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CAPITALISATION POLICY BRIEF FROM FRAMEWORKS TO PRACTICE: ADVANCING GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PUBLIC POLICY AND BUDGETING

Lessons and policy
recommendations from the
Gender Flagship Project

**GENDER
FLAGSHIP**

GENDER MAINSTREAMING
IN PUBLIC POLICY
AND BUDGET PROCESSES

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	4
ABOUT THIS CAPITALISATION POLICY BRIEF	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
1. POLICY CONTEXT – WHY GENDER MAINSTREAMING MATTERS AND WHY CHANGE IS NEEDED	8
2. WHAT WORKS: TESTED AND TRANSFERABLE APPROACHES	11
3. LESSONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	18
4. THE WAY FORWARD	25
ANNEXES	27
ANNEX 1. ABOUT THE GENDER FLAGSHIP PROJECT	27
ANNEX 2. BENEFICIARY AUTHORITY FACTSHEETS	30

Abbreviations and Acronyms

- BA** Beneficiary Authority
- EC** European Commission
- EF** Expertise France
- EIGE** European Institute for Gender Equality
- EU** European Union
- EUI** European University Institute
- GAP** Gender Action Plan
- GBA** Gender-Based Analysis
- GIA** Gender Impact Assessment
- GM** Gender Mainstreaming
- GRB** Gender-Responsive Budgeting
- MFF** Multiannual Financial Framework
- MS** Member State
- SDGs** Sustainable Development Goals
- SG REFORM** Reform and Investment Task Force of the European Commission
- TSI** Technical Support Instrument

About this capitalisation policy brief

Technical support projects generate valuable tools, methods, and insights that can benefit a wider audience beyond direct beneficiaries. This capitalisation policy brief pulls together what worked, what was learned, and what can be adapted elsewhere from the EU-funded Gender Flagship Project (2022–2026), translating hands-on experience into practical guidance and policy recommendations. It is not an advocacy document promoting a single position, but a resource for EU institutions and Member State administrations seeking to strengthen gender mainstreaming in their own contexts. It is aimed particularly at public finance and budgeting actors, gender equality institutions, and centre-of-government bodies responsible for cross-sector coordination. As a capitalisation output, this brief also documents the specific support provided to each Beneficiary Authority (Annex 2), serving both as a record of project achievements and as a resource for administrations considering similar approaches.

The Gender Flagship Project is an EU-funded initiative supporting public authorities in embedding gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting into policy and budget processes. Funded through the European Union Technical Support Instrument (TSI), the project was implemented by Expertise France in partnership with the European University Institute (EUI) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), with support from the European Commission (EC).

The brief synthesises four years of implementation experience, translating practical lessons into policy recommendations for EU institutions and national policy- and decision-makers. It focuses on the eight¹ Cohort 1 Beneficiary Authorities, whose support cycle was completed in 2025. Work with Cohort 2 authorities (Cyprus, Italy, Greece local) was ongoing during the drafting of this policy brief and is therefore not reflected here. The findings, examples and factsheets in this brief draw on data collected for capitalisation purposes by autumn 2025 and may not reflect subsequent developments. The annexes provide detailed project information and Beneficiary Authority factsheets.



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¹ The policy brief draws on the experience of the eight Cohort 1 Beneficiary Authorities that received tailored support: Berlin, Greece (national level), Hamburg, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, Saxony-Anhalt, and Strasbourg. Spain is not included due to its limited participation in the project – it only participated in common capacity-building activities and exchanges

Executive summary

Gender mainstreaming remains the EU's primary strategy for achieving equality between women and men, yet implementation is fragile. The 2025 Gender Equality Index scores the EU at 63.4 out of 100; at the current pace, full equality is at least 50 years away.² Member State scores range from over 73 to below 50. While political commitment exists, most administrations lack the tools, coordination mechanisms and sustained capacity needed to translate that commitment into routine practice.

The Gender Flagship Project has developed and tested practical approaches for narrowing this implementation gap. Since 2022, the project has supported 12 Beneficiary Authorities across nine Member States through tailored in-depth gender analysis, practical gender mainstreaming tools, and sustained capacity-building.

Gender Mainstreaming (GM)

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. (United Nations)



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² EIGE (2025), *Gender Equality Index 2025*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a6ebdaaf-cff4-11f0-8da2-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

The core message, expressed by the participants of the Capitalisation Conference in Brussels³, is clear: the voluntary phase is over. Sustainable gender mainstreaming requires clear mandates, assigned responsibilities, and follow-up mechanisms – not just encouragement and good-practice sharing. The project's experience points to several critical success factors:

- Tools must be integrated early and systematically. Gender Impact Assessments (GIA) applied late in legislative procedures or outside core planning cycles have limited influence. Simple, user-centred tools embedded in existing workflows – with guidance, templates, and helpdesk support – show higher uptake than complex stand-alone instruments.
- Accountability mechanisms prevent tick-box compliance. Linking gender reporting to performance discussions, parliamentary scrutiny, audit processes, and public transparency creates incentives for genuine engagement rather than symbolic reporting.
- Finance ministry engagement is decisive. Ownership increases where gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is framed as a tool for improving allocation efficiency, inclusiveness and fiscal transparency. In practice, this can help direct public resources more fairly towards differentiated needs, address structural inequalities, and strengthen evidence-based decision-making through better budget information.
- Administrations should institutionalise capacity-building. One-off training dissipates as staff rotate. Embedding gender competence in permanent civil service curricula and professional development ensures knowledge renewal beyond project timelines.

Building on this experience, this brief sets out policy recommendations for EU institutions and Member States to strengthen mandates, embed tools in budget and policy cycles, and institutionalise learning (see Section 3).

The new EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030 is now in place⁴, and this policy brief offers tested and transferable approaches to support its effective implementation. Following the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and as negotiations continue on the proposed Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034), the lessons and recommendations presented here can meaningfully inform these processes. Gender mainstreaming is not a marginal or niche concern; it is a fundamental requirement for effective, inclusive, fair and equitable governance. The Gender Flagship Project offers tested approaches to support this.

³ Gender Flagship Capitalisation Conference. *Good Practices & Lessons Learned. Brussels (Belgium), 8–9 October 2025. The conference gathered 69 participants, representing 11 Beneficiary Authorities across nine EU Member States, as well as EU institutions, project partners, and technical experts.*

⁴ European Commission (2026), *Commission presents new Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030 for a more equal, cohesive and successful Europe.* https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_526



Section 1

POLICY CONTEXT
– WHY GENDER
MAINSTREAMING
MATTERS AND
WHY CHANGE IS
NEEDED



Progress towards gender equality in the EU is fragile and uneven. The 2025 Gender Equality Index scores the EU at 63.4 out of 100 – at the current pace, full equality is at least 50 years away.⁵ Member State scores range from over 73 in Sweden to below 50 in Cyprus.⁶ While gains have been made in the domain of power (social, economic, political decision-making), other domains, compared to the results in 2020, only slightly improved or stayed the same.

Gender mainstreaming, the systematic integration of a gender perspective into all policies, programmes and budgets, is essential for closing these gaps. Since the Treaty of Amsterdam, which made gender mainstreaming an official EU policy approach⁷, the EU has built the architecture to support it. This includes gender analysis, impact assessments, gender-responsive budgeting, tracking methodologies for gender-related expenditure, and reporting requirements across the Multiannual Financial Framework and Recovery and Resilience Facility. By 2024, nearly one-fifth of EU spending contributed to gender equality objectives.⁸ The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025⁹ positioned gender mainstreaming as an important instrument for turning commitments into results. The newly adopted EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030¹⁰ reaffirms this role. It commits to strengthening gender mainstreaming across EU policies and the next MFF, supporting Member States in building capacity and developing guidelines on gender mainstreaming including gender budgeting, and improving the collection of sex-disaggregated data.

Yet implementation remains the weak link. Most Member States have designated authorities for gender equality, but only a few have elevated this to ministerial status.¹¹ Some countries require ex-ante gender impact assessments by law; others do not. A small group of frontrunners apply gender-responsive budgeting systematically; elsewhere, it remains nascent or unknown.¹² Recent data show declining use of gender mainstreaming tools, limited consultation with equality bodies, and fragmented training. Many equality institutions lack adequate resources. Civil society faces a shrinking space, and anti-rights/gender movements increasingly challenge established norms.¹³

The Gender Flagship Project's work across 12 Beneficiary Authorities in nine EU Member States reveals what drives this implementation gap: institutional fragmentation, unclear ownership of gender mainstreaming, weak coordination between finance and line ministries, patchy capacity, and persistent data gaps. One finding stands out – without finance ministry engagement, gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) risks remaining largely symbolic. This is not because finance officials resist equality goals. Rather, GRB is often framed as an external or additional requirement, competing with other cross-cutting priorities, rather than as a tool that supports core budgetary objectives such as efficiency, transparency and policy coherence.

⁵ EIGE (2025), *Gender Equality Index 2025*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ European Parliament (2019), *Gender mainstreaming in the EU: State of play. At a glance, Plenary January 2019*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/630359/EPRS_ATA\(2019\)630359_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/630359/EPRS_ATA(2019)630359_EN.pdf)

⁸ European Commission, *Gender equality mainstreaming*. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/horizontal-priorities/gender-equality-mainstreaming_en#how-much-do-we-spend

⁹ European Commission, *The Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025* <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en>

¹⁰ European Commission (2026), *Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030* https://commission.europa.eu/document/1f5fa936-9fba-4435-93f5-32fa220bac82_en

¹¹ EIGE (2025), *Impact driver: Marking milestones and opportunities for gender equality in the EU*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bfef429b-4d86-11f0-a9d0-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) (2025). *Women's Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing*. New York. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/womens-rights-in-review-30-years-after-beijing-en.pdf>

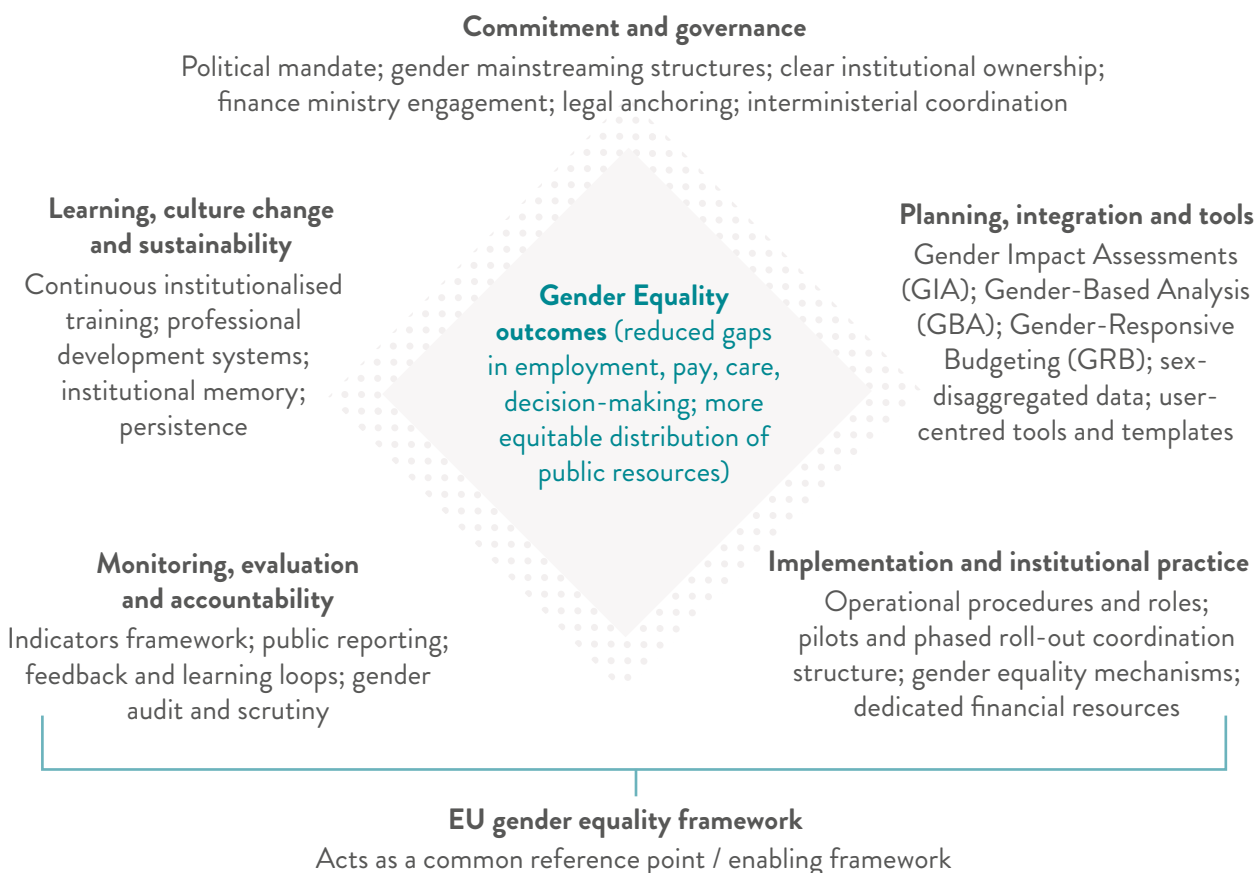
Where gender objectives are insufficiently articulated or embedded in core budget processes, they can become diluted within broader policy agendas, weakening accountability and follow-up. Without systematic training and stable institutional memory, technical skills depend on individual staff and disappear when they leave. Where tools and procedures lack clear legal or administrative anchoring, reforms remain vulnerable to shifting political priorities.

This moment is pivotal. The EU has just adopted its Gender Equality Strategy for 2026–2030 and is negotiating the future Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034 – two developments that will determine whether gender mainstreaming becomes structurally embedded in policy-making and public finance. The recent Beijing+30 review and the 2030 SDG horizon add urgency. As the EU advances green and digital transitions, it must ensure they are equality-sensitive through robust gender mainstreaming. This policy brief contributes to this goal by highlighting practical tools and solutions to support the implementation of the new strategy.

The Gender Flagship Project brings concrete, tested experience to this juncture. Through co-designed governance frameworks, operational tools for gender impact assessment and gender-responsive budgeting, training programmes, and indicator systems, it shows that implementation gaps can be addressed when technical assistance, institutional commitment, and structured peer learning come together.

Sustainable gender mainstreaming depends on five mutually reinforcing dimensions, which structure the analysis and recommendations in this brief:

Figure 1. The five dimensions of gender mainstreaming used in this policy brief



Source: developed by the authors



Section 2

WHAT WORKS:
TESTED AND
TRANSFERABLE
APPROACHES

Across participating administrations, the Gender Flagship Project has tested and refined practical approaches for embedding gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting in core governance processes. The project applied these approaches in institutional environments and adjusted them to fit existing legal frameworks, budget systems and administrative cultures. The section below organises approaches according to the five dimensions of gender mainstreaming (see Figure 1), showing how different types of intervention work together to move from commitment to lasting practice. Each approach includes illustrative examples; Annex 2 presents the corresponding beneficiary factsheets, documenting the support provided and results achieved.

Commitment and governance

1. STANDARDISED METHODOLOGIES FOR MULTI-LEVEL COORDINATION

EXAMPLE

Romania developed a methodology for county-level equality commissions (COJES), including a model local action plan, quarterly and annual reporting templates, and procedural guidance to strengthen vertical coordination with the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES). Greece formally established an Interministerial Gender Mainstreaming Working Group through a Government decision, with two trained representatives from each of its 20 ministries serving as gender focal points.

WHY IT WORKS

Romania's methodology provides a standardised framework to replace fragmented reporting that clarifies roles and enables comparative analysis across counties. Greece's working group establishes a structured channel for integrating gender perspectives into policy and budgeting, with trained focal points providing continuity beyond individual staff turnover.

TRANSFERABILITY

Countries with decentralised responsibilities or complex ministerial structures can adapt these models by issuing standard methodologies defining planning and reporting duties and establishing interministerial coordination bodies with clear terms of reference and trained representatives.



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Planning, integration and tools

2. REVITALISING AND DIGITALISING EXISTING GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOLS

EXAMPLE

Berlin's Gender Check – a mandatory gender impact assessment for Senate bills (draft laws) introduced in 2005 – was evaluated and redesigned under the project. An implementation analysis found that while the tool was formally applied in most cases, substantive engagement remained limited and assessments came too late to influence policy content. Based on these findings, the project produced recommendations for earlier and more effective use, along with a concept and technical specification for an Online Gender Check. The Senate administration now has a solid foundation on which to build the improved and digitalised Gender Check.

WHY IT WORKS

Rather than creating a new instrument, Berlin chose to modernise an existing mandatory tool embedded in administrative routines. The evaluation provided an evidence base for targeted improvements, while the digitalisation concept introduces features – guided workflows, adaptive questioning, and links to supporting guidance materials that can make the assessment more accessible and consistent across departments.

TRANSFERABILITY

Administrations seeking to improve the effectiveness of existing gender assessment tools can apply this approach: conduct a systematic review of how the tool is actually used, identify where it falls short, and redesign for earlier integration and clearer guidance. Digitalisation of such GIA tools can reduce procedural burden and improve consistency, provided the concept is developed before technical implementation.



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3. INTEGRATED BUDGET REPORTING SYSTEMS FOR GRB

EXAMPLE

Portugal introduced Annex XXI in its 2025 budget cycle – a single reporting annex within the State Budget that requires all public entities to classify their measures against gender equality, climate and SDG dimensions. This replaced earlier standalone annexes and streamlined reporting while keeping gender visible. Strasbourg institutionalised GRB through annual Budget Framework Letters¹⁴ issued by the Finance Directorate, requiring each directorate to classify expenditures by gender relevance and analyse at least one budget line using sex-disaggregated data, supported by standardised tagging tools and follow-up sheets.

WHY IT WORKS

Both systems embed gender analysis in existing budget routines rather than creating parallel processes. Portugal's integrated budget annex is designed to simplify reporting while requiring entities to assess gender impacts alongside other priorities; Strasbourg's 'one line per directorate' rule creates a manageable entry point that builds capacity incrementally.

TRANSFERABILITY

Finance ministries can adapt this model by inserting GRB instructions into existing budget circulars, using simplified classification grids aligned with EU and national methods, and starting with limited but mandatory requirements before scaling up.

4. PRACTICAL TOOLKITS COMBINING GIA TEMPLATES AND REFLECTIVE LEARNING

EXAMPLE

Ireland developed a Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit as a practical “working book” for civil servants, combining a standardised gender impact assessment (GIA) template with step-by-step guidance, sector case studies, and a gender-responsive budgeting Module adapted into an interactive “My Gender Equality Dashboard” for personal reflection. Three departments tested the Toolkit through pilot GIAs and the BA indicated plans for e-learning rollout, with the National Strategy for Women and Girls (2025–2030) foreseeing mandatory online training.

WHY IT WORKS

The Toolkit bridges political commitment and administrative practice by guiding officials through the full policy cycle – from clarifying equality goals to monitoring and budgeting. Embedded reflective exercises shift training from passive learning to active application, while framing gender analysis as integral to effective policy-making improved engagement during pilots.

TRANSFERABILITY

The modular structure allows selective use: short screening for routine changes, full GIA for major reforms. The step-by-step format converts easily into e-learning. Any administration can adapt the core elements: a comprehensive template linked to consultation and monitoring, sector-specific case studies, and exercises that build capacity over time.

¹⁴ Budget Framework Letters are formal budget preparation notes addressed to all directorate heads. They include a political foreword signed by the First Deputy Mayor/Vice-President in charge of finance and budget, setting expectations for budget preparation.

Implementation and institutional practice

5. GENDER EQUALITY CONDITIONALITY IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

EXAMPLE

Strasbourg developed a roadmap and operational guide to integrate gender equality clauses into municipal contracts. The city first analysed supplier readiness through a professional equality questionnaire, revealing moderate awareness but limited formalisation of equality practices. Based on this, the Public Procurement Directorate tested equality requirements in 15 contracts using different methods: performance clauses, bid evaluation criteria, and progress plans.

WHY IT WORKS

Public procurement represents significant spending power that municipalities can leverage to promote equality beyond their own administration. By combining a strategic roadmap with practical guidance and supplier analysis, Strasbourg created a realistic pathway that accounts for supplier capacity. Testing multiple integration methods allowed the city to identify what works in different contract types.

TRANSFERABILITY

Any municipality with procurement authority can adapt this approach. Key elements include: assessing supplier readiness before imposing requirements; developing clear guidance for procurement officers; starting with pilot contracts to test legal and operational feasibility; and securing political endorsement to sustain momentum despite legal uncertainties or unsuccessful tenders.



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Monitoring, evaluation and accountability

6. IMPACT-ORIENTED ACTION PLANS AND INDICATOR FRAMEWORKS

EXAMPLE

Saxony-Anhalt developed a Handbook for Gender Equality Programs and Indicators, accompanied by a reporting module for tracking implementation. Hamburg created a Checklist for the Development and Review of Gender Equality Goals and Indicators, paired with a step-by-step Guide that walks departments through relevance checks, situation analysis, objective setting, and budgeting.

WHY IT WORKS

Both approaches shift focus from activity lists to clearly defined results. Saxony-Anhalt's handbook guides officials through logical frameworks and measurable indicators; Hamburg's checklist-guide combination provides both the structure and the explanatory "how and why" to support consistent application across departments.

TRANSFERABILITY

The templates work in any administration using strategies, action plans or programme budgeting. Essential elements include a standard structure across departments, clear distinction between internal and outward-looking plans, and a reporting tool for central coordination.

Learning, culture change and sustainability

7. PEER LEARNING AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

EXAMPLE

The Gender Flagship Project organised study visits to Canada, Vienna, Helsinki and Seville, as well as thematic workshops on gender budgeting (Lisbon), gender impact assessment (Athens), the costs of gender-based violence and gender-budgeting responses (Strasbourg), gender statistics and indicators (Vilnius), and gender-responsive public procurement (Paris). At national level, the three German Beneficiary Authorities jointly organised a symposium presenting their tools and facilitating exchange between federal, state and municipal stakeholders. Beyond these cross-project activities, tailored training sessions and events were delivered to individual Beneficiary Authorities, reaching a wide range of participants across administrations.

WHY IT WORKS

Peer learning exposed administrations to mature practices while letting them test ideas against their own institutional constraints. Thematic workshops allowed deeper focus on specific tools and methods, while tailored training increased knowledge and built skills within individual administrations. The German symposium positioned tools as national reference products. Combining exchange with hands-on application helped translate abstract concepts into implementable models.

TRANSFERABILITY

This approach is replicable at EU level as a structured TSI peer-learning model, and at national level through communities of practice bringing together equality, finance and sectoral actors. What matters is continuity of exchange and focus on adapted instruments.

8. STRUCTURED CAPITALISATION FOR SCALE AND POLICY FEEDBACK

EXAMPLE

The project treated capitalisation as a core workstream aimed at consolidating knowledge and making results accessible beyond direct beneficiaries. Key outputs included a Guide for Assessing Gender Mainstreaming, a Manual for Effective Gender Equality Action Plans and Indicators, case studies for each Beneficiary Authority, and this policy brief. The Capitalisation Conference in Brussels brought practitioners and EU representatives together to discuss the achievements, lessons learned, and the way forward for the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030.

WHY IT WORKS

Capitalisation extends the value of technical support projects beyond direct beneficiaries, consolidating lessons and tools for wider use.

TRANSFERABILITY

Other TSI projects can adopt this model by planning capitalisation from the outset and engaging dedicated expertise to synthesise results – producing guides, case studies and policy briefs alongside technical deliverables, and linking dissemination to policy windows, such as strategy renewals or budget cycles.

Across diverse administrative and legal systems, these examples show that sustainable gender mainstreaming depends on combining practical tools, legal mandates, coordination mechanisms, capacity-building and structured learning. Digital platforms, integrated budget annexes, impact-oriented action plans, standardised methodologies and peer exchange form a mutually reinforcing ecosystem. Building on these approaches, the next section distils broader lessons and sets out policy recommendations for EU, national and (where relevant) subnational policymakers.



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Section 3

LESSONS
AND POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS



What does it take to move gender mainstreaming from policy commitment to administrative reality, and what would it look like to go further? This section distils lessons from four years of hands-on implementation across the Gender Flagship Project's 12 Beneficiary Authorities, and looks ahead to what sustainable, system-wide gender mainstreaming could achieve. Practitioners and policymakers co-developed the recommendations at the Capitalisation Conference in Brussels, combining frontline experience with a shared vision for the next steps.

The experience points to five mutually reinforcing dimensions that underpin sustainable reform: commitment and governance; planning and tools; implementation; monitoring and accountability; and learning and sustainability (see Figure 1). The sections that follow explore each in turn – opening with a key message, drawing out lessons learned, and setting out recommendations for both Member State and EU policymakers.

Member State recommendations are grounded in what the Gender Flagship Project tested and learned in practice. While the project did not operate at EU level, its experience highlighted how EU frameworks and political signals shape national and subnational implementation.



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THEME 1: COMMITMENT AND GOVERNANCE

KEY MESSAGE

The voluntary phase is over. The Gender Flagship Project's experience confirms that gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting only become operational when they are underpinned by clear mandates, formal responsibilities and follow-up mechanisms. Without explicit institutional anchoring, tools remain fragmented, symbolic and vulnerable to political and organisational change.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project showed that political commitment, while necessary, is rarely sufficient. Where responsibilities were not clearly assigned, implementation depended on individual champions and tended not to scale up. Conversely, formal mandates embedded in budget instructions, government decisions or performance frameworks helped move gender mainstreaming towards more systematic practice.

Engagement of finance ministries proved decisive. Where finance actors were involved early in the design and governance of GRB, tools were more likely to inform budget decisions. Where they remained peripheral, GRB tended to operate alongside, rather than within, core budget processes.

Finally, the experience showed that formal coordination mechanisms between equality bodies, finance ministries, line ministries and statistical actors supported greater coherence and continuity, reducing reliance on individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen political commitment and governance, Capitalisation Conference participants identified the following priorities:

Member State level – Priorities:

- **Formalise responsibilities and expectations.** Anchor gender mainstreaming and GRB in explicit mandates such as mandate letters, budget instructions, performance frameworks. Clarify roles, reporting obligations and follow-up responsibilities across government.
- **Engage finance ministries as co-owners.** Involve finance ministries as full partners in the governance and design of GRB to ensure integration into core budgetary decision-making and analytical credibility.
- Institutionalise coordination mechanisms. Establish or strengthen formal coordination structures among key actors to reduce fragmentation and secure continuity beyond political cycles.

EU level – Strategic signal:

- **Strengthen the credibility of EU expectations through leadership** by example, by systematically applying gender mainstreaming and GRB in EU policies, programmes and budgetary processes and sending clear, consistent political signals to Member States.

THEME 2: PLANNING, INTEGRATION AND TOOLS

KEY MESSAGE

One size does not fit all. The Gender Flagship Project's experience shows that tools only have an impact when they are adapted to institutional contexts, integrated early into policy and budget cycles, and perceived as decision-support instruments rather than additional bureaucracy.

LESSONS LEARNED

Context-specific gender analysis proved essential as a starting point. Transferring tools without adapting them to sectoral realities generated limited ownership and uneven use.

Timing mattered. Tools applied late in decision-making, such as gender impact assessments¹⁵ at the end of legislative processes, were less likely to influence policy design or resource allocation. Complexity and specialised language also risked “tool fatigue” when instruments were perceived as burdens rather than supports.

Uptake was higher when tools were simple, user-centred and embedded in existing cycles. Alignment with budget structures and performance frameworks was particularly important for GRB, which helped to increase relevance for finance actors and reduce resistance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To translate political commitment into practice, Capitalisation Conference participants identified priorities for strengthening tools and ensuring their systematic use.

EU level and Member State level – Shared priorities:

- **Start from context-specific gender analysis.** Base the design and selection of tools on an initial analysis of gender inequalities, institutional arrangements and data availability, rather than applying standardised templates. Where data and administrative capacity allow, gender analysis should also consider intersecting inequalities, including age, disability, migration background, income, territory and family status.
- **Integrate tools into existing policy and budget cycles.** Embed gender analysis, impact assessments and GRB within established planning, budgeting and reporting procedures so they inform decisions upstream rather than remaining add-ons.
- **Prioritise simplicity and usability.** Promote straightforward, user-oriented tools supported by practical guidance and sector examples, avoiding unnecessary complexity that undermines uptake.
- **Apply tools in a phased and proportionate manner.** Introduce requirements incrementally, aligned with administrative capacity and existing systems, to avoid overload and support learning-by-doing.

EU level – Supporting role:

- **Improve access to and use of sex-disaggregated data** by promoting consistent standards and visibility of sex-disaggregated statistics in EU reporting and guidance.

¹⁵ Gender impact assessment is the process of comparing and assessing, according to gender-relevant criteria, the current situation and trend with the expected development resulting from the introduction of the proposed policy (European Commission)

THEME 3: IMPLEMENTATION AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE

KEY MESSAGE

Implementation requires operational planning, not just political will. The Gender Flagship Project's experience confirms that implementation succeeds when gender mainstreaming and GRB are treated as operational reforms – resourced, coordinated and phased – rather than as one-off projects or compliance exercises.

LESSONS LEARNED

Moving from tools on paper to routine use proved challenging. Limited staff time and fragmented responsibilities slowed implementation and constrained scale-up beyond pilots.

Implementation tended to progress more smoothly where responsibilities were clarified early (who supports users, maintains tools and monitors application), and where roll-out was phased through pilots and gradual expansion. Pairing external expertise with in-house ownership supported sustainability.

Coordination across institutions remained critical, particularly in decentralised systems, where implementation relied on negotiation and alignment rather than hierarchy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To move from strategies and tools to sustained day-to-day practice, Capitalisation Conference participants identified the following priorities:

Member State level – Priorities:

- **Plan implementation as an operational reform.** Develop explicit implementation plans for gender mainstreaming and GRB, clarifying responsibilities, resourcing, timelines and integration with administrative and IT systems.
- **Engage finance ministries as partners in implementation.** Design GRB processes jointly with finance ministries, framing them as tools to improve budget quality, performance measurement and fiscal transparency.
- **Roll out instruments gradually.** Use pilots and incremental requirements to embed practices into routine work, allowing refinement and adaptation before scaling up.

EU level – Enabling role:

- **Support implementation through targeted technical assistance and peer exchange,** while ensuring that ownership and maintenance remain embedded within national administrations.

THEME 4: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

KEY MESSAGE

Accountability is the cornerstone. The Gender Flagship Project's experience shows that tools and reporting only matter when they are linked to scrutiny, dialogue and follow-up. Without feedback loops, monitoring risks becoming a box-ticking exercise.

LESSONS LEARNED

Monitoring systems were often underdeveloped, with reporting disconnected from decision-making. Where reports were not discussed in performance reviews, audits or parliamentary settings, their influence remained limited.

Data gaps persisted, but the project showed that co-developing indicators and reporting frameworks with line ministries helped to improve relevance, ownership and data quality over time. Accountability tended to be stronger where information was accessible and publicly visible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting translate into measurable progress and real accountability, Capitalisation Conference participants identified the following priorities:

EU level and Member State level – Shared priorities:

- **Link monitoring to scrutiny and follow-up.** Ensure that reporting on gender mainstreaming and GRB feeds into audits, parliamentary discussions, performance reviews and, where relevant, budgetary adjustments.
- **Strengthen budget transparency on gender objectives and results.** Present gender-related objectives, allocations and outcomes in clear and accessible budget documents and summaries to enable oversight by parliaments, audit bodies and civil society.
- **Invest in data and data literacy.** Improve availability and use of sex-disaggregated data while strengthening officials' capacity to interpret and apply data for monitoring and evaluation.



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THEME 5: LEARNING, CULTURE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

KEY MESSAGE

Capacity is investment, not cost. Lasting change depends on learning and institutional memory. The Gender Flagship Project's experience demonstrates that training and capacity-building are most effective when embedded in permanent systems and linked to everyday tasks, rather than delivered as stand-alone project activities.

LESSONS LEARNED

Results appeared more durable where capacity-building was integrated into public administration curricula and linked to specific functions such as budgeting, planning or statistics. Voluntary, project-based training alone led to uneven coverage and was vulnerable to staff turnover.

Cultural change takes time. Resistance and “tool fatigue” were less pronounced when gender mainstreaming and GRB were framed as contributors to policy quality, effectiveness and fairness, supported by practical examples and feasible steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To consolidate progress and prevent backsliding, Capitalisation Conference participants identified priorities for embedding learning and culture change:

Member State level – Priorities:

- **Embed gender competence in public administration training systems.** Integrate core training on gender equality and gender mainstreaming into induction and continuous professional development, with specialised modules for key functions.
- **Link training to tools and responsibilities.** Connect training directly to the tools and procedures officials use, reinforcing learning through practice.

EU level – Supporting role:

- Sustain support for training, peer learning and technical assistance to help administrations consolidate reforms beyond pilot phases and cope with staff turnover.



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Section 4

THE WAY FORWARD



Gender equality is not a sectoral issue to be delegated to equality units alone. It is a dimension of policy quality, fiscal efficiency, and democratic accountability that belongs at the centre of governance. The Gender Flagship Project has demonstrated that the gap between political commitment and institutional practice can close, but only when administrations move beyond voluntary approaches to systematic, mandated action.

Working with 12 Beneficiary Authorities across nine Member States, the project tested practical ways to embed gender considerations into everyday governance, including legislative workflows, budget reporting, performance frameworks and civil service training. While levels of institutionalisation vary, these approaches are already influencing administrative routines and budget cycles, demonstrating their potential for sustained implementation.

The newly adopted EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030 sets the direction; translating it into practice will require concrete mainstreaming approaches, tools and institutional mechanisms. This policy brief, drawing on four years of tested implementation and practitioner experience across the Gender Flagship Project, contributes to this foundation. As the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034 is negotiated, these lessons and recommendations can also inform how gender mainstreaming is embedded in EU budgetary and policy processes.

The challenge ahead is consolidation and scale – embedding proven practices into EU and national governance so that gender mainstreaming becomes not an add-on, but the way policy is made.



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Annexes

ANNEX 1. ABOUT THE
GENDER FLAGSHIP
PROJECT

The project "*Gender mainstreaming in public policy and budget processes*" (the **Gender Flagship Project**) is funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument (TSI). Implemented by Expertise France with support from the European Commission's SG REFORM, in partnership with the European University Institute (EUI) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the project supported public authorities across EU Member States in advancing gender equality by mainstreaming gender into policies and budgets.

Objectives

The Gender Flagship Project supported public authorities from EU Member States at national, regional and local levels in advancing gender equality by mainstreaming gender into policies and budgets. It offered technical assistance for analysing policies and budgets through a gender lens, developing practical tools, and building sustainable institutional capacity – ensuring that all citizens, regardless of gender, can fully participate in and contribute to a fair society.

Beneficiary authorities

COHORT 1 (SINCE 2022)

Germany (Berlin) Federal State of Berlin (Department of Women and Gender Equality)

Germany (Hamburg) Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg (Ministry for Science, Research, Equality and Districts (BWFGB))

Germany (Saxony-Anhalt) Federal State of Saxony-Anhalt (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Gender Equality)

Greece (national level) General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights (GSEHR), Ministry for Social Cohesion and Family

Ireland Department of Children, Disability and Equality (Equality and Gender Equality Unit)

Portugal Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG)

Romania National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES)

France (Strasbourg) City of Strasbourg (Finance Directorate and Mission for Women's Rights)

Italy Department of Equal Opportunities¹⁶

COHORT 2 (SINCE 2024)

Cyprus Ministry of Finance

Greece (local level) General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights (GSEHR), Ministry for Social Cohesion and Family

Italy Ministry of Economy and Finance

Spain Ministry of Finance¹⁷

¹⁶ Italy's Department of Equal Opportunities took part in the project from the beginning (cohort 1) but only participated in common capacity-building activities and exchanges.

¹⁷ Spain only participated in common capacity-building activities and exchanges.

Approach: two cohorts, three phases

The project followed a sequenced model designed to move from diagnosis to sustainable practice:



Cohort 1 (9 authorities) began in 2022 and reached capitalisation in 2025. **Cohort 2** (3 authorities) joined in 2024, with capitalisation implemented in 2026.

Support provided

Each Beneficiary Authority received:

- In-depth gender analysis of current practices and development of tailored Gender Action Plans.
- Technical support from dedicated Local Experts and a core project team, covering: equality-related programmes and indicators; gender mainstreaming processes (e.g. circulars, budget instructions); and GRB methodologies.
- Capacity development through online and in-person training on gender mainstreaming, gender impact assessment and gender-responsive budgeting.
- Peer learning and exchange through study visits (Ottawa, Helsinki, Seville, Vienna) and thematic workshops (Lisbon, Athens, Paris, Strasbourg, Vilnius).

Project timeline in a nutshell

JUNE 2022 Project launch; opening conference (Florence); Cohort 1 kick-offs and in-depth gender analysis

2023 Online trainings (GRB, GIA) by EUI; Lisbon and Athens workshops; study visit to Ottawa; adoption of Cohort 1 Gender Action Plans (GAPs) and their implementation begin

2024 Paris workshop (procurement); Cohort 2 kick-offs; study visit to Helsinki; Strasbourg workshop (GBV); Online trainings (GRB, GIA) by EUI and EF for Cohort 2; in-depth gender analysis for Cohort 2; continuing the implementation for Cohort 1

2025 Adoption of Cohort 2 Gender Action Plans (GAPs) and their implementation begin; study visit to Seville; Vilnius workshop (gender data); Cohort 1 capitalisation and Capitalisation Conference (Brussels); support for Cohort 1 ends

JULY 2026 Cohort 2 capitalisation; support for Cohort 2 ends; final outputs; project closure (July 2026)

Annexes

ANNEX 2.
BENEFICIARY
AUTHORITY
FACTSHEETS

The following factsheets summarise the work undertaken with each of the eight¹⁸ Cohort 1 Beneficiary Authorities, presenting the challenge addressed, the solutions developed, key achievements, and the path forward. Detailed case studies for each Beneficiary Authority are also available as separate publications.

Factsheets are based on information collected by autumn 2025, at the end of the Cohort 1 support cycle. Forward-looking statements and planned next steps reflect priorities identified by the Beneficiary Authorities at that time and may not reflect subsequent developments.

BERLIN

BENEFICIARY AUTHORITY: Federal State of Berlin (Department of Women and Gender Equality)

THE CHALLENGE

Berlin has embedded gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting in its policy framework since 2002. However, the in-depth analysis conducted at the start of the project found that implementation had become uneven. The Gender Check, introduced in 2005 for gender impact assessment of Senate bills, was often applied too late to influence policy design. Combined with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and administrative changes, this reduced the visibility and coherence of gender equality efforts across departments. Targeted support was therefore needed to revitalise and modernise existing instruments and ensure their systematic, practical application within Berlin's public administration.

THE SOLUTION

The project provided Berlin with tailored technical assistance to modernise its tools and strengthen institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming. The support focused on usability, standardisation and a concept for digitalisation, aimed at enabling gender considerations to be integrated earlier and more effectively in policy development.

TOOLS & SYSTEMS

- **Gender Check improvement:** Implementation analysis identifying gaps in timing and consistency, with practical recommendations to clarify objectives, simplify procedures and integrate the check earlier in the legislative process.
- **Online Gender Check:** Concept and technical specification for a web-based, workflow-guided Gender Check (adaptive questions, saving, PDF export). Project support covered design/requirements; implementation is outside scope. Integration into the Joint Rules of Procedure was under discussion at the time of reporting.
- **Gender Competence Toolkit (GeComT):** Concept for modular guidance to strengthen staff capacity and evidence-based application, with two pilot chapters developed (education; participation/decision-making).

¹⁸ Spain is not included due to its limited participation in the project.

CAPACITY & EXCHANGE

- **Capacity-building and peer exchange:** Targeted internal workshops and peer-learning activities, including the Berlin-Vienna exchange and the joint German national closing symposium “Effective Implementation of Gender Equality” in Berlin, co-organised with Hamburg and Saxony-Anhalt, supported cross-departmental cooperation and knowledge sharing.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The project delivered a modernisation package for strengthening gender impact assessment in the legislative process: a roadmap based on an implementation analysis of Senate bills and interviews with departmental staff to improve how the Gender Check is applied, and a concept/specification for moving it into an online, workflow-guided format. In parallel, the GeComT concept and pilot chapters provide practical guidance that can raise the consistency and quality of assessments across departments.

PATH FORWARD

- Completion and rollout of the Online Gender Check and Gender Competence Toolkit.
- Formal integration into the Joint Rules of Procedure and inclusion in staff training programmes.
- Establishment of monitoring mechanisms to support consistent application and identify capacity needs.
- Gradual extension of the Online Gender Check and Gender Competence Toolkit to district administrations to ensure city-wide coherence.

GREECE (National level)

BENEFICIARY AUTHORITY: General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights (GSEHR), Ministry for Social Cohesion and Family

THE CHALLENGE

Despite a robust gender equality legal framework, Greece scores below the EU average on the EIGE Gender Equality Index. Law 4604/2019 on Substantive Gender Equality requires all ministries to integrate gender equality into their policies, budgets and operations. However, the in-depth analysis conducted at the start of the project found that the law lacked an operational mechanism – comprising clear procedures, designated roles, standardised tools, and coordinated structures – needed for implementation. Targeted support was therefore required to translate legal provisions into operational practice.

THE SOLUTION

The project provided Greece with tailored support to operationalise Law 4604/2019. The assistance focused on establishing the GM implementation mechanism through governance frameworks, coordination structures and practical tools to move gender mainstreaming from legal obligation to everyday administrative practice.

GOVERNANCE & FRAMEWORKS

- **Gender Mainstreaming pilot Implementation Circular (GMpIC):** A roadmap defining procedures, roles and timelines for applying gender impact assessments and gender-responsive budgeting across ministries. Designed to serve as the backbone of Greece's GM framework, formal adoption was pending at the time of reporting.
- **Interministerial GM Working Group:** The Secretary General formally established the Working Group through a Government Gazette in 2024, bringing together representatives from all ministries and institutionalising coordination between equality and finance authorities. Members are intended to function as recognised reference points on gender equality within their ministries.
- **Gender Mainstreaming Dossier:** The project developed templates, checklists and indicators in consultation with pilot ministries, translating GMpIC requirements into concrete steps for gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and gender impact assessment (GIA), supporting evidence-based policy-making through sex-disaggregated data.

CAPACITY & TRAINING

- **Training and capacity-building:** The project developed a gender mainstreaming module, which national authorities adapted for the National Centre for Public Administration (EKDDA). EKDDA agreed to include the module in its catalogue of available training courses for civil servants. The project also trained more than 50 officials from four pilot ministries through tailored sessions, workshops and study visits, creating a network of trained focal points for gender mainstreaming.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The project delivered core elements of the gender mainstreaming implementation mechanism foreseen in Law 4604/2019, built on four elements: the GMpIC (regulatory framework), the Interministerial Gender Mainstreaming Working Group (coordination structure), the GM Dossier (practical tools), and the EKDDA training module (sustained capacity-building). Together, these elements provide the foundation for shifting gender mainstreaming from policy aspiration towards operational practice across central public administration.

PATH FORWARD

- Adoption of the Circular and integration of it into the annual budget circular of the Ministry of National Economy and Finance, which would make GRB tools mandatory for all ministries.
- Continued leadership by the General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights to maintain momentum, support pilot ministries, and coordinate with the Ministry of National Economy and Finance.
- Alignment with broader public finance reform, particularly the planned transition to performance-based budgeting, which offers opportunities to embed gender considerations systematically.

HAMBURG

BENEFICIARY AUTHORITY: Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg (Ministry for Science, Research, Equality and Districts (BWFGB))

THE CHALLENGE

Hamburg has a well-established framework for gender equality, underpinned by the Gender Equality Policy Framework Programme (GPR) and the legally anchored gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) system. However, the in-depth analysis completed at the beginning of the project found that implementation across the Senate departments was uneven. Staff did not always have a clear, shared approach to translating gender equality ambitions into budget-relevant objectives and measurable indicators. The use of gender impact assessments varied, and there was no harmonised approach linking gender objectives to budgets and monitoring, creating a gap between strategic commitments and everyday administrative practice.

THE SOLUTION

The project provided Hamburg with targeted technical support to develop practical tools and guidance designed to operationalise the GPR and GRB. The work focused on improving the consistency, measurability and usability of gender equality objectives across all Senate departments.

TOOLS & GUIDANCE

- **Checklist for the Development and Review of Gender Equality Goals and Indicators:** A practical, step-by-step tool helping departments define, review and align gender equality goals and indicators. It supports systematic linkage to the GPR and GRB and introduces a harmonised structure for policy planning and reporting. At the time of reporting, the checklist was available online and in operational use, including in preparation for the upcoming GPR.
- **Guide to Developing and Reviewing Gender Equality Objectives and Indicators:** A methodological companion to the checklist, providing contextual guidance, concrete examples (e.g. public transport, health, education), and a structured six-step process including the "4-R" analysis method (Representation, Resources, Reality, Legal situation).
- **Concept for Equal Opportunities Online Training:** A conceptual framework for an online training course, prepared with the Centre for Basic and Advanced Training (ZAF). It outlines thematic structure, target audience and potential formats for future e-learning on gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting, with implementation planned under a future project cycle.

VISIBILITY & EXCHANGE

- **Peer learning and exchange:** A high-level symposium "Money and Gender Equality" (February 2024, 109 participants from all 12 ministries) and participation in the joint German national closing symposium in Berlin, fostering inter-state cooperation and institutional learning.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The project delivered coherent, practical tools for integrating gender equality into policy and budget processes. The checklist and guide – forming a complementary support package – strengthen the link between strategic goals, indicators and resource allocation, providing both the "how" and the "why" of gender-sensitive planning. These tools support more systematic and measurable gender equality governance across Senate departments.

PATH FORWARD

- Institutionalise the checklist and guide within administrative and budgeting processes.
- Develop and launch the online training module for continuous capacity-building.
- Strengthen indicator harmonisation within the Gender Equality Monitor.
- Continue peer exchange and visibility activities.

IRELAND

BENEFICIARY AUTHORITY: Department of Children, Disability and Equality (Equality and Gender Equality Unit)

THE CHALLENGE

Ireland has a solid legal and strategic framework for gender equality, including the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and the National Strategy for Women and Girls. Strong momentum for reform, driven by the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, called for stronger gender impact assessment, improved data systems and enhanced mainstreaming capacity. However, the in-depth analysis completed at the beginning of the project found that most civil servants lacked practical tools, structured training and sex-disaggregated data to assess how policies and budgets affect women, men and gender-diverse people. Gender impact analysis was not applied systematically, and equality proofing practice varied widely between departments.

THE SOLUTION

The project provided Ireland with technical assistance to bridge the gap between political commitments and day-to-day administrative practice. The support focused on three components: a Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit with practical guidance for gender impact assessment, a Gender-Responsive Budgeting Training Module introducing equality budgeting principles, and targeted capacity-building for pilot departments applying the tools to real policies.

TOOLS & GUIDANCE

- **Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit:** A practical “working book” with a standardised gender impact assessment (GIA) template, step-by-step guidance, checklists and case studies. It also includes “My Gender Equality Dashboard” (MyGED) – reflection exercises helping officials challenge gender blindness and build a personal learning log.
- **Gender-Responsive Budgeting Training Module:** A self-study resource explaining Ireland's equality budgeting model, the equality tagging system and how gender analysis can inform budget decisions. Organised in five parts with quizzes, case studies and exercises, it is designed for adaptation into e-learning format.

CAPACITY & PILOTING

- **Targeted training:** Between May and September 2024, online sessions on gender mainstreaming fundamentals led into two-day in-person workshops for 16 officials from three pilot departments covering children and equality, public expenditure and transport. Officials applied GIA and GRB tools to live policy examples from their own portfolios, including transport strategy, childcare and early learning schemes, and social inclusion initiatives.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The project delivered a standardised framework for integrating gender analysis across the policy cycle. The Toolkit provides a comprehensive GIA template with consultation, costings and monitoring components; the Training Module introduces equality budgeting principles; and pilot departments have tested both tools on real policies – creating a foundation for potential whole-of-government rollout under the new National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025–2030.

PATH FORWARD

- Development of e-learning modules building on the Toolkit and Training Module.
- Wider piloting of the Toolkit and GIA approach under the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025–2030.
- Introduction of a monitoring framework to track training uptake and GIA tool usage across departments.
- Strengthened equality tagging for budget allocations.

PORTUGAL

BENEFICIARY AUTHORITY: Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG)

THE CHALLENGE

Portugal has a comprehensive legal and policy framework for gender equality, anchored in the Constitution, the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination (ENIND) and reinforced by State Budget Law No. 114/2017. These instruments created a basis for gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), but the in-depth analysis completed at the beginning of the project showed that the implementation remained uneven. Earlier pilots using Annex IX-A – a dedicated section of the State Budget requiring public entities to report on gender equality measures – exposed gaps in coordination, methodology and institutional capacity, including inconsistent reporting quality, limited use of sex-disaggregated data, and fragmentation with other budget priorities.

THE SOLUTION

The project provided Portugal with targeted technical support to consolidate its GRB system and move from pilots to institutionalisation. The assistance focused on three components: a strategic Action Plan, integration of GRB into State Budget reporting, and sustainable training infrastructure.

STRATEGY & REPORTING

- **Action Plan for Strengthening GRB (2025–2030):** Developed jointly by the Ministry of Finance and CIG, providing a roadmap to embed GRB in public financial management with governance arrangements, capacity-building pathways, and measurable targets.
- **Annex XXI Integration:** In 2025, a new integrated annex to the State Budget (Annex XXI) replaced earlier separate reporting requirements, consolidating gender equality, climate and SDG dimensions under a single framework. Results improved significantly: 37% of reported budget was classified as directly contributing to gender equality objectives, up from 5% in 2024.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

- **Training manuals:** Two modular manuals on GRB and gender impact assessment (GIA), with sector-specific applications for environment and digital transition. The manuals are planned to be integrated into the National Institute of Administration (INA)'s formal curricula, securing GRB/GIA training as a permanent component of civil service professional development.
- **Capacity-building:** The project trained more than 1,300 officials.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The project contributed to a more systematic and institutionally anchored framework for gender-responsive budgeting. The 2025–2030 Action Plan sets the governance and monitoring architecture for sustained implementation; the shift from Annex IX–A to Annex XXI created an integrated, cross-government reporting mechanism; and the training infrastructure supports continuity through planned inclusion in civil-service curricula. Together, these measures help reposition gender budgeting as a core element of public financial management reform rather than a pilot exercise.

PATH FORWARD

- Strengthened coordination between CIG and other key institutions to ensure coherence between budgeting, data, and policy evaluation.
- Expansion of gender-sensitive indicators and improved data integration under the National Plan for Gender-Perspective Statistics.
- Continued development of guidance on gender-responsive public procurement.
- Ongoing investment in capacity-building and digital tools to sustain institutionalisation across government.

ROMANIA

BENEFICIARY AUTHORITY: National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES)

THE CHALLENGE

Romania has a solid legal framework for gender equality, anchored in Law No. 202/2002 and international commitments. However, the in-depth analysis completed at the beginning of the project showed that implementation was fragmented. Romania scores below the EU average on the EIGE Gender Equality Index. Limited technical capacity, uneven coordination across levels of government and weak data collection hindered progress. National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES), mandated to coordinate equality policy, faced resource constraints and lacked standardised tools for monitoring, reporting and cooperation with County Commissions for Equal Opportunities (COJES).

THE SOLUTION

The project provided targeted technical assistance to ANES and its partners, reinforcing the institutional basis for gender mainstreaming and supporting the development of practical tools for implementation and coordination.

GOVERNANCE & FRAMEWORKS

- **Institutional strengthening:** Following a key recommendation from the project's in-depth institutional analysis, ANES was transferred under the coordination of the General Secretariat of the Government (SGG) in December 2024, aimed at strengthening its institutional standing and policy influence.
- **COJES Methodology:** A standardised methodology for County Commissions (COJES) operations, addressing gaps in planning and reporting. It provides templates for local action plans, quarterly activity reports and annual implementation reports, supporting consistent practice and better coordination between local and national levels.
- **National Plan for Women's Economic and Political Empowerment (NPWEPE):** The project supported the development of a national policy plan for 2025–2029 through extensive consultation with stakeholders. Structured around five pillars, it sets measurable objectives with defined indicators and responsibilities. The National Steering Committee validated the plan (March 2024) and ANES endorsed it (April 2024); formal interministerial adoption was pending at the time of reporting.
- **Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) proposal:** A technical proposal identifying entry points for GRB within Romania's performance-based budget system, shared with the Ministry of Finance in 2024.

CAPACITY & TRAINING

- **Modular training package:** Three modules covering gender equality and gender mainstreaming, gender impact assessment, and gender-responsive budgeting – tailored for national and local officials.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** More than 2,000 participants received training across ANES, line ministries, national agencies, National Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (CONES) and COJES, strengthening institutional readiness for gender mainstreaming.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The project delivered a more coherent set of tools to support implementation of gender equality commitments. The repositioning of ANES under the SGG strengthens its coordination mandate; the COJES methodology standardises local-level procedures; the NPWEPE provides a national strategic framework; and the training programme has built capacity across public administration. Together, these measures supported the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming and greater policy coherence.

PATH FORWARD

- Formal adoption and nationwide rollout of the COJES methodology and NPWEPE.
- Integration of training modules into the National Institute of Administration's curriculum.
- Sustained support for capacity-building and inter-institutional coordination to consolidate reform progress.
- Continued cooperation between ANES, the General Secretariat of the Government, and the Ministry of Finance to embed gender impact assessment and budgeting in performance-based systems.

SAXONY-ANHALT

BENEFICIARY AUTHORITY: Federal State of Saxony-Anhalt (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Gender Equality)

THE CHALLENGE

Saxony-Anhalt has pursued gender equality for more than two decades through successive Gender Action Plans (GAPs), coordinated by the Gender Equality Coordination Unit (LFG) within the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Gender Equality. Despite this long-standing commitment, the in-depth analysis completed at the beginning of the project found that implementation remained fragmented. The administrative system, where ministries operate autonomously under the principle of ministerial responsibility, complicated coordination. The absence of standardised indicators, impact orientation and systematic data use limited the ability to track progress and demonstrate results. Strengthening coherence and measurability became a priority to ensure gender equality policy would be evidence-based and results-focused.

THE SOLUTION

The project provided Saxony-Anhalt with targeted technical assistance to improve planning, monitoring and reporting on gender equality. The support strengthened governance structures and introduced practical tools to make gender equality policy more transparent, comparable and outcome-oriented.

TOOLS & FRAMEWORKS

- **Gender Equality Indicators & Guide:** A tailored indicator set for the GAP, with definitions, data sources, calculation methods and guidance for interpretation/updating, supporting systematic monitoring and communication.
- **Reporting Module:** A structured toolkit (templates + guidance) for consistent GAP planning and reporting, helping ministries document outputs and outcomes using an impact logic and providing a verifiable evidence base for coordination.
- **Handbook for Gender Equality Programs and Indicators:** A methodological guide that consolidates all tools and lessons into one reference document. It defines quality criteria for indicators and reporting, provides guidance on developing impact models and includes examples of good practice from Saxony-Anhalt.

CAPACITY & EXCHANGE

- **Capacity-building and exchange:** Targeted workshops and iterative support on indicators and the Reporting Module (including IMAG and Advisory Board formats), plus participation in the joint German closing symposium in Berlin.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The project provided tools and expertise to strengthen the GAP as a results-oriented steering instrument: a tailored indicator set (endorsed by IMAG) and a Reporting Module already used in GAP reporting, supporting clearer structure, comparability and a stronger evidence base. The Handbook consolidates the approach into a practical reference that can be applied beyond the project.

PATH FORWARD

- Cabinet decision and formal integration of the indicator set and Reporting Module into routine GAP processes across ministries.
- Continued capacity-building for public officials to consolidate knowledge on impact-based planning.
- Strengthening cooperation between equality units and the Statistical Office to improve data availability and quality.
- Using the new tools to inform future GAP evaluations and policy design across sectors.

STRASBOURG

BENEFICIARY AUTHORITY: City of Strasbourg (Finance Directorate and the Mission for Women's Rights)

THE CHALLENGE

Strasbourg is a national and European frontrunner on gender equality, supported by successive Municipal Action Plans for Women's Rights and Gender Equality and strong political leadership. However, the in-depth analysis completed at the beginning of the project showed that implementation across departments was fragmented; early efforts to introduce gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) showed potential but were not yet fully integrated into financial and policy systems; limited sex-disaggregated data, uneven staff engagement and a lack of harmonised procedures for monitoring and reporting were among the challenges. The city sought to move from pilot initiatives to institutional practice.

THE SOLUTION

The project provided Strasbourg with technical and methodological support to embed gender-responsive governance within its budget, procurement and equality structures.

POLICY, BUDGET & PROCUREMENT

- **GRB Integration:** GRB was embedded in the municipal budget cycle through annual Budget Framework Letters¹⁹ (2024–2025) and standard tagging/classification and follow-up tools in the budget information workflow. Directorates were requested to analyse at least one expenditure line annually using sex-disaggregated data, supported by reporting templates.
- **Procurement Roadmap and Equality Guide:** Roadmap and operational guide developed with the Public Procurement Directorate (DCP) to integrate equality considerations into procurement. The city tested equality approaches in 15 contracts, providing a basis for wider rollout and refinement.
- **Violence Against Women (VAW) Diagnostic and Roadmap:** A citywide diagnostic (13 directorates) mapped existing measures and budgets addressing violence against women, identified gaps and supported the development of a coordinated municipal roadmap.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

- **Training Programme:** 200+ officials trained through practical modules (GRB in public policies; GRB in subsidies/grants), supporting an emerging internal network of GRB focal points, though uptake was uneven across directorates at the time of reporting.

¹⁹ Budget Framework Letters are formal budget preparation notes addressed to all directorate heads. They include a political foreword signed by the First Deputy Mayor/Vice-President in charge of finance and budget, setting expectations for budget preparation.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Strasbourg anchored gender-responsive budgeting in core budget governance through the 2024–2025 Budget Framework Letters and a standard set of tagging and analysis tools. The city also advanced equality conditionality in procurement (15 pilot contracts) and completed a cross-departmental diagnostic to structure its future response to violence against women. Project commitments have been carried forward through Strasbourg’s Fourth Action Plan for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (2025–2027), endorsed in June 2025.

PATH FORWARD

- Sustain the annual GRB analysis and maintain political leadership and cross-departmental coordination.
- Update the VAW guide for professionals and, as resources allow, advance the broader VAW roadmap in alignment with municipal services and civil society actors.
- Strengthen monitoring and internal support (including dedicated coordination capacity) to address uneven uptake across directorates.
- Expand equality conditionality in procurement, refining clauses through pilot contracts and supplier engagement.
- Embed gender equality training into standard professional development and provide tailored sessions for finance staff and elected officials to consolidate knowledge and ownership.

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



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