

Mainstreaming gender in Horizon Europe: policy progress, challenges, and pathways forward

Marta Dell'Aquila
Rukudzo Irene Nyoka



SUMMARY

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming have been established as central priorities within the European Union's current Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (R&I), Horizon Europe (2021–27). The European Commission has demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting gender equality through measures such as mandatory Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) and the systemic integration of the gender perspective in research. However, despite progress, available data indicate that advancements remain slow, underscoring the need for more robust action by the EU to achieve meaningful equality in this field.

Drawing on existing literature and data, this paper introduces a new theoretical framework for analysing the integration of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in Horizon Europe across three interrelated dimensions: structural, epistemic and substantive. It conceptualises gender equality in R&I as a circle, where progress in one dimension can mutually reinforce advancement in the others. The paper further identifies emerging themes and priority areas for the next Framework Programme, addressing persistent challenges in gender equality, and proposes seven targeted policy actions.

Implementing these measures would enhance the EU's capacity to mainstream gender in research, strengthen its leadership in promoting gender equality, and its position as a global example for gender-responsive R&I.



Marta Dell'Aquila is a Researcher in the Global Governance, Regulation, Innovation and Digital Economy (GRID) unit at CEPS. Rukudzo Irene Nyoka is a Research Assistant in the GRID unit at CEPS.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI- Artificial Intelligence

CSOs- Civil Society Organisations

DG RTD- Directorate-General for Research and Innovation

EC- European Commission

EIC- European Innovation Council

EIGE- European Institute for Gender Equality

EIT- European Institute for Technology

ERA- European Research Area

EU- European Union

FP- Framework Programme

GACD- Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases

GBV- Gender Based Violence

GEP- Gender Equality Plan

IAS- Innovation Actions

LMICs- Low- and Middle-Income Countries

NGOs- Nongovernmental Organisations

OECD- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

R&I- Research and Innovation

RIA- Research and Innovation Action

SDG- Sustainable Development Goal

SMEs- Small and Medium Enterprises

SRHR- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

SSH- Social Sciences and Humanities

STEM- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

SWG GRI- Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation

WIDERA- Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area

WP- Work Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In her 2025 State of the Union speech, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen reaffirmed that ‘science has no passport, gender, ethnicity or political colour. It is one of the most valuable global goods’. Promoting the [Choose Europe](#) programme, she emphasised how the European Union’s long-term commitment to gender equality must remain central to its research and innovation agenda.

Under Horizon Europe, the EU’s framework programme for research and innovation (2021-2027), both gender equality and gender mainstreaming are recognised as core priorities. The programme has introduced robust measures, including mandatory Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) and the systematic integration of gender perspectives into research content. These initiatives reflect the European Commission’s strong commitment to embedding gender considerations across all research processes, positioning the EU as a catalyst for transformative change.

Despite these achievements, significant gaps remain: women represent only 34 % of researchers at the EU level, 98 % of EU publications lack a gender dimension, and women account for just 9 % of inventors (European Commission, 2025c). These figures highlight the urgent need for stronger action.

Drawing on existing literature and data, this paper presents a new theoretical framework examining the integration of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in Horizon Europe across three dimensions: structural, epistemic and substantive. The structural dimension concerns formal requirements, such as mandatory Gender Equality Plans, which have already driven notable progress. Our analysis focuses on the epistemic and substantive dimensions, which are mainly related to the production of knowledge and the content of research, respectively. For the epistemic dimension, we conducted an in-depth review of two work programme clusters, ‘Health’ and ‘Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment’, examining how gender is incorporated into their scientific content and priorities. For the substantive dimension, we mapped gender-related topics and actions throughout Horizon Europe to assess how effectively the programme promotes and advances gender equality in practice.

Our analytical framework conceptualises gender equality in R&I as a circle, where advancements in the structural dimension can stimulate progress in the epistemic and substantive dimensions, and vice versa. This approach is not intended to replace gender mainstreaming, but rather to complement and broaden its scope.

Based on these findings, we identify key themes and topics for future exploration in the next Framework Programme, addressing critical challenges in gender equality. We also propose seven policy actions, including aligning gender policies with research priorities,

promoting intersectional research, and ensuring the comprehensive integration of gender considerations in the budgeting process.

Implementing these actions would strengthen the European Commission's efforts to mainstream gender in research, reinforce the EU's commitment to gender equality, and set a global example for advancing gender-responsive research and innovation. Ultimately, they would represent another decisive step toward achieving gender equality.

INTRODUCTION

With the presentation of the proposed budget for the tenth Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10), scheduled to run from 2028 to 2034, the European Union (EU) has outlined its priorities for the future of European research and innovation (R&I) policy. According to the European Commission, FP10 – again branded as Horizon Europe – is intended to be ‘twice bigger, simpler, faster and more impactful’ building on the experience, outcomes and achievements of the current programme (FP9).

Among its cross-cutting priorities, the current Horizon Europe programme has placed particular emphasis on gender equality¹, enhanced by the [Ljubljana Declaration](#) on gender equality in R&I, and further reflected as a focus area within the [European Research Area](#) (ERA) and its policy agenda. Far from being an isolated objective within R&I policy, this priority reflects the broader efforts of the EU to advance gender equality, as demonstrated by various initiatives and strategies, such as the [Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025](#)²; and by its commitment to achieving [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 5](#), ‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’.

Encouragingly, several milestones have been reached in advancing gender equality in R&I, particularly through the mandatory requirement of a [Gender Equality Plan](#) (GEP) for participation in the programme, and through the integration of the gender dimension into research content and its evaluation under the ‘Excellence’ criterion. These two elements are part of what is commonly referred to as ‘gender mainstreaming’, defined by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) as a strategy that ‘involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination’. If GEPs offer the structural framework for gender equality, the integration of the gender dimension into the research context makes it operational.

However, gender inequalities are still widespread in the field of R&I. The recently released [SheFigures Report 2024](#) highlights ‘a notable gap between the adoption of policies and strategies at the EU and national levels and their implementation at the institutional level’ (European Commission, 2025c). Beyond this, the unequal representation of men and women in [senior positions](#) in the R&I labour market and in fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) remains a pressing challenge. For

¹ See: [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations \(EU\) No 1290/2013 and \(EU\) No 1291/2013](#).

² In addition to the Gender Equality Strategy, the European Commission has implemented various policies and strategies related to this field during its past mandate (2019–2024). Among them, the Anti-Racism Action Plan, the Roma Strategic Framework, the Strategy for the Rights of LGBTIQ Persons, and the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

example, 'only 1 in 3 STEM graduates and 1 in 5 ICT specialists are women. Since 2015, the percentage of women working in ICT has not changed much'³. Such [inequalities are not isolated](#), as numerous others continue to affect the R&I landscape, 'with just 9 % of inventors being women and 98 % of EU research failing to integrate a gender dimension'.

Table 1. Definition of key terms⁴

Gender Mainstreaming: The integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures, and spending programmes with the aim of achieving equality among people of all genders.

Gender Equality: The equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men, and girls and boys.

Gender Parity: The relative equality in terms of numbers and proportions of women and men, girls and boys, calculated as the ratio of female-to-male values for a given indicator.

Gender Balance: The proportional participation of women and men across different areas of work.

Intersectionality: An analytical tool for studying, understanding, and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics and identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination.

Feminist Research: Research is grounded in feminist theory that seeks to understand women's experiences, challenge gender inequalities, and promote social change. It questions traditional notions of objectivity, and values reflexivity and collaboration (Hesse-Biber, 2014: 3)⁵.

Against this background, this paper examines the current state of gender mainstreaming in Horizon Europe and proposes actions to strengthen this area in the next Framework Programme. Section 1 introduces a new theoretical framework for analysing gender equality in EU R&I policy, structured around three interconnected dimensions. Section 2 reviews the current state of gender integration in the R&I framework programme, starting with a historical overview and then assessing the extent to which the design of specific clusters has incorporated a gender perspective. Section 3 maps existing gender initiatives and topics funded under Horizon Europe, identifying thematic areas with potential for further development in FP10. The final section sets out policy recommendations, calling for gender equality to be placed at the core of the next Framework Programme.

³ See: [Women in Digital | Shaping Europe's digital future](#).

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, all definitions are taken from the Gender Equality Glossary & Thesaurus of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). See: [Glossary & Thesaurus | European Institute for Gender Equality](#).

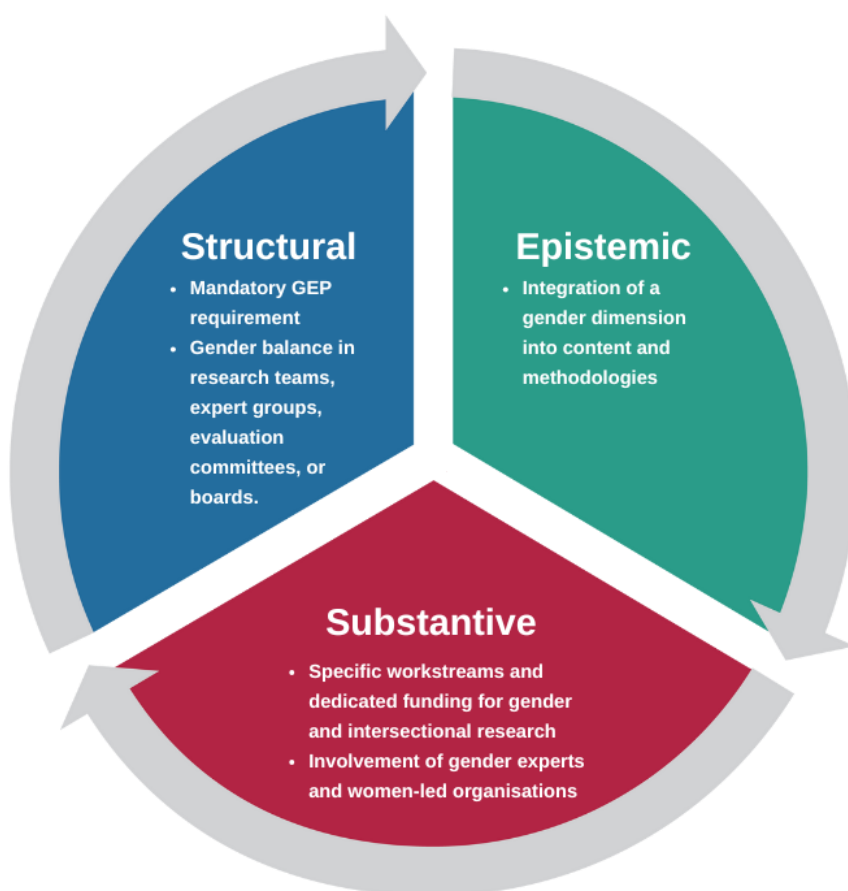
⁵ To explore further this definition, see also: Stanley & Wise, 2002; Harding, 1987; Oakley, 2013 and Reinharz, 1992.

1. THE DIMENSIONS OF GENDER IN R&I

The European Commission identifies [three levels](#) of integration of gender equality in Horizon Europe: (1) the adoption of a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) to qualify for funding; (2) the integration of gender aspects into R&I activities by default, assessed under the excellence criterion, unless explicitly exempted; and (3) gender balance among research teams, experts' groups, evaluation committees and boards. In fact, Horizon Europe seeks to achieve 50 % women across all groups and considers gender balance in research teams as a tiebreaker for proposals with equal scores. In addition, specific calls, topics and initiatives under Horizon Europe have been dedicated to fostering gender studies and intersectionality in research. Section 3 of this paper is dedicated to mapping these initiatives.

Instead, we propose reframing the integration of gender equality in R&I not in terms of levels but in terms of dimensions that are co-dependent, interconnected and mutually beneficial: the structural, epistemic, and substantive dimensions.

Figure 1. The dimensions of gender in R&I



Elaboration: CEPS

1.1. THE STRUCTURAL DIMENSION: THE GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

The structural dimension refers to the formal requirements and institutional measures designed to promote gender equality, not just in terms of gender balance, but also by ensuring equal opportunities, fair treatment, and representation for all genders. Under this dimension, GEPs are the main element. Defined as 'a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through institutional and cultural change', having a GEP became mandatory in 2022 for participation in the Framework Programmes (FP). Despite some resistance (Schredl & Lipinsky, 2025), this became binding for 'all public bodies, higher education institutions and research organisations from EU Member States and associated countries'. At present, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and private-for-profit entities like Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are excluded from this obligation.

A valid GEP must be a public, management-endorsed document with clear goals and actions, supported by dedicated resources, sex/gender-disaggregated data for monitoring and annual reporting, and training to address gender bias and build institutional capacity (the 'building blocks').

Far from being a mere formal requirement, a GEP is a strategic instrument for addressing structural barriers to equality. It promotes work-life balance, strengthens gender balance in leadership, ensures fairness in recruitment and career progression, integrates gender perspectives into research and teaching, and prevents gender-based violence and harassment. In practice, GEPs contribute to more gender-balanced teams and support Horizon Europe's target of 50 % female representation. Their effectiveness in advancing gender equality has been consistently highlighted in evaluation reports⁶.

While GEPs have faced criticism for being perceived as 'paperwork' or 'tick-box exercises' (Lauritzen & Guldvik, 2025), they remain essential policy tools that can trigger institutional and organisational change. Similar to the function of quotas in promoting representation (Dahlerup, 2006), GEPs establish concrete obligations that drive progress in the short term, while laying the groundwork for a future in which gender equality is more firmly embedded and less reliant on regulatory measures. As such, GEPs should be regarded not as administrative obligations but as strategic enablers with the potential for long-term transformative impact (Devroe et al., 2021).

⁶ European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Andriescu, M., Pépin, A., Mougou, A., Buckingham, S. et al., 'Impact of gender equality plans across the European research area – Report', Pépin, A. (editor), Mougou, A. (editor), Gilloz, O. (editor), Svíčková, K. (editor) and Tenglerova, H. (editor), Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/074644>.

In summary, while GEPs represent the main mechanism within this dimension, their impact extends beyond mere compliance, generating positive effects that advance broader gender equality.

1.2. THE EPISTEMIC DIMENSION

The epistemic dimension of gender equality mainly concerns how knowledge is produced and what place sex and gender considerations occupy in this production (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1992). In other words, it refers to why considering sex and gender in research design and development improves the quality, relevance, outcomes, and impact of the research ([European Commission, 2020](#)).

Historically, scientific research has taken men as the normative standard (Fricker, 2007). The epistemic dimension therefore requires applying gender analysis to fields often assumed to be gender-neutral, such as health and biomedicine, climate change, conflict, or legal studies. Approaching these areas from a so-called '[gender-neutral](#)' perspective risks producing distorted or, at best, incomplete results that obscure the full picture and fail to address underlying inequalities⁷. The example in Table 2 illustrates how gender neutrality and gender blindness in research can result in gender-biased outcomes (Forman-Rabinovici & Mandel, 2023).

Table 2. Gender-neutral/gender-sensitive approach to the analysis of heatwaves in elderly populations

Aspect	Gender-neutral approach	Gender-sensitive approach
Risk assessment	Uses average population data, assumes equal vulnerability across population	Identifies elderly women as disproportionately at risk due to specific factors (e.g., isolation, mobility issues, and lower resources).
Policy measures	General advice: 'stay hydrated,' 'avoid outdoor activity,' and broad emergency services.	Targeted outreach to elderly women
Data & monitoring	No sex- or age-disaggregated data; limited ability to evaluate differential impacts, including psychological and social mechanisms.	Collects and analyses sex- and age-disaggregated data to track outcomes and improve future planning.
Outcome	Mortality remains higher among women, especially elderly women living alone.	Reduced gender gaps in mortality and fairer distribution of protection and resources.

Elaboration: CEPS; *Source:* van Steen et al., 2019.

⁷ It has to be noted that there is a slight difference between 'gender neutral' and 'gender blind'. Although 'gender-neutral' suggests impartiality between women and men, it can be 'gender-blind' in practice, overlooking important gender-specific differences. See: https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1321?language_content_entity=en. However, these two terms are usually used to explain 'gender blind research' as research that 'does not take gender into account and assumes that the research is gender neutral or that potential differences between men and women are not relevant' (Korsvik & Rustad, 2018: 10).

However, systematically applying a gender perspective in contexts where it is not relevant can also be counterproductive. Martin and Phillips (2019), for example, highlight that gender-blind approaches may help reduce stereotypes about women in STEM fields. The relevance of gender perspectives therefore depends on the context, and Horizon Europe clearly specifies in its calls when gender analysis is encouraged, mandatory, or not required.

While the relevance of gender perspectives depends on context, focusing solely on gender can overlook how multiple social categories intersect to shape inequalities and compound discriminations (Dell'Aquila & Hellebrandová, 2024). This is where intersectionality becomes essential. Over the past two decades⁸, the concept of intersectionality has gained prominence, despite ongoing debates and criticisms (Davis, 2008). Its potential lies precisely in broadening gender-focused analysis by incorporating additional variables and social factors such as race, ethnicity, age, and disability status, among others, thereby offering a framework that better reflects the complexity of contemporary society. In this spirit, Horizon Europe has strengthened requirements for intersectional analysis and for the collection of disaggregated data, not only by gender and sex, but also across other intersecting categories⁹.

Despite growing attention to the importance of integrating a gender dimension into research content, the *SheFigures* Report 2024 shows slow progress. A preliminary analysis indicates trends similar to Horizon 2020, where 'only 1.7 % of funded projects incorporated a gender dimension'¹⁰. Similarly to GEPs, a key risk lies in perceiving the inclusion of a gender dimension in research (both at the proposal and implementation stages) as a mere 'tick-box' exercise. This challenge is heightened by limited expertise in gender mainstreaming within specific fields, as well as by persistent gender imbalances among researchers in the labour market (European Commission, 2025c).

1.3. THE SUBSTANTIVE DIMENSION

The substantive dimension concerns research and innovation content; gender-specific topics such as gender-based violence, the care economy, or women's health issues, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). It also relates to the inclusion of women's organisations, gender experts, and CSOs as priority stakeholders in programme activities. While this overlaps with the epistemic dimension, since involving

⁸ The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action of 2001 marks a turning point in the institutionalisation of intersectionality.

⁹ See, for example, HORIZON-HLTH-2024-DISEASE-13-01: Implementation research for management of multiple long-term conditions in the context of non-communicable diseases (Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases- GACD).

¹⁰ These data refer to the outcome, not to the inclusion of the gender dimension in calls and proposals (application stage). Currently '81 % of Calls for R&I proposals now address the gender dimension'. See: [Gender equality in research and innovation not progressing fast enough, according to new She Figures report- Research and innovation](#).

these partners contributes to the production and shaping of gender-relevant knowledge, this inclusion often has a symbolic aspect, giving these stakeholders a platform to advocate on issues they represent¹¹. This symbolic function brings valuable insights from the field, where these stakeholders work directly with the final recipients affected by specific research.

This is also particularly significant given that ‘the anti-gender movement and the spread of regressive ideologies, [including backlash against inclusion and diversity policies](#), have gained ground’, globally (Global 50/50, 2025). Setbacks in the US under the Trump administration have reinforced [reactionary forces in Europe](#), affecting international research collaboration.

This trend, combined with reductions in development aids from the world’s biggest donors, is profoundly slowing the progress towards gender equality, and this is particularly true in the areas of women’s health. According to the recent Global 50/50 report, mainly focusing on global health-related organisations, ‘the percentage of organisations with a public commitment to gender equality fell from 84 % in 2024 to 75 % in 2025. The drop is sharpest among organisations that receive US federal funding, where commitments dropped by 19 % over the same period’. On top of that, a [2025 UN Women Report](#) shows that deep cuts to foreign aid are severely threatening women-led organisations in humanitarian crises, with 90 % of consulted organisations financially affected and nearly half at risk of closing within six months.

In this framework, the EU continues to hold a strong voice against this general backlash. The [EU Roadmap for Women’s Rights: a renewed push for gender equality](#), released in March 2025, reaffirms the EU’s strong commitment to gender equality and outlines key areas for improvement and objectives. Among them, equal pay and economic empowerment, work-life balance and care, equal employment opportunities with adequate working conditions, and quality and inclusive education. All these aspects are relevant to R&I and contribute to the advancement of gender equality at large.

Making these gaps and issues visible is a crucial first step toward effective action. When challenges remain invisible, they are often left unaddressed, underscoring the need for gender-specific evidence to ensure that these issues receive appropriate policy attention. Gender-based violence (GBV) provides a clear example.

The most recent [EU Gender-Based Violence Index](#) indicates that one in three women in the EU has experienced physical or sexual violence in her lifetime, highlighting the widespread nature of this issue. Since 2016, the demand for robust data has grown, supporting both awareness-raising and policy development. At the EU policy level,

¹¹ This also entails fostering a sense of ‘belonging’ in research. See Dell’Aquila et al., 2025, p. 33.

significant progress has been achieved in this context, including the EU's accession to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (commonly known as the [Istanbul Convention](#)) in 2023, and the adoption of [Directive \(EU\) 2024/1385 on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic violence](#) in 2024. In parallel, dedicated calls under the Horizon programme have made it possible to shed light on specific forms of gender-based violence, particularly in higher education and academia. The [UNISafe project](#), for example, funded by Horizon 2020, released a [survey](#) in 2022, counting over 42,000 responses from 46 universities and research organisations in 15 countries, revealing that GBV is widespread in academia. Overall, 62 % of respondents reported experiencing at least one form of gender-based violence at their institution: psychological violence is the most common (57 %), followed by sexual harassment (31 %), while 10 % experienced economic violence, 6 % physical violence, and 3 % sexual violence. Yet only 12.5 % of incidents were reported, mainly due to uncertainty about the seriousness of the behaviour or lack of recognition of it as violence at the time. As a result, the project 'developed a holistic framework for the analysis, assessment, and development of comprehensive policies aimed at ending and addressing gender-based violence', the [7P model](#). These outcomes have informed the [Zero-Tolerance Code of Conduct. Counteracting Gender-Based Violence, including Sexual Harassment, in the EU Research and Innovation System](#), released by the European Commission in 2024.

These developments demonstrate how making gender-based violence visible has enabled the design of targeted institutional measures and the implementation of policies to prevent and address such unreported violence.

1.4. THE VIRTUOUS CIRCLE OF GENDER IN R&I

Horizon Europe has demonstrated progress across the structural, epistemic, and substantive dimensions of gender equality, with the strongest advances observed in the structural dimension.

(1) Structural dimension. Meaningful improvements have been achieved in strengthening the institutional foundations for gender equality. By January 2025, over 80 % of applications submitted by public authorities, higher education institutions, and research organizations included a gender equality plan (GEP) at the proposal stage. The introduction of GEPs has helped promote inclusive organisational practices and foster long-term cultural change. These efforts are reflected in growing gender balance across the programme: women now represent 51.4 % of expert evaluators and expert group members, meeting the parity target. Leadership roles are also becoming more gender-balanced, with women-led consortia rising to 31 % compared with 24 % under Horizon 2020. Participation of women researchers has also increased, indicating that structural

measures are translating into more inclusive involvement in research and innovation (European Commission, 2025a). Nevertheless, progress in this dimension remains subject to [potential challenges and setbacks](#).

(2) *Epistemic dimension*. Horizon Europe has strengthened gender mainstreaming within research content by establishing gender integration as a core operational objective for all research and innovation activities. As of January 2025, 80.5 % of RIA (Research and Innovation Action), IA (Innovation Action) and COFUND (Co-fund) topics include the gender dimension in their work programme descriptions; a substantial improvement from Horizon 2020 where only an estimated 23 % of projects considered gender aspects (European Commission, 2025a). While this quantitative shift marks clear progress – moving from optional ‘gender-flagged’ topics to a default requirement – the depth and quality of this integration will only become fully evident as projects are completed. However, risks remain that gender considerations may be added superficially or inconsistently¹².

(3) *Substantive dimension*. Horizon Europe also dedicates targeted workstreams to gender-specific issues, supporting research that directly addresses persistent inequalities. These initiatives help fill critical knowledge gaps and generate evidence-based solutions to emerging and systemic gender challenges. Strengthening the substantive dimension through continued dedicated funding, improved data availability, and gender-responsive monitoring is key to ensuring that structural and epistemic commitments translate into tangible outcomes and societal change (GENDERACTIONPlus, 2025).

The three dimensions outlined above address gender equality in the R&I field in complementary ways. Structurally, they ensure that formal gender-related requirements are met. Epistemologically, they integrate a gender perspective into research content and, where relevant, prevent gender-biased analysis. Substantively, they promote research and evidence on gender-specific topics, including through the involvement of women-led organisations with first-hand experience of particular issues. While each dimension addresses only part of the challenge, together they create a comprehensive framework that drives measurable progress toward gender equality.

Their interaction can in fact generate a ‘virtuous circle’: by funding research on specific gender-related topics, new data become available, which in turn inform policies that enhance gender equality. Over time, these measures help normalise equal opportunities, reducing the reliance on formal requirements to ensure women’s representation.

¹² However, it has to be noted that a recent European Commission’s study offers guidance to reinforce this direction by encouraging inclusive gender analysis, clearer definitions, and expanded evaluation criteria to ensure meaningful epistemic integration. See: European Commission, 2025d.

While significant progress has already been made on the structural dimension, our analysis focuses primarily on the epistemic and substantive dimensions, highlighting key findings and areas for improvement to further strengthen gender integration and ensure meaningful, sustained progress toward gender equality in R&I.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN HORIZON EUROPE

In the last two decades, gender equality has gained importance in the EU R&I landscape⁷. Different policy strategies, initiatives, and tools have been put in place, allowing for improved monitoring of progress towards gender equality in R&I¹³, both within the European Research Area and within the Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation.

2.1. GENDER EQUALITY IN THE R&I GOVERNANCE: THE ROLE OF FRAMEWORK PROGRAMMES AND THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

In 2012, the European Commission's [Communication](#) identified gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research as one of the ERA's priorities. The Communication highlighted that 'European research still suffers from a considerable loss and inefficient use of highly skilled women' and how 'the integration of a gender dimension into the design, evaluation and implementation of research is also still too limited' (European Commission, 2012: 12). This was endorsed by the [Council Conclusions of 1 December 2015 on Advancing gender equality in the ERA](#), which established three main objectives: (1) ensuring equal career opportunities for women and men at all levels, (2) achieving gender balance in leadership and decision-making roles, and (3) systematically integrating gender perspectives into research design and content.

In 2021, the [Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe](#) (Pact for R&I) defined gender equality as a priority area included in the [first ERA Policy Agenda](#) for the period 2022-2024 under its Action 5 'Promote gender equality and foster inclusiveness, taking note of the Ljubljana Declaration'. Its implementation built on Horizon 2020 projects under the [Science-with-and-for-Society](#) (SwafS) programme and was complemented by initiatives funded through Horizon Europe's Widening Work Programme. In addition, it was supported by a Sub-Group of the ERA Forum, the Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation (SWG GRI). In February 2025, the Council endorsed the [Commission's proposed ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027](#), which reiterates gender equality as a major ERA priority, under the structural policy 'Strengthening gender equality and inclusiveness in the ERA, notably with an intersectional approach'.

¹³ For a broader and more detailed picture of the status of gender equality in R&I, see: [Gender equality in research and innovation- European Commission](#).

While the first ERA Policy Agenda presented 'intersectionality' as a new dimension of inclusiveness needing further exploration, the new Policy Agenda highlights its central role in guiding gender mainstreaming in R&I.

A similar trend can be seen in the FPs. Horizon 2020 was the first to make gender equality a systematic, cross-cutting priority across all R&I activities, but earlier FPs had already considered gender issues. The table below highlights how gender integration evolved across the last five FPs.

Table 3. Evolution of gender integration across the FPs

Framework Programme (FP)	Gender integration
FP5 (1998–2002)	Gender issues were explicitly introduced for the first time. The European Commission issued the Communication ' Women and Science: mobilising women to enrich European research ', aiming to promote the equal opportunities and the participation of women in research, and the integration of equal treatment into the FP.
FP6 (2002–2006)	A 40 % participation goal for women was set, covering advisory groups through to project teams. Gender issues were systematically integrated at all stages of policy and programme implementation and addressed as a cross-cutting dimension in research content where relevant. A dedicated budget for women and science projects was provided under the Science and Society part of the 'Structuring the ERA' programme.
FP7 (2007–2013)	The 40 % participation target was maintained, and the mainstreaming of gender strengthened. Funding was provided for projects on gender in science and for promoting structural change in research institutions. The implementation of GEPs was encouraged through funding.
Horizon 2020 (2014–2020)	Gender treated as a cross-cutting issue across the programme. Focus on three dimensions: gender balance in research teams, gender balance in decision-making, and integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content. Encouragement of GEP implementation through funding.
Horizon Europe (2021–2027)	Strengthens gender equality by requiring Gender Equality Plans, integrating the gender dimension in research by default, and promoting gender balance in governance and teams. Dedicated funding supports gender research, inclusive ERA policies, intersectional research, and women innovators, alongside initiatives like the EU Award for Gender Equality Champions.

Source: elaboration by authors

Over time, EU research policies have shown a clear evolution in their approach to gender equality. They have moved from setting participation targets and introducing general initiatives framed in terms of ‘equal treatment’ and ‘equal opportunities’, mainly directed at women, to embedding gender as a cross-cutting dimension across policy, implementation, and research content. The early emphasis on quantitative goals, such as the 40 % participation target in FP5 and FP6, has been progressively reinforced through systematic mainstreaming requirements and dedicated funding for women and gender studies. Subsequent frameworks sustained these commitments while extending them to promote structural change in research institutions and encouraging the adoption of GEPs through funding. Horizon 2020 marked a step change by promoting gender balance in research teams and integrating gender perspectives into R&I content, marking a stronger institutional recognition of gender issues. Horizon Europe consolidates and formalises this approach, shifting from voluntary guidance to binding requirements: GEPs are now mandatory, gender integration in research content is expected by default, decision-making bodies must meet gender balance criteria, and dedicated funding supports both gender-focused and intersectional research.

Collectively, these developments, both in the ERA and in FPs, illustrate a shift from isolated actions toward a comprehensive, systematic, and increasingly intersectional approach to gender equality in European research policy. This growing intersectional awareness, with attention expanding beyond numerical representation, encompasses the structural, epistemic and substantive dimensions of research.

Although gender equality has become increasingly recognised as central to R&I, significant gaps persist. These gaps are highlighted and analysed in both the latest *SheFigures* Report, which tracks progress in advancing gender equality in R&I on a three-year basis, and the report *Fostering Gender Equality: Key figures from Horizon Europe*, published in February 2025 by DG Research and Innovation (RTD). The following table presents numerical data on gender equality in Horizon Europe, drawn from the *Fostering Gender Equality* Report, which provides the most up-to-date information on gender mainstreaming at the time of writing.

Table 4. Gender equality in Horizon Europe in numbers¹⁴

This summary covers 6 out of 7 sections of the report and presents the subset of data most relevant to our analysis. A further dedicated section addresses the integration of gender perspective into research content and methodologies, reflecting the crucial role this plays in assessing the effectiveness of integrating gender in research. Women Participation Across the Framework Programmes There has been an increase in the percentage of women in the European Commission expert evaluation panels and in the Horizon Europe expert groups compared to Horizon 2020. As of 2025, women's participation is at 51,4 %, meeting the political commitment to achieve gender balance in these positions. Women-led consortia have increased from 24 % in Horizon 2020 to 31 % in Horizon Europe. It is important to note that women's participation is still low in Cluster 4 under Pillar II (Digital, Industry and Space). Project Coordinators Horizon Europe has seen the participation of approximately 5009 women project coordinators; a 31 % share compared to 24 % in Horizon 2020. Horizon Europe is the first EU R&I Programme that has put forward the option for the self-identification as non-binary with 24 project coordinators identifying as non-binary. The Share of Women Researchers Participating in Horizon Europe Projects The share of women researchers participating in Horizon Europe has increased to 38 % from 37 % in Horizon 2020. This figure is still higher than the average share of women researchers across the EU which stood at 33.7 % in 2021. 208 Horizon Europe researchers identified as non-binary. Although an imbalance exists between men and women researchers in the EU across all career stages, this imbalance is more pronounced among senior researchers and associate professors as well as professors and directors of research (OECD, 2015). The trends in Horizon Europe are no different. Participation of Women in the Start-up and Scale-up Landscape Industry-oriented programme parts recorded the lowest in women with leading roles. For example, approximately 24 % of start-ups associated with the European Institute of Technology (EIT) innovation projects throughout the 2021-2022 period were women-led (Innovative Europe Final Report, 2024). The gap is more pronounced in venture capital funding. In 2023,
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¹⁴ As noted in the Report, these data are partial and should not be interpreted as a comprehensive measure of the actual status or impact of gender equality and mainstreaming in R&I. Since Horizon Europe is still ongoing, any comparisons with Horizon 2020 or previous Framework Programmes are indicative of numerical trends only, and do not imply definitive conclusions. Also, the data used is reflective of the status as of January 2025; any subsequent changes have not been considered.

companies with male founders secured 75 % of capital raised, companies with female founders secured 7 % with the remaining 18 % being secured by mixed companies.

Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) as Eligibility Criterion

As of January 2025, 80.6 % of all Horizon Europe applications placed by public bodies, higher education institutions and research organisations had GEPs at project proposal stage. Universities (85 %) and research organisations (80 %) are more likely to have a GEP when applying. Public bodies have a lower declaration rate, with 60 %. Universities and institutions of higher education are mostly represented in programmes such as the Widening participation and spreading excellence, where over 85 % of the applicants declare having a GEP. The European innovation ecosystems programme is overly subscribed by public institutions; explaining the low declaration of having a GEP at approximately 66 %. EU Member States recorded a share of 82 % of GEP while Widening member states a lower share with 75 %. Similarly, non-EU applicants also reported a low share, with 78 % declaring having GEPs.

Share of Women Involved in European Partnership Activities

Women's participation in European Partnership activities is very low, with a participation rate lower than 30 %. The [Biennial Monitoring Report 2024](#) on partnerships highlights that 31 out of 43 partnerships have made efforts to ensure gender balance, corresponding with 68 % among the institutionalised, 72 % among the co-programmed and 77 % among co-funded partnerships.

**2.2. FOSTERING THE EPISTEMIC DIMENSION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH:
THE INTEGRATION OF GENDER PERSPECTIVES INTO CONTENT AND
METHODOLOGIES**

As previously mentioned, the integration of the gender perspective is now a mandatory requirement for research content across the entire programme, unless its non-relevance for a specific topic is specified. To measure this integration, the European Commission developed a gender-budgeting scoring methodology. The methodology uses a scoring technique, where projects are categorised into four groups based on the extent to which they integrate the gender dimension in R&I.

Table 5. Gender-budgeting scoring methodology

■ Score 2: interventions whose principal objective is to improve gender equality; ■ Score 1: interventions that have gender equality as an important and deliberate objective but not as the main reason for the intervention; ■ Score 0: non-targeted interventions (interventions that are expected to have no significant bearing on gender equality); ■ Score 0*: score to be assigned to interventions with a likely but not yet clear positive impact on gender equality.

Notes: this scoring system was developed by the European Commission to measure expenditure related to gender equality across all funded Horizon Europe programmes (European Commission, 2025a).

As stated in the report, the scoring system provides key insights into the level of financial commitment made towards gender mainstreaming in R&I under Horizon Europe. Between 2021 and 2023, 'Horizon Europe allocated a total of EUR 215.3 million to actions for which the improvement of gender equality is a principal objective ('score 2' actions)' (European Commission, 2025a: 22).

However, according to the European Commission's Impact Assessment Report (2025b), the introduction of the tracking tool in 2022 was poorly aligned with the publication of the basic acts for many programmes, leaving limited scope for applicants to embed gender considerations into their structure. As a result, 69 % of the EU budget was assessed as not contributing to gender equality.

Although the extent and effectiveness of integration can only be assessed at the end of the programme, the scoring system already provides valuable insights into the level of financial commitment made towards gender mainstreaming in R&I under Horizon Europe. Nevertheless, the system still falls short of providing deeper insights, such as the degree of alignment between core research priorities and allocated investment. The budgeting tool also lacks clarity on the outcomes that reflect real impact on gender equality¹⁵. In

¹⁵ See: European Parliament, 2025,

fact, there is a risk of funding projects that purport to advance gender equality while applying, only to produce tokenistic deliverables on gender equality elements of their research. This highlights a clear area for improvement in the next FP10¹⁶.

As reflected in the data presented above, there has been an important increase in calls requiring the integration of the gender dimension in Horizon Europe compared with Horizon 2020. Although this is a positive development, the high level of the gender integration should be interpreted with caution, particularly when integration is defined without clear tangible criteria. Although the European Commission is proposing a valuable tool for the next Framework Programme – a framework for tracking gender equality expenditure¹⁷ – the existence of such a tool does not in itself guarantee that the quality of integration is substantive. Robust evaluation mechanisms and guidelines, like the ones outlined in the *Gendered Innovations 2*, remain essential to ensure that the integration translates into tangible meaningful outcomes towards gender mainstreaming in R&I.

Building on this, our analysis reviewed selected Horizon Europe clusters' Work Programmes to assess the quality of gender integration. This analysis helps identify the extent to which gender mainstreaming is being prioritised right from proposal, research design stages to the expected final outputs of the programme. A strong foundation set from the very beginning during the proposal stage may reflect research content that prioritises gender mainstreaming. The integration of gender in R&I not only adds value to the quality of research and its social relevance but also feeds into the formulation of policies that promote equal access to opportunities and increased well-being (D'Andrea, 2022), like the EU's '*Work-life balance Directive*'.

2.2.1. *Beyond the Gender-Specific Scope: an analysis of specific clusters*

In this section, we focus on two Horizon Europe clusters under Pillar II: (1) 'Health' and (2) 'Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment'. The analysis covers the Work Programmes (WPs) for 2021–2022, 2023–2025, and the most recent 2025 edition, to ensure a comprehensive assessment over time. A structured set of

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/779721/BUDG_BRI\(2025\)779721_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/779721/BUDG_BRI(2025)779721_EN.pdf)

¹⁶ As stated in the [Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a budget expenditure tracking and performance framework and other horizontal rules for the Union programmes and activities](#), a new gender equality scoring system (ranging from 0 to 2) has been proposed to track programme budget contributions in FP10. See also: Commission Staff Working Document: Impact Assessment Report- Accompanying the document: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a budget expenditure tracking and performance framework and other horizontal rules for the Union programmes and activities. [EUR-Lex-52025SC0590- EN- EUR-Lex](#).

¹⁷ See: Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a budget expenditure tracking and performance framework and other horizontal rules for the Union programmes and activities.

questions (Annex I) guided the evaluation of calls and topics, focusing on the integration of gender and related themes, including intersectionality.

The choice of these specific clusters reflects their strong gender relevance for several reasons:

- Both areas are linked to survival, wellbeing, and sustainability, with women playing central roles across their main thematic areas.
- Both exhibit strong intersectional dimensions, as women disproportionately bear the burden of providing food and primary healthcare and are more vulnerable to systemic shocks such as drought, famine, or health crises.
- Historically, both sectors are highly unequal. In health, women are the primary healthcare givers providing the first response to sick children and family members. Although they on average live longer than men, they spend about 25 % more of their lives in poor health, while only around 1 % of healthcare R&I funding targets female-specific conditions beyond oncology. In agrifood systems, women's work remains underpaid, irregular, and labour intensive, while food insecurity affects women more severely than men.

Health

The WP 2021-2022 explicitly references gender across multiple sections (e.g. 'Destination 1 – Staying healthy in a rapidly changing society') and in calls that ask applicants to consider sex and/or gender¹⁸. However, the framing of these requirements varies: some calls treat gender analysis as optional ('where appropriate', leaving the decision to applicants), while others make it explicit and required. One topic, 'Boosting mental health in Europe in times of change', calls for the collection and analysis of sex- and gender-disaggregated data, though this remains an exception rather than a standard requirement in this WP.

Notably, the WP does not explicitly reference intersectionality. Nonetheless, some calls (e.g. 'Methods for assessing health-related costs of environmental stressors' and 'Optimising effectiveness in patients of existing prescription drugs for major diseases (except cancer) with the use of biomarkers') encourage applicants to consider gender alongside other dimensions such as sex, age, disabilities, and socioeconomic factors in health equity, suggesting a need for a more in-depth analysis.

¹⁸ For example, topic 'Pre-clinical development of the next generation of immunotherapies for diseases or disorders with unmet medical needs' requires taking into account sex and gender in preclinical and clinical studies, where relevant.

Compared with the previous WP, the WP 2023-2025 demonstrates a clearer, though still uneven, evolution in the treatment of gender. While the framing of gender integration continues to vary (sometimes optional, sometimes mandatory)¹⁹, the overall stated aims now reflect more clearly gender considerations, as in ‘Destination 3 – Tackling diseases and reducing disease burden’, which calls for ‘new preparedness and prevention measures, public health interventions, diagnostics, vaccines, therapies, alternatives to antimicrobials, as well as to improve existing preparedness and prevention strategies to create tangible impacts’ that explicitly address sex/gender-related issues. Recognition of pre-existing gender inequalities in the field is also more visible, for instance in ‘Destination 1 – Staying healthy in a rapidly changing society’, which links gender and social aspects to health risks and disease prevention.

Concerning intersectionality, this is mentioned several times, for example under the topic ‘Towards a holistic support to children and adolescents’ health and care provisions in an increasingly digital society’, alongside references to interconnected factors, marking a step forward compared to the absence of this concept in the previous WP. Finally, some calls (such as ‘Evidence-based interventions for promotion of mental and physical health in changing working environments, post-pandemic workplaces’), require sex- and gender-disaggregated data and even request consideration of intersectional impacts (such as ‘Implementation research for management of multiple long-term conditions in the context of non-communicable diseases (Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases – GACD)’). This suggests a gradual but important shift from fragmented references toward a more structured and intersectional approach to gender in Horizon Europe.

Finally, the last WP 2025 presents gender consistently as an essential dimension of analysis, sometimes reiterated multiple times under the same topic from different angles, like the topic ‘Improving the quality of life of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families’, showing growing recognition of its relevance. Unlike earlier WPs here gender objectives are clearly integrated into the overall aims, with explicit acknowledgment of gender inequalities and pre-existing differences in the field, like in the ‘Destination – Living and working in a health-promoting environment’.

Intersectionality is also more present, with additional references to the interconnection of gender with factors such as age and race, reflecting a gradual broadening of scope beyond gender alone. Moreover, a topic under this WP, ‘Leveraging artificial intelligence for pandemic preparedness and response’ encourages synergies with a previous gender-

¹⁹ See, for example, topics: ‘Towards a holistic support to children and adolescents’ health and care provisions in an increasingly digital society’; ‘Comparative effectiveness research for healthcare interventions in areas of high public health need’; or ‘Access to health and care services for people in vulnerable situations’.

specific topic, 'Tackling gender, race and other biases in AI (RIA)', showing a willingness to lead more interdisciplinary research.

Compared to previous WPs, this represents both continuity and progress: gender is not only frequently mentioned but also embedded more directly in aims and obligations, while intersectionality appears more systematically.

Across the three datasets, a clear trajectory emerges in the way Horizon Europe addresses gender and related concepts in the field of health, showing a gradual but meaningful progression: from more optional gender framing to stronger integration of both gender and intersectionality within objectives, calls, and data requirements²⁰. Moreover, synergies between non-gender-specific topics with gender-focused research strengthen interdisciplinary research.

Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment

The WP 2021-2022 makes numerous references to gender-related concepts, with 'gender' being mentioned 179 times and 'sex' mentioned 69 times. Approximately half of all mentions of the term occur to note that 'the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement', suggesting the topic requires a gender-neutral analysis. A striking example is a topic such as 'Modelling land use & land management in climate change context' under the 'Destination – Innovative governance, environmental observations and digital solutions in support of the Green Deal', which explicitly states that the gender dimension is not required. This is particularly concerning given that the topic cuts across two key gender-relevant themes: landownership and the crucial role of women in climate resilience.

In the whole WP, two topics – 'Understanding the role of behaviour, gender specifics, lifestyle, religious and cultural values, and addressing the role of enabling players (civil society, policy makers, financing and business leaders, retailers) in decision making' and 'Boosting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas' – refer to gender in the topic, showing the centrality and consideration of the gender focus for these topics. Embedding of gender right from the topic name highlights the importance of embodying a gender perspective across the whole research process. Unlike the previous WP, where the choice was only between mandatory and not, the framing of gender requirements in the WP 2023–2025 varies: for some topics it is

²⁰ In all three cases, references to gender in the General Annexes relate mainly to the GEPs' obligations (with a transitional grace period foreseen in the WP 2021–2023 until 2022) and to evaluation and scoring criteria, particularly under the 'Excellence' criterion for Innovation Actions and Programme Co-Fund Actions (CoFund). In addition, gender balance is considered as a tiebreaker when proposals receive the same score within a single budget envelope.

mandatory²¹, for others it is optional²², and in certain cases the incorporation of the gender dimension is merely *encouraged*. This method of framing might counter the efforts to promote the systematic inclusion gender in R&I content across the whole programme. Moreover, the WP does not have any references to gender in the topics and does not require the collection of sex- and gender-disaggregated data.

Notably, the term ‘intersectionality’ appears only twice, a decrease compared to the previous WP. However, the concept is implicitly reflected in several topics, like ‘Biodiversity loss and enhancing ecosystem services in urban and peri-urban areas’, which calls for the inclusion of marginalised communities, and ‘Reintroduction of landscape features in intensive agricultural areas’, which requires the consideration of social and generational aspects. Although not explicitly required, the integration of intersectionality increased within this WP through references on race, social status and disability; a remarkable step considering the contribution it has towards gender-related content.

In addition, the word ‘inequality’ in reference to social and gender equality, is used twice, like in the previous WP. This is important as the word is used to signal the call’s strategic aim to reduce inequality; an important outcome to improve gender mainstreaming in R&I within Horizon Europe. Finally, none of the Destinations in this WP explicitly refer to gender in their descriptions. For the Destinations ‘Clean environment and zero pollution’ and ‘Land, ocean and water for climate action’, the integration of the gender dimension is not required for any of their topics. In contrast, it is mandatory across all topics under Destination ‘Resilient, inclusive, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities’.

In the last WP 2025, there is an upward trajectory in the integration of the gender dimension across the programme. In comparison to other WPs, the explicit requirement to include a gender dimension is more pronounced, with only two topics (‘Innovative and advanced monitoring and modelling systems for revised air quality policies’ and ‘Demonstration of reduced energy use and optimised flexible energy supply for industrial bio-based systems’), not requiring it. Similar to WP 2023-2025, there is a call to integrate intersectionality either explicitly or implicitly, through requirements that consider factors like race, ethnicity or social status, e.g. in ‘Research and innovation for food waste prevention and reduction at household level through measurement, monitoring and new technologies’.

Another positive trend in this WP is an increased emphasis on collaborations with gender experts, building on the gender integration requirement. Topics like ‘Assessing and modelling socio-economic impacts of nature restoration’ and ‘Enhancing sustainability

²¹ For example, see topic ‘HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-2: New healthy and sustainable food products and processes’.

²² For example, see topic ‘HORIZON-CL6-2023-CircBio-01-6: Bio-based solutions for humanitarian applications’.

and resilience of agriculture, forestry and rural development through digital twins' are examples of those that explicitly call for collaboration with gender experts.

The significance of this cluster in influencing policies that affect everyday life sustenance should not be ignored. The cluster cannot afford to have so many topics negating a gender dimension also considering the significant [role women play](#) in agri-food systems, climate resilience and the economies embedded in it. The significant number of projects across the WP, with the gender dimension marked as 'not required' is striking, considering the interconnectedness and effects of the focus areas of the cluster with gender; and counters the move by the Commission to have the integration of the gender dimension in R&I content as an operational objective across the whole programme (European Commission, 2025a). The cluster's focus areas have a crucial gender dimension that needs to be explored in most of the topics within the WP. In essence, gender and its intersectional topics are key, and are among the most influential factors shaping key topics within this cluster.

Our Conclusions

Our analysis of the two clusters highlights several key conclusions. First, there is an increase in the use of the intersectional approach and intersectionality. While some topics explicitly require it, in others it is implied, particularly through considerations of race, age, sex, and ethnicity, among other factors. This approach is crucial as it expands the analysis beyond gender, enabling research to capture multiple dimensions of inequality and support more inclusive policymaking (Hankivsky and Jordan-Zachery, 2019). The framing of the gender dimension as a requirement was similar across the two clusters, sometimes treated as optional and at other times explicitly required. Notably, certain topics under the 'Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment' WP 2023-2025 cluster, explicitly do not require the gender integration, e.g. all topics in Destination 'Land, ocean and water for climate action'. Arguably, this non-requirement could be attributed to the topics being characterised as hard sciences. There is a need to explore ways to incorporate gender mainstreaming into seemingly gender-neutral research areas.

The results from our analysis further confirm the need to strengthen the integration of gender in Horizon Europe. The framing of gender requirements remains ambiguous and is often treated as a 'tick box' criterion rather than a substantive analytical lens. There is a risk of producing research outcomes that superficially address gender mainstreaming and fail to provide in-depth outcomes that can contribute meaningfully towards gender equality.

The requirement to collect sex- and gender-disaggregated data is low in both clusters, limiting the research outputs and ultimately the policies influenced by these results.

Similarly, collaboration with gender experts, women's organisations and CSOs is not clearly emphasised as a requirement. At best, the Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment cluster calls for the 'inclusion of relevant social sciences and humanities (SSH) expertise' and 'adequate involvement of civil society'. The ambiguity of these requirements risks the partial or total exclusion of relevant stakeholders who could contribute to advancing gender mainstreaming in Horizon Europe.

These findings on the integration of gender and intersectionality in clusters where gender is not the primary focus highlight both progress and persistent gaps in Horizon Europe. They provide a foundation for a closer examination of how these perspectives are integrated directly into research content and methodologies. This sets the stage for the following section, which examines gender-related calls, initiatives, and topics in Horizon Europe that explicitly focus on gender studies and gender-specific issues.

3. MAPPING GENDER-RELATED TOPICS AND ACTIONS IN HORIZON EUROPE

The analysis is structured using a matrix based on specific guiding questions and organised around the three overarching dimensions identified (structural, epistemic and substantive).

The selection of topics was based on the European Commission's webpage '[Horizon Europe Support for Gender Equality](#)', which lists all relevant topics. Our analysis focused on the design and content of the topics described in the clusters' WPs, rather than the projects funded under each topic. While these indicators, mainly assessing the number of projects, their allocated budget and existing collaboration with LMICs, are included in the analysis, the primary emphasis remains the descriptions in the WPs. In addition, to ensure a comprehensive assessment, we reviewed all the WPs under Pillar II and 'Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area' (WIDERA) actions for 2021–2022, 2023–2025, and 2025, identifying references to 'gender' in the titles of calls, topics, and initiatives. Consequently, projects with a strong gender dimension or the term 'gender' in their title may not have been considered if they were not funded under the selected topics analysed.

As a complement, the same procedure was applied to gender-related initiatives under Pillar III (Annex II), with questions adapted to their specific nature.

The following questions were used in the matrix to guide the analysis:

- Main Topics / Focus Areas: Topics or focus areas under each WP were assessed to identify key priorities for gender-related research.
- Objectives described under the topic: The objectives outlined the key themes to be addressed, research approaches and ideal outcomes expected for each project. Their analysis provided insights into the expected research content, targeted policy areas, and relevant policy frameworks.
- Intersectional approach: Intersectionality enables the analysis of complex forms of discrimination by considering the interaction of different factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability status, among others. Project descriptions under selected topics were checked to ascertain if and how they required or encouraged an intersectional approach.
- Synergies with previous/current FPs, calls, or topics: Our assessment considered whether the project required any synergies with previous calls or topics, to support building more interdisciplinary research.

- **Alignment with Policy Frameworks:** This indicator questioned whether the topic was aligned with any important gender-related policy frameworks such as the EU Gender Equality Strategy and the SDG5. Alignment is important because knowledge created not only has a strong anchoring in existing policy but also acts as a building block towards their objectives.
- **Inclusion of LMICs:** Considering the importance of cooperation and the previous work CEPS led on this specific dimension of R&I²³, the analysis also assessed the involvement of lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in each topic and related funded projects.

As a result of our analysis, the identified topics for the period 2021-2025 under Horizon Europe were grouped into six thematic areas.

Table 6. Thematic areas for Horizon Europe topics

Main Theme	Topics	Sub-theme
Gender Equality in R&I, including women in STEM	1. Centre of excellence on inclusive gender equality in R&I 2. Support to the implementation of inclusive gender equality plans 3. Living Lab for gender-responsive innovation 4. Support to the implementation of an EU Manifesto for STE(A)M education and R&I career paths to tackle gender inequalities in the ERA 5. Cultural and creative approaches for gender responsive STEAM education. 6. Policy coordination to support all aspects of inclusive Gender Equality Plans and policies in ERA. 7. Policy coordination to advance the implementation of the ERA gender equality and inclusiveness objectives within Member States 8. Policy support to facilitate the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach towards gender-based violence in the ERA	Gender-based violence Gender and the labour market
Gender, Technology and Digitalisation	1. Tackling gender, race, and other biases in AI (RIA)	Intersectional Gender Inequalities

²³ See: Yeung, T. et al. 2025, specifically section 1.2 'A closer look at the impact of Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe on LMICs: a selection of case studies'.

Gender-based violence	1. Tackling gender-based violence in different social and economic spheres (2025) 2. Domestic and sexual violence are prevented and combated.	Gender and the labour market
Gender and the labour market	1. Overcoming discrimination for an inclusive labour market 2. Boosting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. 3. Understanding the role of behaviour, gender specifics, lifestyle, religious and cultural values and understanding the role of enabling players (civil society, policymakers, financing and business leaders, retailers), in decision making. 4. Investigating and addressing career barriers faced by underrepresented and marginalised researchers (2025) 5. Gender differences in career trajectories of parents and their implications for gender equality and family wellbeing (2025)	Intersectional Gender Inequalities
Intersectional Gender Inequalities	1. Strengthening racial, ethnic, and religious equality 2. Determining key drivers of inequality trends 3. Intersectionality and equality in deliberative and participatory democratic spaces 4. Gender and social, economic, and cultural empowerment	Gender and Societal/Democratic Impact
Gender and Societal/Democratic Impact	1. The impact of inequalities on democracy 2. Gender roles in extremist movements and their impact on democracy 3. Radicalisation and gender 4. Feminisms for a new age of democracy	Intersectional Gender Inequalities

Elaboration: CEPS.

Most topics fall under the clusters 'Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society' and WIDERA actions. In addition, one topic appears in the 2021-2022 'Digital, Industry and Space' cluster, two in the 2021-2022 'Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and

Environment’ cluster, and two others in the ‘Civil Security for Society’ cluster (2021-2022 and 2023-2024)²⁴.

Most topics also encourage developing synergies with previous Horizon 2020 projects (e.g., [GENDERAction](#) or [IMPRODOVA](#)), with tools such as the GEAR Tool, with other Horizon Europe topics (including those under different clusters), and with projects funded through other EU programmes, such as the [Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values \(CERV\)](#) programme, and via international cooperation (for example, aligned with the Gender Equality Strategy for External Action III). This is particularly relevant given the growing emphasis on interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches in research.

Most Destinations and calls are explicitly aligned with key EU policy frameworks, notably the Gender Equality Strategy, the European Green Deal, and globally, the UN2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Concerning collaboration with LMICs, previous CEPS analysis examined the extent to which [EU R&I policies engage with LMICs](#). Findings indicate that LMIC participation in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe remains limited, with funding amounting to EUR 304 million and EUR 335 million respectively (up to January 2025). African countries received the largest share. However, within this framework, gender-focused R&I projects involving LMICs remain underfunded²⁵.

In addition to the traditional calls, the WIDERA actions include the [EU Award for Gender Equality Champions](#), an initiative running yearly since 2022. This prize scheme, launched to support Horizon Europe’s GEP requirements and advance inclusive gender policies within the new ERA agenda, recognises up to four research or academic organisations in three categories: Sustainable Champions (long-standing GEP success), Newcomer Champions (recent progress), and Inclusive Champions (innovative GEPs addressing intersecting inequalities).

As presented in the previous table, gender-relevant topics were grouped into six thematic areas: 1. Gender Equality in R&I, including women in STEM; 2. Gender, Technology and Digitalisation; 3. Gender-based violence; 4. Gender and the labour market; 5. Intersectional Gender Inequalities and 6. Gender and Societal/Democratic Impact. Notably, the ‘Gender Equality in R&I, including women in STEM’ area contains the largest number of topics. Other well-represented areas include ‘Gender and the labour market’,

²⁴ In order, these topics are: ‘Tackling gender, race and other biases in AI (RIA)’; ‘Understanding the role of behaviour, gender specifics, lifestyle, religious and cultural values and understanding the role of enabling players (civil society, policymakers, financing and business leaders, retailers), in decision making’; ‘Boosting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas’; ‘Domestic and sexual violence are prevented and combated’; and ‘Radicalisation and gender’.

²⁵ Note that this analysis led to the selection of relevant projects using the corresponding legal code HORIZON-EU.2.2.: Culture, Creativity, and Inclusive Society.

‘Intersectional Gender Inequalities’ and ‘Gender and Societal/Democratic Impact’, which encompass various sub-themes addressed through funded projects, such as gender equality and agriculture and the use of AI to enhance the inclusion of marginalised populations in democratic processes. Many of these themes naturally intersect, reflecting the complex and interconnected nature of gender-related challenges, where issues such as gender inequalities in the labour market and in R&I often overlap and influence each other.

Our analysis indicates that intersectionality is gaining momentum, both as a perspective to be integrated into research content and as a standalone topic. Most topics require the integration of an intersectional perspective, sometimes as a complementary element, but in several cases as the primary approach. This reflects a growing trend, further reinforced by the inclusion of dedicated intersectional topics, like ‘Intersectionality and equality in deliberative and participatory democratic spaces’. This development represents a significant step toward inclusion, as it extends gender-focused analysis to consider the intersection with social factors, addressing complex forms of discrimination.

Despite the increasing importance of gender equality in EU R&I policy, the current thematic areas and topics do not fully reflect the complexity of a rapidly changing world. The theme ‘Gender, technology, and digitalisation’ reflects this gap. While several initiatives have been implemented under Pillar III, like [Women Tech EU](#) or [Girls go Circular/STEM](#), Horizon Europe’s coverage of this field remains uneven within Pillar II, with gender often included merely as a perspective rather than positioned as a central focus. Similarly, other themes, such as women leadership in R&I, receive limited attention under Pillar II, while several practical initiatives have been funded under Pillar III, notably the European Innovation Council (EIC) [Women Leadership Programme](#), [European Prize for Women Innovators](#) or the [Supernovas](#) programme.

Horizon Europe has already addressed important gender-related topics, reflecting meaningful progress and a growing commitment to integrating gender considerations across R&I. Yet significant work remains to advance gender equality: in fact, as noted by EIGE, ‘gender equality in the European Union is still over 60 years away’ (EIGE 2023; 2025b). The R&I field has a crucial role to play in shortening this timeline. With the upcoming FP10, the EU has a unique opportunity to go further by positioning gender not merely as a complementary perspective, but as a central, leading focus.

3.1. TOWARD A STRENGTHENED SUBSTANTIVE DIMENSION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN R&I: POTENTIAL GENDER EQUALITY TOPICS FOR FP10

Embedding gender at the heart of research agendas can act as an accelerator for equality: it contributes to closing existing gaps, anticipating emerging societal challenges, and driving more inclusive and equitable innovation. This goes beyond simply adding a gender perspective to topics: it requires dedicated funding for research areas where gender is central to the challenge.

Horizon Europe has already broadened the analytical gender framework and introduced several streams focused on gender-specific topics. Nevertheless, important themes remain insufficiently addressed in FP9, even though they are recognised as key challenges for gender equality. For instance, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) recently identified the [biggest gender equality issues over the next 15 years](#), drawing on the expertise of representatives from government, business, policy, and advocacy organisations ([EIGE, 2025a](#)). These are:

- Digitalisation (including AI and Gender Bias, Cybersecurity and Privacy, Remote Work and Connectivity, Digital Literacy and Access, E-Government Services, and Access to accurate data);
- Green transition (including Policy Integration and Gender-Sensitive Approaches, Environmental Degradation and Vulnerability, Climate Change, Migration, and Security, Sustainable Urban and Rural Development);
- Future of work (including Gig Economy and Precarious Employment, Care Economy Transformation, Automation and Job Displacement, Workplace Flexibility and Culture, Skills and Education for the Future Workforce);
- Diversifying inequalities (including Intersectionality and Multiple Identities, Economic Inequalities and Access to Resources, Healthcare Accessibility and Quality, Education and Skill Development);
- Shifting values (including Political Representation and Leadership, Legislation and Policy for Gender Equality, Social Movements and Activism, Countering anti-equality narratives, Sudden shocks to democratic systems, Cultural Norms and Media Representation).

Similarly, a recent OECD report identified several persistent gender gaps across education, labour markets, leadership, health, and efforts combat gender-based violence (OECD, 2025). In addition, the report emphasises the importance of addressing emerging gender inequalities in the digital and green transitions.

In this context, the next FP10 could make a meaningful impact by aligning its gender-related research priorities with specific EU policy priorities, such as those identified by EIGE or in the EU Roadmap for Women's Rights, which broadly align with each other. While some areas, such as intersectionality and specific gaps in the labour market and democratic spaces, have already been addressed to a significant extent, others, though acknowledged, require greater focus. This includes, among others, gender-based violence, digitalisation, and the green transition. Although these issues have been partially considered from a gender perspective, further efforts are needed to capture their full gendered dimensions and implications.

In this regard, one topic requires particular attention due to its growing relevance in the [global research and policy landscape](#): women's health. Despite targeted [initiatives and projects](#) over the years, funding and policy support remain uneven, and biomedical research continues to be predominantly male-focused: preclinical studies, clinical trials, and even basic cell research have historically underrepresented female subjects, contributing to ongoing disparities in health outcomes (Storer Jones, 2025). By prioritising women's health innovation, FP10 can position itself as a frontrunner in closing the gender health gap, strengthening evidence-based healthcare, and establishing the EU as a leader in shaping a research agenda that delivers tangible societal benefits (ibid., 2025) and advances global health, as highlighted by European Commission's President von der Leyen in her latest [speech at the State of the Union](#) in September 2025.

Overall, most of these priorities have been addressed to some extent in FP9, marking important steps forward for gender equality. The next FP10 must build on this progress by further enhancing the visibility and impact of gender research and ensuring the meaningful integration of a gender perspective across specific topics.

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: POSITIONING GENDER AT THE CORE OF FP10

As our analysis has shown, important milestones have been achieved during the current Framework Programme, notably the introduction of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) as an eligibility requirement. As Horizon Europe is still ongoing, our analysis reflects only a partial picture of gender equality in the EU R&I landscape, which is encouraging overall. At the same time, these gains cannot be taken for granted. Anti-gender backlashes in Europe (Kantola & Lombardo, 2024) and the global reduction in gender-related funding, particularly in the US, risk undermining progress and could also have broader consequences for women's rights.

It is therefore essential that FP10 builds on the solid foundation established under FP9 and further strengthens the commitment to gender equality. While we acknowledge the [Commission's proposal for Horizon Europe 2028–2034 Framework Regulation](#) and the significant number of thematic recommendations already made to advance gender equality in FP10²⁶, including CEPS' report 'Towards an ambitious FP10' (Dell'Aquila et al., 2025), our analysis suggests complementary actions and areas that warrant emphasis and deserve particular attention.

- 1) **Align gender policy priorities and gender research priorities.** The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development set 2030 as the deadline for achieving SDG 5 on gender equality, yet it has long been evident that this goal will not be met. As it stands, globally [gender equality is projected to take nearly 300 years to achieve globally](#). To accelerate progress, gender equality priorities must be systematically analysed and supported through research. Our analysis shows that challenges identified by EIGE have been only partially addressed by workstreams in Horizon Europe. While mainstreaming the gender dimension across specific topics remains essential, the EU must ensure that policy and research priorities are better aligned in advancing gender equality.
- 2) **Promote intersectional research and intersectional mainstreaming.** Our analysis indicates a growing interest in intersectionality and intersectional approaches, already reflected in some workstreams funded under Horizon Europe. This commitment must be maintained and further enhanced in the next FP. Intersectional research leads to more inclusive analysis and outcomes, moving

²⁶ See: the [Position on the Proposal for Horizon Europe 2028–2034 and the Budget Expenditure Tracking and Performance Framework](#) from GenderActionPlus, released in July 2025.

beyond gender alone to consider the multiple, overlapping factors that create complex forms of discrimination and disadvantage. Applying an intersectional mainstreaming approach also requires recognising the additional barriers faced by researchers themselves, including not only gender imbalances but also inequalities linked to ethnicity, age, disability status, and other factors, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable research workforce.

- 3) **Enforce existing guidelines to ensure meaningful gender mainstreaming in research content.** To ensure meaningful gender mainstreaming, existing guidelines and evaluation mechanisms should be strengthened and effectively implemented. These should include the systematic involvement of gender experts at all stages of research and within research teams, even in projects not directly related to gender. Targeted training should also be provided to strengthen researchers' capacity to integrate gender perspectives. Furthermore, all research should produce and analyse sex- and gender-disaggregated data to generate evidence-based insights into gender dynamics and their intersections with other social and structural factors.
- 4) **Strengthen Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) and extend their mandatory scope to all legal entities, including those from non-associated third countries.** Currently, GEPs are required only for public bodies, higher education institutions, and research organisations from the EU Member States and Associated Countries, and compliance is verified mainly through self-declarations and occasional random checks. This limited approach risks undermining the effectiveness and credibility of the requirement. GEPs should not be treated as formalistic exercises but as substantive tools for advancing equality across multiple dimensions. To reinforce their impact, GEPs should explicitly incorporate an intersectional perspective, ensuring they move beyond gender alone to address inclusivity more broadly. For instance, mandatory building blocks should include the collection of intersectional disaggregated data (not only by sex and gender), and the recommended thematic areas should encompass intersectionality alongside the integration of gender perspectives in research and teaching content. This would better reflect the complexity of the research landscape and strengthen the transformative potential of GEPs.
- 5) **Leverage Horizon Europe cooperation with associated and non-associated countries to promote gender equality beyond the EU.** By maintaining and extending the requirement for GEPs for all participants, the EU can create a positive ripple effect on partner institutions and national policies on gender equality, increasing the participation of female researchers and the production of research content incorporating the gender dimension. Experts have expressed

optimism that partnerships with countries like [South Korea](#) and [India](#), through the GEP requirements, will expand women's participation in research and ensure equal access to STEM fields, such as semiconductors and biotechnology. Horizon Europe provides the EU with an opportunity to reinforce its commitment to gender equality even beyond European borders. Therefore, in line with our previous recommendation, the EU should maintain the requirement for GEPs for all participants and beneficiaries within the Horizon Europe programme.

- 6) **Standardise and further develop the gender budget tracking tool by the European Commission to move beyond simply tracking contributions to gender-related topics and highlight annual spending targets for gender equality.** The tool currently measures contributions towards gender in R&I without clarifying the metrics that prove meaningful integration. The tool should therefore be extended by adding metrics on research outcomes, such as the collection of gender-disaggregated data, so that budget allocation reflects how investments made translate into real impact on gender and gender-responsive policies. Moreover, there should be increased awareness of the budget tracking tool to enable participants to align with it. Lastly, the tracking tool should also highlight spending targets for gender equality like other priorities in Horizon Europe, such as climate and environment. This will reinforce the EU's commitment to gender equality alongside other major priorities.
- 7) **Provide guidelines on topics which cannot integrate the gender dimension in their research process.** These guidelines should clearly outline the exceptional circumstances under which topics may legitimately exclude the gender dimension. In Horizon Europe, the European Commission discontinued the 'positive gender-flagging' of topics to encourage broader integration of the gender dimension across all research areas. However, in many calls, gender integration remains framed as an optional requirement. This creates scope for overlooking gender mainstreaming in research, which contradicts the European Commission's goal to increase gender mainstreaming in R&I content. Therefore, the integration of the gender dimension should be clearly guided and mandated by the European Commission, rather than left to participants' discretion.

These seven recommendations provide a comprehensive roadmap for embedding gender equality at the core of FP10 across its structural, epistemic, and substantive dimensions. In a context where anti-gender movements are gaining ground and international funding for gender equality is declining, implementing these actions would enhance research quality, societal relevance, and Europe's global leadership on gender-responsive innovation, sending an unequivocal signal that gender equality is fundamental to excellent and impactful research.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX I

List of questions used to assess the gender dimension and its elements in clusters 'Health' and 'Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment' Work Programmes for 2021–2022, 2023–2024, and 2025.

- 1) Does the call/topic explicitly mention gender, gender equality, women's empowerment, or inclusion of gender-diverse groups?
- 2) If yes, how many times?
- 3) Does the call/topic explicitly require balanced representation of women and men in participants, panels, or leadership roles?
- 4) Are gender-related concepts framed as cross-cutting priorities or optional add-ons?
- 5) Are gender equality objectives clearly embedded in the overall aims of the topic?
- 6) Does the call/topic recognise relevant gender inequalities or differences in the field?
- 7) Are women's organisations, gender experts, or civil society explicitly included as eligible/priority stakeholders?
- 8) Does the call/topic address intersectionality, and if so, in which section(s)?
- 9) Does the call/topic require sex/gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis?

Transversal question: Please identify the topics that are particularly relevant to this specific point.

ANNEX II

Programme/ Implementing body	Name of the initiative/prize	Description	Objective	Amount	Partnerships/synergies	Year of creation/launch	Comments
European Innovation Council (EIC)	EIC Women Leadership Programme	It offers women researchers and entrepreneurs training, coaching, mentoring, and networking opportunities to strengthen leadership skills and foster connections within the innovation community.	To support women in innovation and tech.		In partnership with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).	2021	
European Innovation Council (EIC)	European Prize for Women Innovators	It celebrates women entrepreneurs behind Europe's most groundbreaking innovations. It highlights women from the EU and Horizon Europe-associated countries whose disruptive solutions drive positive change for people and the planet. There are three categories: (1) EIC Women Innovators (2) EIC Rising	To support women entrepreneurs with disruptive innovations and inspire other women and girls to pursue careers in science, innovation, and technology leadership.	(1) EIC Women Innovators: three prizes of EUR 100 000, EUR 70 000 and EUR 50 000 (2) EIC Rising Innovators: three prizes of EUR 50 000, EUR 30 000 and EUR 20 000 (under the age of 35) (3) EIT Women Leadership: The winner is awarded EUR 50 000, and two runners-up	In partnership with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA).	2011	The prize scheme evolved from the "European Woman Innovator of the Year". Revamped in 2023 in a new format jointly managed by the EIC and EIT.

		Innovators (3) EIT Women Leadership		are awarded EUR 30 000 and EUR 20 000 respectively.			
European Innovation Ecosystems (EIE) / European Innovation Council (EIC)	Women Tech EU	A 2-year EU-funded project supporting women leading deep tech startup companies from Europe.	To create a more gender-balanced entrepreneurship ecosystem.	Over two years, four calls for applications will select 160 beneficiaries, each receiving €75,000 in non-dilutive grants and a personalised business development programme featuring mentoring, coaching, and targeted training.	Led by a consortium of partners from 8 countries across Europe with the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency remaining its granting authority.	2021	
European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)	Supernovas	This initiative serves as a support system focused on increasing women's presence in both entrepreneurship and early-stage investment. It helps women advance into leadership positions while also expanding opportunities in areas where female	To increase women's participation and leadership in entrepreneurship, innovation, and investment by breaking barriers and unlocking their full potential within the ecosystem.		EIT Food, EIT Manufacturing e EIT Urban Mobility	2022	Includes Women2Invest, Women Investors Community, Rocket Up, and the Women Leadership Programme (see above).

		representation is currently limited.					
European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)	Girls go Circular/STEM	Educational programme providing free digital learning for girls aged 14-19 across Europe. Through the Circular Learning Space, participants gain digital and entrepreneurial skills, deepen their knowledge of the circular economy, and develop sustainability awareness while promoting equal opportunities.	To empower young girls with digital, STEM, and green skills, closing the gender gap and enabling them to become active agents of change in the circular economy and sustainability-driven sectors.		EIT RawMaterials and supported by DG EAC.	2020	Its annual flagship event is Women and Girls in STEM Forum. NB. This programme has been expanded and relaunched as Girls Go STEM.



Centre for European Policy Studies

Place du Congrès 1

1000-B Brussels

Belgium