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EXPERTISE
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CASE STUDY

PARTICIPATION OF STRASBOURG IN THE GENDER FLAGSHIP PROJECT

2022-2025



**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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The poster features three vertical panels. The left panel shows two small potted plants with the text 'RAISE AWARENESS AND CULTIVATE A EUROPEAN GROUND FOR GENDER EQUALITY'. The middle panel shows a hand holding a European Union flag with the text 'FOSTER THE INTEGRATION OF GENDER EQUALITY INTO PUBLIC POLICIES AND BUDGETS'. The right panel shows a person's back in a meeting with the text 'SUPPORT PUBLIC AGENTS IN IMPLEMENTING GENDER MAINSTREAMING TOOLS'. At the top, it says 'GENDER FLAGSHIP' and 'GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PUBLIC POLICY AND BUDGETING'. Logos for Expertise France and the European Union are at the bottom.

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

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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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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	18
3. Future directions and recommendations	19
ANNEX. SPOTLIGHT PRACTICE: OPERATIONALISING GRB IN STRASBOURG'S BUDGET CYCLE	21
Purpose and added value	22
Novelty	22
Implementation in practice	23
Guidance for adaptation	24

Abbreviations and Acronyms

- BA** Beneficiary Authority
- COPIL** Comité de Pilotage (Steering Committee)
- COTECH** Comité Technique (Technical Committee)
- DCP** Direction de la Commande Publique (Public Procurement Directorate)
- DSSJ** Direction Solidarités, Santé et Jeunesse (Solidarity, Health and Youth Directorate)
- EF** Expertise France
- EIGE** European Institute for Gender Equality
- EU** European Union
- EUI** European University Institute
- GAP** Gender Action Plan
- GIA** Gender Impact Assessment
- GM** Gender Mainstreaming
- GRB** Gender-Responsive Budgeting
- SDG(s)** Sustainable Development Goal(s)
- SG REFORM** Reform and Investment Task Force of the European Commission
- TSI** Technical Support Instrument
- VAW** Violence Against Women

Executive summary

Strasbourg joined the Gender Flagship Project to consolidate and scale up its early efforts in Gender Mainstreaming (GM) and Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB), aiming to address institutional fragmentation, limited use of gender-related information, and uneven Directorates' engagement. Building on previous pilot projects, the city sought to embed gender equality more systematically into municipal governance.

During the project, Strasbourg achieved several concrete results. GRB was institutionalised through the introduction of annual Budget Framework Letters and tailored tools for expenditure analysis. Each directorate is now expected to analyse at least one budget line annually from a gender perspective, creating a scalable entry point for broader change. The city also developed a public procurement roadmap and operational guide to integrate equality clauses, alongside a supplier perception analysis. In addition, several directorates conducted a GRB analysis of their budgets and developed roadmaps outlining their vision, next steps and targets to pursue the implementation of the GRB approach. Other directorates deployed the GRB approach and tools with the aim of mainstreaming gender considerations into their subsidies/grants. In line with the city's objectives set out in the Action Plan, the Citizen Engagement team was trained and equipped with tools to strengthen their skills in implementing gender and inclusion considerations in their activities with the public. New tools were co-developed and tested to conduct Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs).

In parallel, Strasbourg initiated a citywide diagnostic on the prevention, risk mitigation efforts and response to violence against women (VAW), collecting data from internal departments and civil society to inform a future roadmap.

These activities were complemented by the capacity-building effort, which included targeted training and mentoring, which created a core group of internal GRB champions, though broader uptake remains uneven.

The development of the city's Fourth Action Plan on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (2025-2027) presented a unique opportunity to integrate tools and results of the project, including the Directorates' commitments and GRB roadmaps; in the 3rd strategic objective on "gender mainstreaming in public policies". The Action Plan was presented and endorsed by the municipality in June 2025; it is one of the key milestones that contributed to sustaining the Gender Flagship's gains.

Looking ahead, while resource constraints have led Strasbourg to scale back the originally envisaged VAW roadmap, the city is updating its VAW guide for professionals. It also plans to pilot equality clauses in procurement, rollout Directorates' roadmaps, and deepen the integration of GRB into its budget cycle. Sustaining this momentum will require continued coordination, internal support, and strong political commitment to ensure gender equality becomes a lasting feature of municipal policy and practice.

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 Aurélie Arquier and Céline Calvé. 2023.

1.1. Beneficiary Authority (BA)

The City of Strasbourg is the sole French beneficiary of the Gender Flagship Project. A national frontrunner in **gender-responsive budgeting**¹, Strasbourg has advanced gender equality across successive municipal mandates.

The project is co-led by the **Finance Directorate** and the **Mission for Women's Rights**, under the political leadership of the First Deputy Mayor of Finance Directorate and the Deputy Mayor for Women's Rights. This strong governance model combines technical expertise with high-level commitment to embed gender considerations into the city's budget and policy systems.

Strasbourg's participation builds on earlier technical assistance (2021–2022), which piloted GRB in the **Sports** and **Citizen Participation** directorates through participatory, diagnostic-led methodologies.

1.2. Context when joining the project

France upholds gender equality through constitutional guarantees and alignment with international and EU strategies. At the local level, Strasbourg has translated these frameworks into policy through three successive Municipal Action Plans for Women's Rights and Gender Equality (2012–2016, 2017–2020, and 2021–2024).

The current Municipal Action Plan focuses on:

- 1.** Ensuring professional equality in the administration;
- 2.** Promoting a citywide culture of equality;
- 3.** Supporting civil society and public initiatives advancing gender rights.

Despite this strong policy base, operational barriers persisted: limited use of sex-disaggregated data, inconsistent departmental engagement, underdeveloped evaluation tools, and fragmented implementation of gender mainstreaming. Early GRB initiatives were promising but also lacked institutional consolidation and benefited from only variable political support.

Strasbourg's demographic and institutional profile reinforce the project's relevance. With a population of nearly 290 000 (52% women), and as host to several European institutions, the city has both the visibility and responsibility to lead by example in gender equality.

¹ Referred to locally as *budget sensible au genre (BSG)*

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

Strasbourg’s governance model for gender-responsive budgeting is notable for its combination of strong political commitment and robust administrative coordination. The City Council, comprised of 65 elected officials under the leadership of Mayor, oversees a municipal administration structured into 18 directorates. These directorates span key policy areas such as education, culture, public space, and sports—many of which are directly implicated in gender equality efforts.

Operational governance is reinforced through two interdepartmental mechanisms:

- **COPIL (Steering Committee):** Provides strategic oversight and includes political leadership. It serves as a decision-making body ensuring alignment between policy priorities and project implementation.
- **COTECH (Technical Committee):** Coordinates day-to-day execution and interdepartmental collaboration. It supports technical actors and ensures coherence across directorates.

This dual-layered governance structure was tested during the 2021–2022 pilot in the Sports and Citizen Engagement directorates.

While the pilot validated the relevance of GRB, it also revealed disparities in directorates’ engagement and knowledge, underlining the need for more uniform capacity-building across services.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Strasbourg’s approach to gender equality is anchored in a robust legal and policy framework that connects local action to national and international commitments. Nationally, the city operates within France’s constitutional guarantees and legal standards for gender equality. At the European level, Strasbourg aligns with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (notably SDG 5), and has been a signatory of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life since 2010. Locally, Strasbourg has institutionalised its commitment through three successive Municipal Action Plans for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality.

Gender-responsive budgeting and gender impact assessments were introduced during earlier pilot initiatives with Sports and Citizen Engagement directorates and have since been recognised as essential tools to support Strasbourg’s gender equality agenda. Initial progresses was made in categorising expenditures by gender relevance and incorporating gender criteria into grants and participatory budget, though these practices remained limited in scope and consistency.



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

Strasbourg's participation responded to persistent institutional and technical gaps. While prior efforts—such as budget tagging in the pilot directorates—provided a foundation, the city lacked **systematic implementation, standardised tools,** and **broad internal buy-in.**

Through the Gender Flagship, Strasbourg aimed to:

- Consolidate pilot outcomes into a citywide GRB approach rollout strategy;
- Strengthen staff capacity through training and peer learning;
- Expand the use of gender-related data and impact assessments;
- Integrate gender into grants and procurement;
- Ensure the approach becomes irreversible, regardless of political shifts.

1.4. Project objectives and aims

The Gender Flagship Project supported Strasbourg's strategic goal of embedding gender equality into all aspects of municipal governance and service delivery. It was structured around the following objectives:

- 1. Capacity-building:** Train staff and elected officials; establish a network of internal GRB focal points;
- 2. Tool development:** Co-develop and implement practical tools for GRB and GIA, including expenditure tagging, classification and impact indicators;
- 3. Data systems:** Improve knowledge and strengthen skills in the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data to inform decision-making through a gender lens;
- 4. Mainstreaming mechanisms:** Co-develop and incrementally apply gender criteria in public procurement and grant processes;
- 5. Civic engagement:** strengthen skills in implementing gender and inclusion considerations in activities and interaction with the public.

These objectives aimed to ensure both short-term improvements and long-term institutional change, embedding a culture of gender-responsive governance throughout the city administration.



Gender budgeting was part of the mayor's political vision from the beginning. We had already started a trial phase when we heard about the TSI call. Getting this TSI support was an amazing surprise - we had political commitment and a team in place, so the timing was perfect.



Project beneficiary

Section 2

GENDER
MAINSTREAMING
SUPPORT
PROVIDED

2.1. Tailored support and results achieved

2.1.1. GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING TOOLS AND FRAMEWORK LETTERS: INSTITUTIONALISATION OF GRB IN THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET CYCLE

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

One of the central activities of the Gender Flagship Project in Strasbourg was to integrate gender-responsive budgeting into the city’s budget cycle. To embed GRB in practice, the project team worked closely with the Finance Department and operational units. Two working sessions were held with finance managers to review the tools and assess how familiar they were with the GRB approach. The project also introduced a concrete annual requirement: each department is now asked to select one expenditure line and analyse it using gender-disaggregated information—meaning data that shows how public spending affects women, men, and gender-diverse individuals differently.

To support this process, several practical tools were developed and institutionalised:

- Budget Framework Letters (2024 and 2025) - Formal budget preparation notes issued by the Finance Directorate and addressed to all directorate heads (“note to directors”). They include a political foreword signed by the First Deputy Mayor/Vice-President in charge of finance and budget, setting expectations for budget preparation. Following an incremental approach, the 2025 letter asked each directorate to select one specific expenditure line and provide a more detailed gender impact analysis, building on the initial gender tagging/classification introduced in the previous cycle in 2024. Together, the letters provide political direction and formal administrative instructions to embed gender-responsive budgeting across all directorates.
- Classification and data analysis tools – serve as the backbone of the GRB process. The categorisation and classification support tool helps departments tag and classify expenditures based on their gender relevance, making it easier to determine where budget allocations may produce unequal outcomes. Meanwhile, the data analysis follow-up sheet is a structured reporting template that departments use to document their chosen expenditure line, describe their findings using gender-disaggregated data, and propose adjustments.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The institutionalisation of GRB produced both cultural and technical change. Finance managers, who were initially unfamiliar with GRB, showed increased understanding and commitment after the sensitisation workshops. Several directorates began using the tools and completed their first gender-based analysis of a budget line. This approach allowed teams to identify disparities—such as whether funding disproportionately benefits one gender group—and start to rethink how budgets could be used to promote equality and equity.

The city now has a set of official documents and tools that institutionalise the GRB approach. The Budget Framework Letters and tagging sheets serve as formal guidance. The annual gender-based analysis of selected expenditure lines initiated in 2025 creates a manageable but meaningful way for directorates to build experience and improve over time. This model is scalable, practical, and already showing impact in changing how public money is managed.



The project helped break silos. Departments that never worked together suddenly realised they could - and should - cooperate to address gendered vulnerabilities.



Project beneficiary

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Despite the progress, several challenges were encountered. Many staff members lacked time or confidence or familiarity with GRB and budgeting terminology. Words like “categorisation” and “classifier” were often seen as technical or confusing, which limited understanding. In some directorates, the process relied too heavily on a single motivated staff member, making the process hard to sustain if that person left. Political support was strong at the executive level but less consistent across directorates.

A key lesson was the importance of **clear language**, **practical examples**, and **step-by-step guidance**. Directorates need support not limited to knowledge on gender equality, but also to navigate budgeting terminology, cycles and structures. The project also confirmed that even small actions—like analysing one budget line—can build momentum if done consistently and with adequate support.

To sustain this work, Strasbourg will need continued coordination between the Finance Department and the operational units, stronger internal communication, and ideally, a dedicated staff member to monitor progress and provide continuous technical assistance.

For further details, see Annex. Spotlight Practice: operationalising GRB in Strasbourg’s budget cycle.

2.1.2. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN QUESTIONNAIRE AND DIAGNOSTIC MAPPING: DEVELOPMENT OF A COORDINATED MUNICIPAL FRAMEWORK FOR PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

As part of the Gender Flagship Project, the City of Strasbourg undertook a structured diagnostic initiative to identify, map, and coordinate its contributions to the prevention of and response to violence against women (VAW). Recognising that relevant interventions were dispersed across various municipal departments, the objective was to consolidate existing practices, uncover operational gaps, and lay the groundwork for a coherent and visible municipal approach to VAW.

To support this effort, a **questionnaire** and a **guidance note** were developed and shared with all relevant departments. These tools were designed to gather data on directorates’ budgets and interventions related to VAW, as well as perceived challenges and support needs. This internal mapping served as a foundation for a future cross-sectoral roadmap to guide municipal policy.

Thirteen departments contributed to the data collection process, including key sectoral public policies such as Health and Autonomy, Culture, Gender Equality and Women’s Rights Mission, Childhood and Education, Urban Prevention, and Digital and IT, among others. Directorates involved in social care, public health, safety, and gender equality were especially encouraged to participate due to the relevance of their work to VAW-related issues.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The internal mapping exercise clarified the types of measures already in place as well as the budget allocated to prevention, risk mitigation and response activities. Several directorates reported relevant actions that had not previously been identified as contributing to the fight against gender-based violence, illustrating the diagnostic value of the process.

Thirteen directorates submitted inputs via the questionnaire. Their responses allowed the project team to analyse existing measures, identify relevant budget allocations, and assess how departments contribute—directly or indirectly—to the city’s broader equality goals. The Department of Health and Autonomy (DSSJ) emerged as one of the most engaged actors and expressed a strong interest in developing a coordinated municipal framework.

The exercise also prompted internal reflection across the Directorate. For many, it was the first time they considered their operational role through the lens of VAW prevention or response. The accompanying guidance note was instrumental in helping teams interpret the scope of the questionnaire and engage more confidently with the issue.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

One of the main challenges identified was the **fragmentation** of municipal efforts. Although many directorates contributed meaningfully to VAW-related work, these contributions had historically lacked coordination, limiting their strategic impact. The mapping revealed that existing actions were rarely labelled or tracked as VAW interventions, which made them invisible in policy planning.

Another barrier was the **lack of sex-disaggregated data**. For instance, while some victim-related data existed—particularly within the Security Directorate—it was not systematically broken down by sex or gender, reducing its usefulness for analysis or policy targeting.

The initiative confirmed the importance of defining a **vision for a coordinated public policy to address VAW**, building a **shared vocabulary**, and improving **internal communication and strategic collaboration** around gender-based violence. While the guidance note helped to interpret concepts and expectations, the process underscored the need for continued dialogue to ensure consistent collaboration across departments.

2.1.3. PROCUREMENT ROADMAP, GUIDE AND SUPPLIER ANALYSIS: INTEGRATION OF GENDER EQUALITY CONDITIONALITY INTO PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PRACTICES

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Under the Gender Flagship Project, the City of Strasbourg initiated a comprehensive effort to integrate equal conditionality, focused on gender equality, into its public procurement policies. This work was part of a broader strategy to leverage municipal contracting power to promote professional equality and set an example at the local and national levels.

The activity was structured around three core outputs: an analysis of companies' perceptions, a guide and a roadmap.

The **analysis of companies' perceptions** was based on a review of responses to the city's professional equality questionnaire. This component aimed to assess supplier readiness and attitudes toward equality requirements. An analysis of 129 company responses to the professional equality questionnaire was carried out. Most responding companies were small in size; 77% declared having internal policies on equality, yet only 11% held a formal professional equality label. This insight provided a valuable baseline, suggesting moderate levels of awareness but limited formalisation of equality practices among suppliers. The findings informed both the roadmap and the guide, allowing for a better calibration of expectations and tools.

The **guide (Guide to promoting the integration of issues relating to equality between women and men in the public procurement of the City of Strasbourg)** supports the operational integration of equal conditionality into procurement procedures and internal processes. It is intended as a practical reference for public procurement officers and their support networks (relays), helping translate policy ambitions into enforceable clauses and procedural standards.

The **roadmap** (included in the final report "Deploying gender equality conditionality in public procurement"), developed jointly with the Public Procurement Directorate (DCP) and validated by the elected official responsible for procurement, outlines the medium- and long-term deployment strategy for equality-based clauses. It includes objectives related to the number and type of contracts targeted, financial thresholds, duration of engagements, and operational modalities such as supplier sourcing.



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RESULTS ACHIEVED

During the project, the city was able to incorporate equality considerations into 15 public contracts. It was able to test different methods of integration: performance clauses, bid evaluation criteria, and progress plans.

The roadmap was successfully produced and approved by the city's political leadership. It provides a concrete and scalable trajectory for integrating equality criteria into procurement contracts, specifying variables such as the number of markets to be covered, contract amounts, and mechanisms like targeted sourcing.

The accompanying guide was also developed to support public procurement teams and relays in operationalising these new conditionality measures. Though not detailed in the main report, the guide's purpose is clearly framed: to help embed equality expectations into each stage of the procurement process in a legally sound and practical way.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Although the city has demonstrated strong political will, concerns persist regarding legal uncertainties in relation to procurement contracts, the risk of unsuccessful tenders, and potential litigation. The city's prior experience with social and environmental clauses provides a useful foundation, but equal conditionality remains a new and untested area in practice.

The awareness questionnaire, while a valuable exploratory tool, remains voluntary and has not been integrated into tender evaluations. Its initial underutilisation also highlights the importance of follow-up mechanisms and stronger incentives for supplier engagement.

A key lesson emerging from this phase is the importance of combining political endorsement with detailed operational planning, internal training, and legal review. The roadmap and guide are necessary, but not sufficient on their own—they must be paired with active implementation, pilot testing, and close monitoring. Strasbourg is now well-positioned to take this next step and, if successful, could serve as a reference point for other municipalities aiming to embed gender equality in public procurement.



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2.2. Capacity-building activities

The Gender Flagship Project supported an extensive capacity-building programme in Strasbourg, involving over 200 municipal staff across diverse departments. The programme targeted key stakeholders, including finance services, culture, gender equality missions, health and autonomy, international relations, and citizenship engagement teams.

The training programme was structured around two main thematic tracks. The first focused on "Implementing GRB in public policies (from A to Z)" delivered through a modular approach across four progressive sessions, targeting staff from Finance, Culture, Gender Equality and Women's Rights Mission, Elections and Territories departments. The second track concentrated on "Mainstreaming gender budgeting into public subsidies/grants", engaging participants from Health and Autonomy, Culture, City Public Policies, International Relations, Civil Society Partnership, and Childhood and Education departments.

To broaden institutional awareness and support, the project organised multiple awareness-raising sessions titled "Advancing Gender Equality through Gender-Responsive Budgeting and Mainstreaming", attracting participants from various city departments and reinforcing the strategic importance of gender mainstreaming across municipal operations. Additionally, specialised sessions on "Equal and Inclusive Participation" were delivered to citizenship engagement teams to strengthen participatory approaches in activities and interventions with the public.

The training programme contributed to the creation of a core group of informed and committed staff capable of applying GRB principles and advocating for gender-sensitive budgeting practices within their departments. This emerging internal network is expected to support the ongoing institutionalisation of GRB. In some cases, gender considerations have already been integrated into budget exercises, such as within the participatory budget framework and grant allocation processes. The 2024 sessions also generated growing interest from additional departments seeking more targeted capacity building.



These weren't just trainings - they went deep. People worked on real issues they face in their day-to-day jobs, which made the learning stick. There's often a gap between theory and practice, but here we had both: a strong conceptual framework and practical assignments, implemented throughout the extended period of time. That combination is what really made it work.



Project beneficiary

Section 3

FUTURE
DIRECTIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS



Section 3. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Gender Flagship Project has laid critical groundwork for embedding gender equality into Strasbourg's governance, notably through gender-responsive budgeting, gender-sensitive procurement, and institutional capacity building. To sustain this progress, several priority directions emerge.

First, Strasbourg could strengthen further the institutional embedding of GRB as a core budgetary practice, ensuring annual departmental analyses of expenditure lines using gender-disaggregated data and embedding categorisation and tagging as standard procedures. The Finance Department, working closely with operational departments, should lead this integration into regular budget cycles.

Second, the city could formalise a coordinated municipal framework for preventing and responding to violence against women (VAW). The diagnostic work has exposed fragmentation and inconsistent data practices. As a near-term step, Strasbourg is updating its VAW guide for professionals; in time, and as resources allow, the city could complete and validate a broader municipal roadmap, informed by collaboration with civil society, with clear objectives, coordination mechanisms, and monitoring indicators.

Third, the city could work on advancing the implementation of gender equality conditionality in public procurement. While strong political endorsement exists and foundational tools have been developed, binding equality clauses should now be piloted and refined, with a focus on engaging and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises.

Capacity building remains important. Gender mainstreaming and GRB training should be embedded into the city's professional development programs, with practical coaching on data use and communication tools that enable staff to advocate effectively. A dedicated training module for elected officials is also recommended to deepen political ownership.



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Annex

ANNEX. SPOTLIGHT
PRACTICE:
OPERATIONALISING
GRB IN STRASBOURG'S
BUDGET CYCLE

Purpose and added value

The introduction of gender-responsive budgeting tools and Framework Letters by the City of Strasbourg aims to systematically embed gender considerations into municipal financial planning. The core purpose is to ensure that budgets reflect awareness of how expenditures affect different gender groups and contribute to reducing inequalities.

The added value lies in transforming what is often perceived as an abstract equality principle into a practical, institutionalised requirement: each department is expected to analyse at least one expenditure line annually using gender-disaggregated data. This creates a manageable and scalable mechanism that not only promotes accountability but also fosters learning and progressively strengthens the city's capacity to design and implement inclusive policies.

This spotlight practice exemplifies how a municipality can move beyond awareness-raising toward concrete operationalisation of gender mainstreaming principles within the existing budget cycle.

Novelty

While GRB is an established international policy concept, Strasbourg's practice brings novelty in its operational design at the municipal level.

Key elements of innovation include:

- The clear, annual expectation that every department contributes to GRB efforts by focusing on a single, concrete, budgetary item, making the process practical rather than overwhelming.
- The formal embedding of GRB requirements into the city's core budget preparation instruments, such as the annual Budget Framework Letters and accompanying tools, ensures that GRB is treated as a normal part of financial governance.
- A tailored approach that combines technical tools with efforts to raise awareness and sensitise managers, enabling a gradual but sustained institutional culture change.

This approach addresses a frequent challenge in gender mainstreaming: moving from political statements to operational practices that departments can realistically implement and improve over time.



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Implementation in practice

The spotlight practice comprises a suite of complementary tools that together enable and encourage departments to take part in GRB:

- **Budget Framework Letters (2024 and 2025):** These are formal instructions issued annually by the Finance Department, which now explicitly include guidance on GRB. Following an incremental approach, in 2025 they ask each directorate to identify a specific expenditure line and provide gender-based analysis on its impact. The letter signals a clear political commitment and serves as a formal instruction to institutionalise GRB across the entire directorate.
- The Framework Letters require that every department identify and analyse at least one expenditure line from a gender perspective as part of their regular budget preparation. This ensures that GRB expectations are systematically communicated and operationalised.
- **Budget Notice for 2024:** This document complements the Framework Letters by setting out the city's broader policy expectations regarding gender equality in budgetary planning. It serves as an authoritative reference, reinforcing the message that GRB is a policy priority and clarifying the rationale for its integration.
- **Categorisation and Classification Support Tool:** This technical tool helps departments identify which budget lines may have differential impacts by gender. It provides a framework for sorting expenditures into categories that can reveal potential disparities or opportunities for gender-responsive interventions.
- **Tagging Sheet:** A practical spreadsheet designed to help departments record and track the specific budget lines selected for gender analysis. This sheet supports consistency, facilitates internal monitoring, and provides a simple reporting mechanism back to the Finance Department.
- **Data Analysis Follow-up Sheet:** This tool enables departments to document their findings and reflect on the gender implications of the selected expenditure line. It also helps build institutional memory by recording results that can inform future planning cycles.

Initial sensitisation meetings with finance managers were crucial for introducing these tools, answering questions, and encouraging ownership. During the reporting period, several departments completed their first gender-based budget analysis, demonstrating proof of concept and laying the foundation for iterative improvement. The process is designed to scale incrementally, with departments gaining experience and confidence over time.



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Guidance for adaptation

Other municipalities interested in adapting this spotlight practice can draw the following lessons from Strasbourg's experience:

- **Start with a manageable requirement.** Requiring just one expenditure line per department to be analysed annually makes GRB operationalisation feasible and reduces resistance or capacity concerns.
- **Formalise the expectation through existing financial governance instruments.** Embedding GRB requirements in Budget Framework Letters ensures the practice is institutionally anchored and not reliant on individual champions.
- **Provide simple, standardised tools.** Tailored tools such as tagging sheets, classification guides, and follow-up templates make it easier for departments with varying levels of expertise to participate.
- **Invest in sensitisation and support.** Initial sensitisation sessions help demystify GRB and build confidence among managers who may not be familiar with gender analysis or budgetary structures.
- **Anticipate uneven uptake and plan for reinforcement.** Not all departments will engage at the same pace. Continued communication, technical support, and feedback mechanisms help ensure gradual but sustained adoption.
- **Leverage the practice as an entry point for broader gender mainstreaming.** Even a small, well-defined requirement can generate momentum that leads departments to reflect more broadly on the gender impacts of their work.

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GENDER FLAGSHIP

GENDER MAINSTREAMING
IN PUBLIC POLICY
AND BUDGET PROCESSES