

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



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