

# MAKING GENDER-SMART INNOVATION HAPPEN

A Handbook of Good Practices in Gender  
Mainstreaming Across the EIT Community



Designed by Casa Bien

2026

This publication is brought to you by Supernovas, an initiative of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). Supernovas exists to unlock Europe's full potential by improving gender diversity in entrepreneurship and investment, empowering women founders and investors to drive lasting change.



**SUPERNOVAS**

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## ACROSS EUROPE, THE INNOVATION LANDSCAPE IS TRANSFORMING.



Yet one reality remains:

**EUROPE CANNOT REACH ITS FULL POTENTIAL WHILE GENDER INEQUALITIES CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE WHO INNOVATES, WHOSE IDEAS ATTRACT INVESTMENT, AND WHOSE SOLUTIONS SCALE.**

# FOREWARD

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) was created to strengthen Europe's innovation capacity, and that mission depends on enabling all talents to participate fully. Across the EIT Community, we see every day that diverse teams innovate faster, anticipate market needs more accurately, and deliver solutions with greater impact. When gender perspectives are embedded into programme design, founder support, or educational pathways, the outcomes are clear: a broader reach, stronger results, and more resilient innovation ecosystems.

This publication brings together concrete good practices from across the EIT Community, spanning business creation and acceleration, innovation pathways, and entrepreneurial education. Together, they show how gender equality increases innovation capacity and becomes a source of strategic advantage.

You will find examples of how EIT KICs are redesigning acceleration processes, integrating gender perspectives into innovation mentoring, strengthening the pipeline of women founders, and embedding inclusive thinking into entrepreneurial learning. These practices demonstrate that when we expand into who participates in innovation, we expand what innovation can achieve.

This publication also reflects the EIT Community's growing leadership in this area. The EIT has been recognized twice by the EU Agencies Network (EUAN), receiving first place in their Diversity & Inclusion Award in 2023 and again in 2025. These honors underline our collective commitment to building an innovation ecosystem where excellence and inclusion reinforce each other.

The practices in this report show that gender-smart innovation is actionable, measurable, and transformative. They offer tools that any organization can adopt, from venture support teams to educators and programme leaders, and they highlight the value of collaboration across sectors and communities.

I want to thank all colleagues across the EIT Community who contributed to this publication. Your work—designing, testing, improving, and sharing these practices—shows that by mainstreaming gender equality in how we teach, innovate, and support entrepreneurs, we shape an innovation ecosystem that is stronger, more creative, and better prepared for the future.

Let these practices inspire us to go further, to keep opening doors, challenging assumptions, and enabling every great idea to reach the market.

Martin Kern     Director, European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Gender equality is a driver of innovation excellence, competitiveness and positive societal impact. Yet across Europe’s innovation ecosystems, persistent gaps in participation, leadership and access to opportunities continue to hold back progress. The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) play a leading role in addressing these challenges by embedding gender mainstreaming as a quality principle across education, innovation and business creation.

( 01 )

This Handbook presents a selection of good practices implemented across the EIT Community between 2022 and 2025. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how targeted actions, institutional change, inclusive communication and cross-cutting gender integration can turn EU equality commitments into tangible progress. They highlight a wide range of approaches; from mentoring and leadership development to inclusive call design, gender-responsive innovation processes, and cross-regional collaboration, all contributing to stronger participation, visibility and leadership of women across innovation ecosystems.

( 02 )

The practices included are not exhaustive or presented as universal models. They reflect ongoing learning and illustrate how the EIT Community is navigating persistent gender barriers in male-dominated sectors, diverse regional contexts and evolving organisational capabilities. Each chapter highlights examples in Education, Innovation and Business Creation & Acceleration together with short-term results, lessons learned and elements that can be adapted to other KICs and stakeholders in the wider EU innovation landscape.

( 03 )

The Handbook concludes with seven cross-KIC lessons that underline the importance of leadership commitment, embedded processes, practical tools, stronger evidence and locally grounded approaches. The final recommendations call for strengthening gender mainstreaming as the key strategy supported by a clearer intersectional lens and by robust gender indicators to track real impact. Together, these insights reflect the progress already achieved and the ongoing efforts needed to ensure that gender equality becomes a driver of excellence across Europe’s innovation ecosystems.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Handbook reflects the collective commitment of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) to advancing gender equality and inclusion across innovation, entrepreneurship and education.

We also thank all participants from the KICs who took part in the Gender Mainstreaming Good Practices Workshops and contributed with collaborative spirit to validating and enriching the practice descriptions through dialogue and peer learning.

**Special appreciation**

Goes to Magdalena Gryszko-Szanto, EIT Gender Equality Lead, for her continuous support, guidance and inspiration throughout the process. We further recognise the many KIC teams and practitioners engaged in implementing gender mainstreaming across the EIT Community for their ongoing efforts to make gender equality an integral part of Europe's innovation ecosystem.

**BEHIND EVERY EFFORT TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY THERE ARE REAL PEOPLE, REAL STRUGGLES AND THE COURAGE TO PUSH BARRIERS THAT SHOULD NEVER HAVE EXISTED.**

**Coordinator and lead author**

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It is our hope that this publication will inspire and contribute to making gender equality a tangible reality in today's innovation efforts and in the better futures they aim to create.



# EXPERT REVIEW

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The EIT Gender Equality Handbook offers a compelling and practical overview of how gender equality can serve as a catalyst for innovation, competitiveness, and societal impact within Europe’s innovation ecosystem. The report positions gender mainstreaming not as an optional add-on but as a core quality principle embedded across the EIT Community’s activities; education, innovation, and business creation.

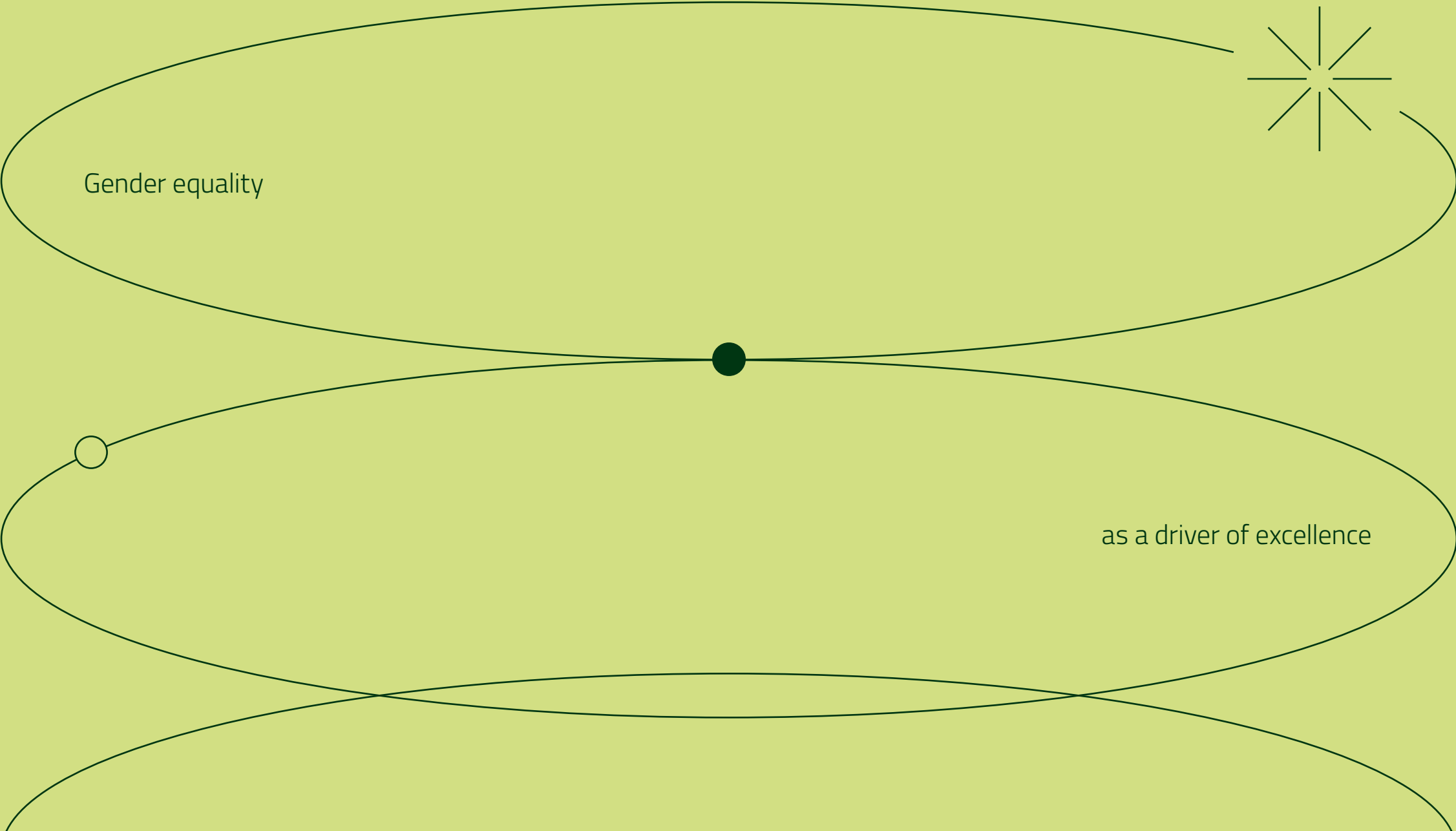
A major strength of the Handbook lies in its focus on actionable practices rather than abstract commitments. By showcasing initiatives implemented between 2022 and 2025, it demonstrates how targeted interventions, such as mentoring programs, leadership development, inclusive call design, and gender-responsive innovation processes, can translate EU policy goals into measurable progress. The diversity of approaches presented reflects adaptability to different sectors and regional contexts, which is critical given the persistent gender gaps in male-dominated fields.

### The report’s structure

Is clear and practical: each chapter highlights examples in Education, Innovation, and Business Creation & Acceleration, accompanied by short-term results and lessons learned. This makes the Handbook a useful resource for stakeholders seeking replicable strategies. Importantly, the concluding section synthesizes five cross-KIC lessons, emphasizing leadership commitment, embedded processes, practical tools, evidence-based approaches, and local adaptation. These insights underscore that systemic change requires both institutional will and effective operational mechanisms.

The Handbook acknowledges its own limitations: the practices are not exhaustive nor universally applicable. This transparency strengthens its credibility, framing the document as a “learning in motion” rather than a prescriptive manual. The final recommendations, calling for intersectional perspectives and robust gender indicators, signal a forward-looking agenda that aligns with broader EU priorities on equality and inclusion.

Overall The Handbook succeeds in bridging policy and practice. It provides a roadmap for embedding gender equality into innovation ecosystems, while recognizing the complexity of cultural and structural barriers. For policymakers, practitioners, and innovation leaders, this resource offers both inspiration and concrete tools to advance gender equality as a driver of excellence.



# FOUNDATIONS

- ( 1.0 ) **Introduction**
  - ( 1.1 ) Purpose and Objectives of the Handbook
  - ( 1.2 ) How to Use This Handbook
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# 1.1 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE HANDBOOK

( 01 )  
Consolidate Learning

( 02 )  
Foster Exchange and Collaboration

( 03 )  
Enable Replication and Inspire Transformation

Gender equality is both a core European value and a proven driver of innovation excellence. Across Europe, more equal societies are also more innovative and competitive, because inclusion fuels creativity, diversity strengthens problem-solving and balanced participation unlocks untapped talent.

In the last years the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Community has acted as a living laboratory for gender-smart innovation, testing, learning and scaling what works across Europe's research, education and entrepreneurship innovation ecosystems. 2024 Horizon Europe Report highlights that the EIT brings down barriers to women's participation in the European innovation ecosystem. In 2023 and 2025, the EU Agencies Network (EUAN) recognised the EIT's work and results on gender equality with the first price EUAN Diversity & Inclusion Award.

This Gender Mainstreaming Good Practice Handbook captures how the EIT Community and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) translate the principle of gender equality into action. Developed under the [EIT Community Supernovas Programme \(✕\)](#), Gender Mainstreaming Support Activity (2025), it compiles concrete examples of programmes, mechanisms and institutional changes that advance gender equality across its three core areas: education, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Its purpose is threefold:

- ( 01 ) Gather evidence from KIC experience to build a shared knowledge base.
- ( 02 ) Create a common reference point to support dialogue, comparison and cross-learning among KICs.
- ( 03 ) Highlight adaptable models, lessons and mechanisms that other innovation actors, inside and outside the EIT can apply.

# 1.2 HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

The Handbook serves as both a learning tool and an inspirational guide for the EIT Community and for Europe's broader innovation landscape. Each part can be read independently or as part of an integrated narrative.

## What you will find

- Part I **Foundations** The EU policy framework & EIT gender equality policy, methods and core gender-mainstreaming approaches.
- Part II **Practice** Thematic chapters on **Education** (✕), **Innovation** (✕) and **Business Creation & Acceleration** (✕), with practice fiches and toolboxes.

## How to use it

As background and resources material.

Click on each theme to explore good practices and replication tips.

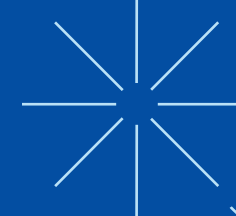
- Each Good Practice fiche includes:
- ( 01 ) The initiative's scope (cross-KIC or single KIC; region/countries).
  - ( 02 ) The gender-mainstreaming approaches applied, shown with icons.
  - ( 03 ) Key results, lessons learned, and transferability potential.

At the end of the thematic chapters, the Handbook presents seven cross-KIC lessons on advancing gender mainstreaming and a set of final recommendations outlining where future efforts should focus to strengthen gender equality in innovation.

By combining evidence, analysis and practical tools, the Handbook supports both reflection and action, helping the EIT Community and its partners move beyond representation toward more gender-responsive and transformative innovation.

## THE EIT'S GENDER-MAINSTREAMING JOURNEY IS EVOLVING:

( 01 )

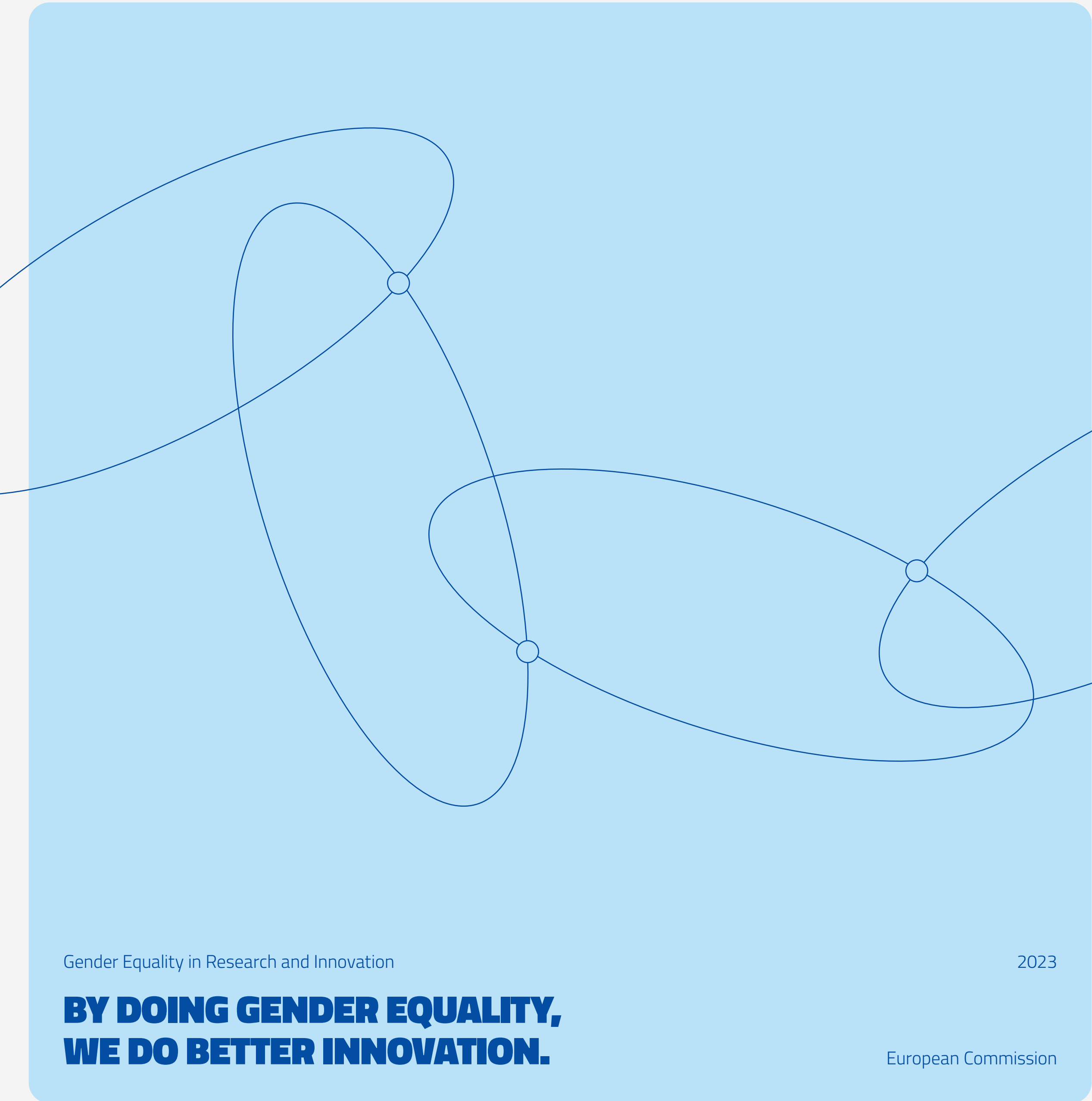


( 02 )



**THE PRACTICES IN THIS HANDBOOK SHOW LEARNING IN MOTION**

# 2.1 EU FOUNDATIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN INNOVATION



Gender Equality in Research and Innovation

2023

**BY DOING GENDER EQUALITY,  
WE DO BETTER INNOVATION.**

European Commission

Gender Equality is a cornerstone of the European Union and a The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Article 8) and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (Articles 21 and 23) require the Union to promote equality between women and men in all its activities, making gender equality both a legal obligation and a measure of quality. The EU's policy and legal frameworks have shifted gender equality from a standalone objective to a key driver of excellence, creativity, and impact in research and innovation (R&I).

By translating European principles into tangible results, the EIT and its community actively advance EU gender-equality policy. The practices showcased in this Handbook exemplify this contribution and support broader EU policies and programmes such as:

- + Horizon Europe
- + European Skills Agenda
- + European Green Deal
- + EU SME Strategy
- + EU Startup and Scale-up Strategy
- + European Innovation Agenda

2020–2025

## EU Gender Equality Strategy (✕)

The Strategy sets the political and legal foundation for a Union of Equality where women and men, in all their diversity, can thrive equally. It commits the European Commission and Member States to integrate a gender perspective into all EU policies and programmes, including research, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

2022–2027

## European Research Area Policy Agenda (✕)

Through the ERA, Member States and research and innovation actors collaborate to embed gender equality as a structural driver of excellence and sustainability. The ERA agenda promotes inclusive GEPs, the prevention of gender-based violence, and the collection of sex-disaggregated data as the foundation for evidence-based policy.

2021–2027

## Horizon Europe (✕)

Horizon Europe makes gender equality a core principle and funding requirement. Eligibility to coordinate or receive funding requires that public bodies, higher-education institutions, and research organisations have a Gender Equality Plan in place.

All applicants and consortia are expected to: integrate the gender dimension into research and innovation content and impact pathways; ensure gender balance in project teams, leadership, and evaluation processes; and adopt inclusive working conditions and communication practices.

## Toolbox: Resources for practitioners

- 2020 — Gendered Innovations 2 (+)  
Methods and case studies for integrating sex and gender analysis in research and innovation.
- 2021 — European Commission Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (+)  
Explains the four-pillar model for creating, implementing and monitoring effective GEPs.
- 2022 — EIGE GEAR Tool (updated edition) (+)  
Step-by-step toolkit for planning, implementing and evaluating gender-equality strategies in research and higher education institutions.
- 2022–2025 — GENDERACTIONplus (+)  
Peer-learning network and policy recommendations to strengthen gender equality and intersectionality across the European Research Area (ERA).
- 2022–2026 — INSPIRE (+)  
Support platform and training resources promoting “inclusive gendered innovation” within Horizon Europe.
- 2024 — She Figures (+)  
Latest statistical overview monitoring gender equality across EU research and innovation systems.

# 3.1 THE EIT AND ITS COMMUNITY

The [European Institute of Innovation and Technology \(+\)](#) (EIT) is an independent EU body established in 2008 to strengthen Europe's ability to innovate. Operating under Horizon Europe, it connects education, research and business through the knowledge triangle model.

Through its nine [Knowledge and Innovation Communities \(+\)](#) (KICs), Climate KIC, 28DIGITAL, InnoEnergy, Health, Food, Manufacturing, Raw Materials, Urban Mobility, and the new EIT Culture & Creativity, the EIT mobilises up to 2,420 partners across more than 70 Innovation Hubs in Europe and beyond.

# 3.2 GENDER AND DIVERSITY IN THE EIT MISSION

For the EIT, gender equality and diversity are core enablers of innovation. However, gender imbalances remain uneven across sectors where the KICs operate.

- ( 01 ) Men-dominated fields such as raw materials, energy, manufacturing and mobility show lower participation of women.
- ( 02 ) Digital and technology-driven sectors still face persistent gender gaps in STEM education and leadership.
- ( 03 ) Food, health and culture involve more women, yet barriers to leadership and to integrating the gender dimension persist.

Gender mainstreaming within the EIT Community reflects the diversity of Europe's innovation landscape. Through the [Regional Innovation Scheme \(RIS\) \(+\)](#), the EIT extends its activities to modest- and moderate-innovation regions, supporting tailored mentoring, awareness-raising, and capacity-building initiatives. EIT Hubs across the EIT RIS area increasingly integrate the gender dimension into innovation design and evaluation, with local partners bringing valuable local knowledge and context. Together, these Hubs enhance the EIT Community's ability to promote inclusive and gender-responsive innovation across Europe.

Across these contexts, the EIT Community becomes a platform for gender-smart innovation. By translating EU equality principles into practice, it demonstrates how gender equality and diversity strengthen the quality, reach and societal impact of Europe's innovation.

+ Regional Innovation Scheme.

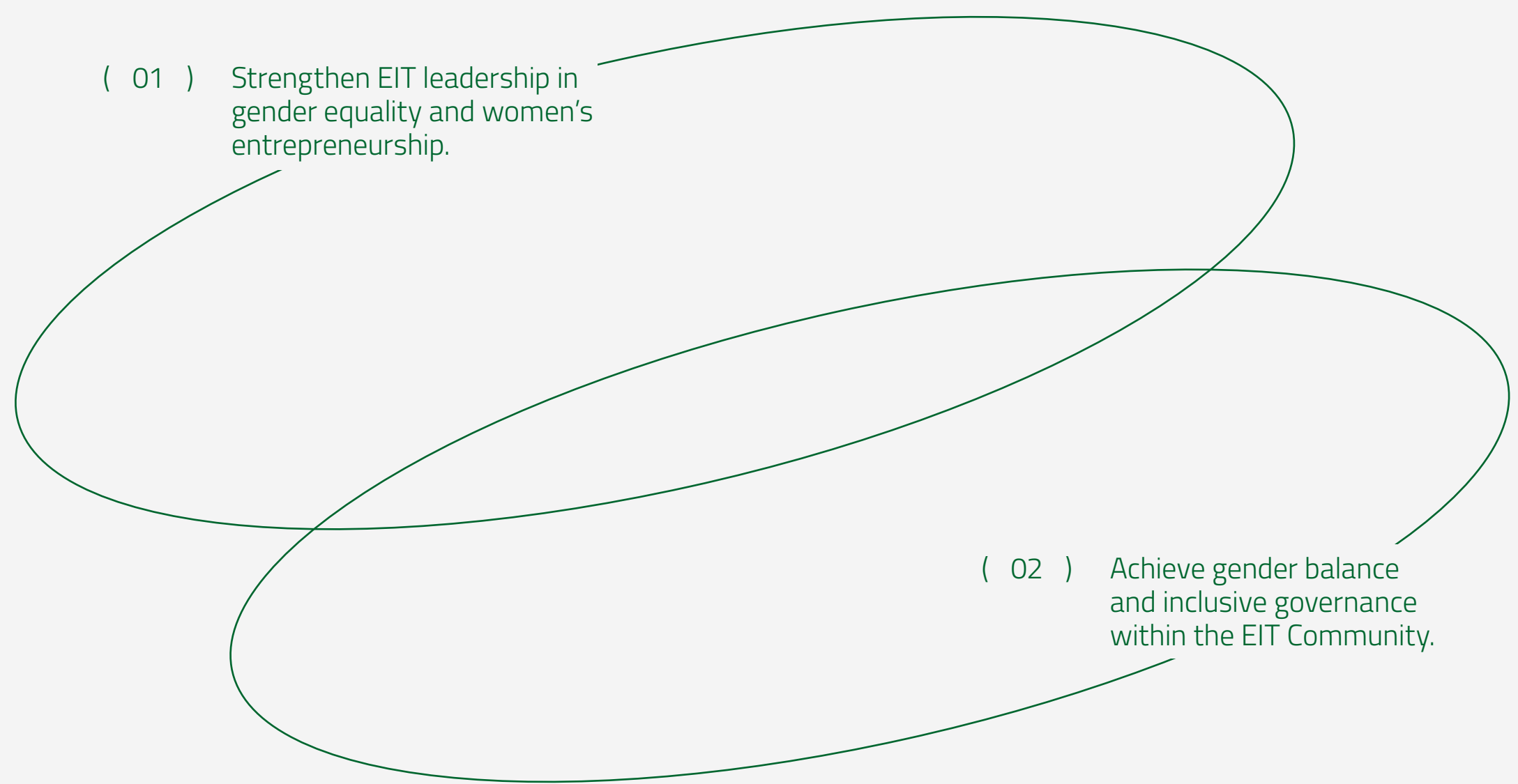


# 3.3 THE EIT GENDER EQUALITY POLICY AND ACTION PLANS (2022–2027)

Adopted in 2022, the [EIT Gender Equality Policy \(+\)](#) aligns with the [EU Policy and Legal framework for gender equality in innovation \(+\)](#).

Its vision is clear: “The EIT and its Community will take a leading role in promoting gender equality, diversity and inclusion across the European innovation ecosystem.”

Two long-term objectives guide this vision:



2021–2024

## Building the foundations

KICs adopted or updated Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) aligned with Horizon Europe requirements.

Gender Focal Points were established in each KIC and cross-KICs gender equality working group was created.

Gender mainstreaming integrated into strategic and operational planning of EIT and all KICs.

Specific cross-KICs initiatives such as EIT Community SUPERNOVAS, EIT Community Girls Go STEM (previously Circular) and EIT Red Kalyna were launched to strengthened women's participation in entrepreneurship and innovation.

## Achievements

Indicator	Women %	Target %	2024 Status
CEOs / owners of EIT-supported start-ups & scale-ups.	26,1	25	Exceeded
CEOs / owners of start-ups created of/for innovation through EIT programmes.	28	25	Exceeded
Students in EIT-labelled education.	43	40	Exceeded
Participants in non-labelled training.	56	50	Exceeded
Decision-makers within the EIT Community.	41,1	40	Exceeded

+ EIT Gender Equality Policy.  
 + Section 2.0: EU Policy and Legal Framework for Gender Equality in Innovation

2025–2027

# Deepening integration and impact

Building on these foundations, the [EIT Gender Equality Action Plan 2025–2027 \(+\)](#) embeds gender equality across the EIT Community’s governance, operations and programme content, turning commitment into measurable impact across all pillars of the knowledge triangle. Its six strategic areas translate gender-equality priorities into clear targets and action pathways for the EIT Community.

During 2025- 2027, the EIT will strengthen gender integration as a cross-cutting principle, harmonise data collection across KICs and foster systematic cross-learning through the EIT KICs Gender Equality Working Group.

EIT Gender Equality Policy

**DIVERSITY AND GENDER EQUALITY ARE NOT PERIPHERAL TO INNOVATION, THEY ARE CONDITIONS FOR EXCELLENCE.**

2022–2027

Innovation  
**30%**  
 women in programmes, gender dimension in calls, gender-responsive design.

Education  
**40%**  
 women & men, gender dimension in curricula, inclusive learning design.

Business Creation & Acceleration  
**35%**  
 women CEOs/owners, Gender mainstreaming in calls.

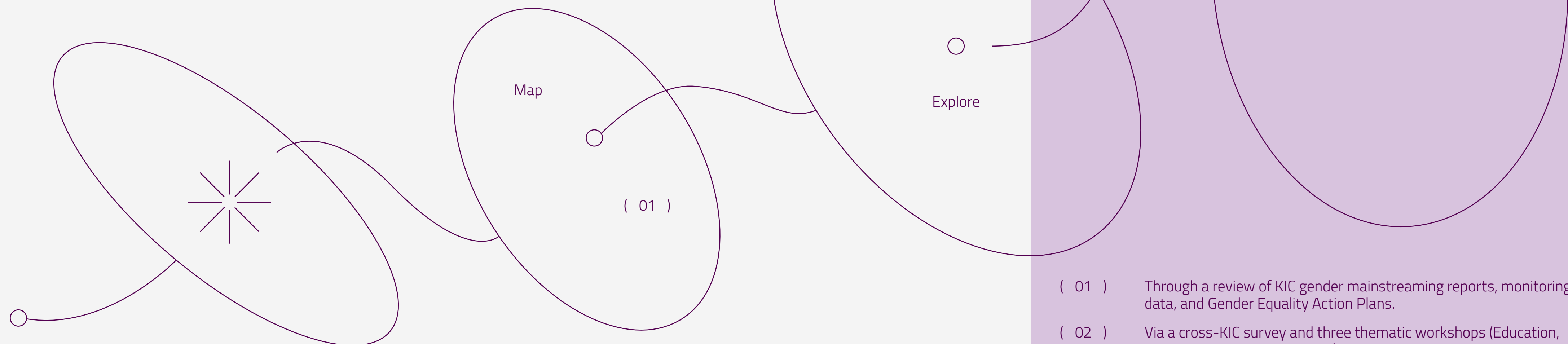
Institutional Transformation  
**Gender-balance**  
 in decision making, high-quality GEPs, work-life balance, and pay-gap monitoring.

Strategic Partnerships  
**Cooperation**  
 with European gender-equality networks, financial institutions and policy bodies.

Communication  
**Inclusive language**  
 & visuals, gender-sensitive events, visibility of women innovators

# 4.0 METHODOLOGY TO IDENTIFY AND ASSESS THE GOOD PRACTICES

The identification of gender mainstreaming good practices within the EIT Community followed a harmonised and transparent process, designed to ensure both credibility and comparability across KICs. The aim was not to portray an exhaustive inventory of actions, but to capture a curated selection of initiatives that illustrate how the EIT Community is embedding gender perspectives in education, innovation, and business creation.



The methodology built on three interconnected elements:

- ( 01 ) Through a review of KIC gender mainstreaming reports, monitoring data, and Gender Equality Action Plans.
- ( 02 ) Via a cross-KIC survey and three thematic workshops (Education, Innovation, Business Creation).
- ( 03 ) In collaboration with KIC gender focal points and the EIT Gender Equality Lead.

This mixed-method approach made it possible to combine quantitative indicators with qualitative insights, capturing both institutional progress and the lived experience of gender mainstreaming in practice.

# 4.1 DEFINITION, SCOPE AND SELECTION

In this Handbook

## A Good Practice

is defined as an initiative that has advanced gender equality or gender-responsive innovation, produced observable results and offers potential for replication in other contexts of the EU innovation ecosystem.

Focused primarily on actions implemented between 2022 and 2024, corresponding to the first full cycle of EIT Gender Equality Plans (while also including practices that continued into early–mid 2025) where early, verifiable results were already available. Each initiative was reviewed against four interconnected criteria.



Criteria

What was considered

( 1 )

Relevance

Alignment with EIT and EU gender-equality objectives; response to sectoral or structural gaps.

( 2 )

Positive change and impact

Evidence of short term quantitative progress or qualitative transformation.

( 3 )

Learning value

Clarity of enablers, challenges and lessons for institutional learning.

( 4 )

Transferability

Potential to inspire adaptation in other KICs or organisations.

# 4.2 ANALYTICAL PROCESS AND INTERPRETATION

All initiatives were analysed using a comparable format (the Good Practice fiche) and are presented in a condensed version in the thematic chapters, focusing on the essential elements of each practice to ensure clarity and comparability. These practices represent different levels of maturity, from targeted pilot actions to structural changes in policy and governance. The analysis recognises that gender mainstreaming across the EIT Community is still evolving. Therefore, the focus is on short-term, verifiable progress, such as improved participation, growing institutional awareness and the integration of gender perspectives into programme design, while also identifying emerging signals of systemic change

This method reflects the Horizon Europe philosophy: learn through evidence, improve through reflection, and scale what works.

The analytical process serves three main purposes:

( 1 )

Establish a baseline for ongoing monitoring and policy learning.

( 2 )

Support exchange and collaboration among KICs.

( 3 )

Inspire external stakeholders to adopt gender-responsive practices across the wider EU innovation ecosystem.

**DOCUMENTING WHAT WORKS AND WHAT STILL NEEDS WORK, IS THE MOST POWERFUL TOOL FOR LEARNING.**

(+) EIGE  
Research and Innovation

**GENDER MAINSTREAMING IS THE SYSTEMATIC CONSIDERATION OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CONDITIONS, SITUATIONS AND NEEDS OF WOMEN AND MEN IN ALL POLICIES AND ACTIONS.**

# 5.0 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE EIT CONTEXT

In research and innovation, gender mainstreaming means analysing how gender influences:

- ( 01 ) Who participates in teams, decision-making and leadership.
- ( 02 ) What is prioritised in research agendas, innovation design and funding.
- ( 03 ) How results are produced and used ensuring that outcomes are relevant, inclusive and equitable.

Integrating gender equality matters for innovation because:

- ( 01 ) Improves excellence and quality by avoiding bias and blind spots in data, design and testing.
- ( 02 ) Strengthens market relevance by addressing diverse user needs.
- ( 03 ) Expands the talent base, increasing creativity and competitiveness.
- ( 04 ) Supports ethical and sustainable innovation aligned with EU values.

Gender Equality in Research and Innovation


2023

**INCLUSIVE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION LEAD TO BETTER SCIENCE AND STRONGER SOCIETIES.**

European Commission

# 5.1 APPROACHES TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING

In this Handbook, the good practices presented are organised around five complementary approaches and dimensions. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, most initiatives combine several to achieve lasting impact.

 **Intersectionality** Dimensions

**Definition** Addressing overlapping inequalities (e.g. gender, geography, age, disability) to ensure inclusiveness and fairness.

**Example** Initiatives supporting women and gender-diverse people from underrepresented regions or groups, including those facing multiple barriers to participation.

 **Communication & Visibility** Dimensions

**Definition** Promoting equality through inclusive language, balanced representation and visible role models.

**Example** Gender-sensitive communication guidelines, awareness campaigns and storytelling that highlights women and other underrepresented innovators.

 **Specific Actions** Approach

**Definition** Targeted measures that directly address gender gaps and promote equal participation or leadership of underrepresented groups.

**Example** Mentoring, leadership training, scholarships or entrepreneurship and investment support for women and gender-diverse innovators.

 **Cross-Cutting Integration** Approach

**Definition** Embedding gender perspectives and data systematically across programme design, implementation and evaluation.

**Example** Gender criteria in funding calls, gender-responsive curricula and monitoring systems using sex-disaggregated data.

 **Institutional Change** Approach

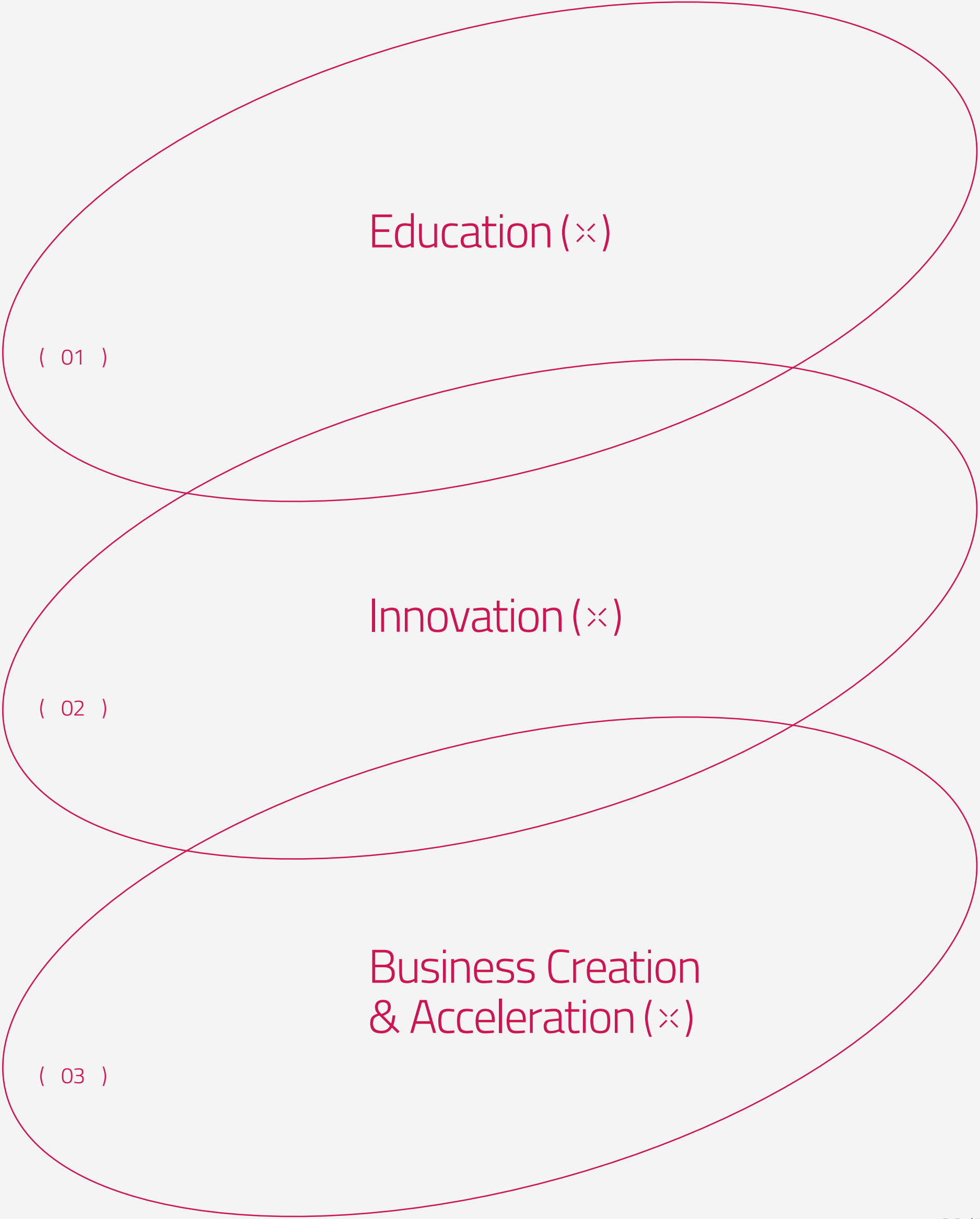
**Definition** Transforming organisational structures and culture to make equality part of decision-making and accountability.

**Example** Adoption of gender policies or GEPs, creation of gender focal points, capacity building and inclusion of gender KPI.

# 5.2 NAVIGATING THE HANDBOOK: FROM FRAMEWORK TO PRACTICE

This first part of the Handbook has outlined the EU and EIT frameworks, the rationale for gender equality in innovation and the approaches used across the EIT Community. Part 2 puts these principles into action, showing selected examples of how the EIT Community transforms gender equality policy into real initiatives. Click each thematic areas to see how the EIT KICs are embedding gender mainstreaming across Europe’s innovation ecosystem.

- ( 01 ) Building inclusive learning environments.
- ( 02 ) Embedding gender in innovation systems.
- ( 03 ) Supporting gender-smart entrepreneurship.



# SELECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES

( 1.1 ) Gender Equality in Europe's Innovation Ecosystem

( 1.2 ) Overview of Selected Good Practices

( 1.3 ) Education: Building Inclusive Learning Environments

( 1.4 ) Innovation: Embedding Gender in Innovation Systems

( 1.5 ) Business Creation & Acceleration: Supporting Gender Smart Entrepreneurship

( 1.6 ) Ongoing Gender Mainstreaming Efforts Across the EIT Community



# 1.1 GENDER EQUALITY IN EUROPE'S INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

## ( 01 ) The challenge

Europe's innovation potential is held back by a persistent leaky pipeline, where women's participation steadily declines from education into research, entrepreneurship and leadership. This drop-off is amplified by regional disparities and intersecting inequalities linked to socio-economic background, age, disability and migration status. As a result, diverse talent is not fully reflected in the creation, funding or scaling of Europe's innovations, limiting both opportunity and competitiveness.

## ( 02 ) Why it matters

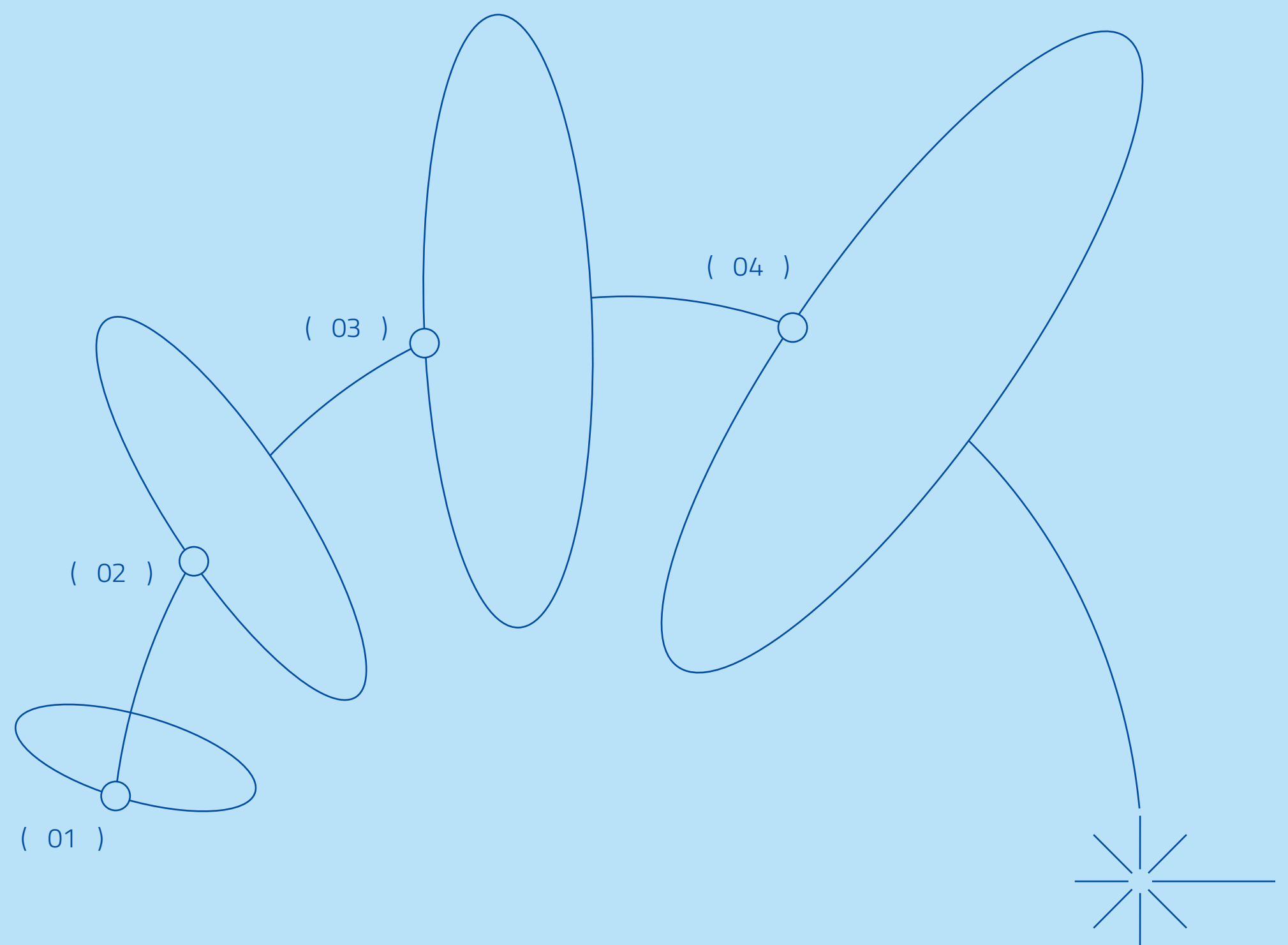
Closing gender gaps is both a social and economic imperative. Diverse and gender-balanced teams consistently deliver stronger innovation performance, better decision-making and more sustainable outcomes. Regions with higher levels of gender equality are also more innovative, confirming that equality is a catalyst for competitiveness. Integrating gender and diversity perspectives enhances creativity, strengthens the relevance of solutions, and builds resilience across innovation ecosystems.

## ( 03 ) Positive trends

Progress is visible. Women's share among deep-tech founders has doubled since 2010 and gender-smart investment instruments, such as the [European Investment Fund Gender Smart Equity Investment Programme \(+\)](#), the [Women TechEU scheme \(+\)](#), the [InvestEU Gender Finance Lab \(+\)](#) developed with the European Investment Bank (EIB), the [EIT Community SUPERNOVAS programme \(+\)](#), are directing capital and support to diverse innovators.

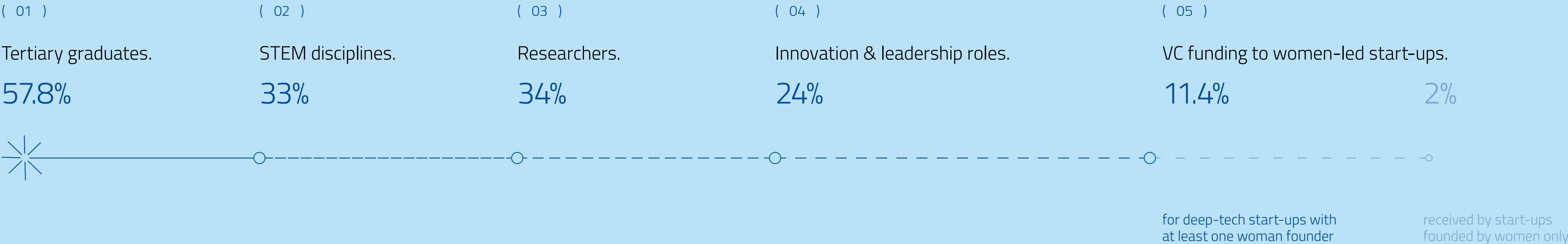
## ( 04 ) Opportunities ahead

Sustaining this progress requires embedding equality, with intersectional awareness, into every stage of the innovation chain, from education to research and business creation. Innovation policies must consider whose futures they design for.



This infographic highlights where women's participation declines along the innovation pipeline and shows which EIT Community good practices address each gap.

## Leaky pipeline



Challenges	Good practices addressing this challenge
( 01 ) High entry participation, but not sustained into STEM, R&I, or innovation leadership.	STRADA, WE Lead Food, Deep Tech Talent Initiative, Girls Go STEM, UMX, Top Female Founders.
( 02 ) Persistent gender gap; stereotypes; lack of early role models.	Girls Go STEM, Deep Tech Talent Initiative, UMX, WE Lead Food.
( 03 ) Underrepresentation in research careers; limited gender dimension in R&I content.	Gender Mainstreaming in Innovation, Gender Smart Handbook, WE Lead Food, UMX, WIN-ITS, Red Kalyna.
( 04 ) Low representation of women in innovation leadership and sector decision-making.	Top Female Founders, WE Lead Food, WIN-ITS, Red Kalyna, STRADA, SUPERNOVAS.
( 05 ) Barriers in access to capital, networks and visibility.	Top Female Founders, SUPERNOVAS, EWA, Climate Entrepreneurship Programme, Gender Mainstreaming in Startups.

The following pages are organised around the three thematic areas:

- Education
- Innovation
- Business Creation & Acceleration

These practices are presented with key lessons and recommendations. These initiatives are not perfect models, but examples of progress and early steps toward systemic change.

Readers can click on each good practice or thematic area to learn more.



## SUPERNOVAS reports (x) found that:

Over

80%

of European VC funding still flows to all-male founding teams.

Women-founded tech scale-ups grew

6.5x

between 2017–2022, outpacing the 5.5x growth of all European scale-ups.

Women-founded companies grew

1.2x faster

than the European scale-up average in the last five years.

In deep tech, women represent

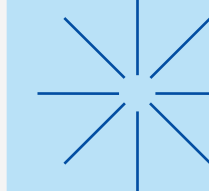
~14%

of founding teams, with numbers gradually increasing over time.

## + Gender Diversity

strengthens entrepreneurial ecosystems, improving performance, visibility, and access to investment.

## Closing the gaps



Intersectional data remain scarce across EU innovation ecosystems, limiting evidence-based policy and investment decisions.

- Gender-diverse teams deliver stronger innovation performance, companies with diverse leadership generate up to 19% more innovation revenue.
- Advancing gender equality could add between €1.95 and €3.15 trillion to EU GDP by 2050.

As we believe in this handbook:

**WHEN WOMEN'S TALENT, IDEAS AND LEADERSHIP POWER EVERY STAGE OF THE INNOVATION CHAIN, EUROPE NOT ONLY BECOMES FAIRER, IT BECOMES STRONGER.**

# 1.2 OVERVIEW OF SELECTED GOOD PRACTICES

## STRADA: Strengthening Women in Manufacturing Leadership

EIT Manufacturing

Short objective

To strengthen women's leadership in manufacturing through mentoring, training and a supportive professional community.

## Top Female Founders Summer School

EIT Health

Short objective

To equip women founders in health innovation with entrepreneurship skills, confidence and networks to scale gender-responsive health solutions.

## WE Lead Food: Women's Leadership in Agrifood Innovation

EIT Food

Short objective

To support to women leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators to thrive in food systems through targeted training, mentoring, and networks.

## EIT Community Girls Go STEM

EIT Raw Materials: Cross-KIC

Short objective

To inspire girls aged 14–19 to engage with STEM and sustainability topics through inclusive activities, engaging learning and role-model visibility.

## Gender Balance in Deep Tech Training: EIT Community Deep Tech Talent Initiative

EIT Community: Cross-KIC

Short objective

To ensure women (minimum of 30%) access deep-tech training and leadership pathways through targets, inclusive design and visibility.

## Integrating Gender & Diversity in Educational Media (UMX)

EIT Urban Mobility

Short objective

To make educational media equitable by ensuring gender-balanced experts, inclusive content and diverse representation in the productions.targets, inclusive design and visibility.

## Gender Mainstreaming in Innovation Support

EIT Food

Short objective

To embed gender equality in innovation processes through capacity building, inclusive evaluation and gender-responsive tools.

# 1.2 OVERVIEW OF SELECTED GOOD PRACTICES (CONT.)

## Gender Smart Handbook for Climate Entrepreneurs

Climate KIC

Short objective

To provide start-ups and Entrepreneurship Support Organisations with practical tools to apply gender-responsive approaches in climate innovation.

## SUPERNOVAS: Making Women Shine in the Entrepreneurial Universe

EIT Community: Cross-KIC

Short objective

To break barriers and increase women presence and leadership in the entrepreneurship, innovation and investment ecosystem through acceleration, training, mentoring and a strong European community.

## EWA: Empowering Women in Agrifood

EIT Food

Short objective

To support early-stage women agrifood entrepreneurs through personalised mentoring, training and local ecosystem access.

## Women in Nordic Intelligent Transport Systems (WIN-ITS 2)

EIT Urban Mobility

Short objective

To advance gender equality in the intelligent transport systems sector across the Nordic and Baltic regions by facilitating international and local learning and dialogue.

## Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Entrepreneurship Programme

Climate KIC

Short objective

To help Entrepreneurship Support Organisations integrate gender equality into recruitment, programme design, funding and monitoring to build inclusive climate innovation pipelines.

## Red Kalyna: Empowering Ukrainian Women Innovators

EIT Community: Cross-KIC RIS Cluster

Short objective

To recognise and support Ukrainian women innovators affected by war through visibility, networking and community-building.

## Gender Mainstreaming in Start-up Support (Calls & Acceleration)

EIT Urban Mobility, EIT Community  
Jumpstarter, EIT Global Outreach

Short objective

To embed gender equality in scouting, call design, evaluation and communication to increase fairness and diversity in start-up support mechanisms.

# 1.3 EDUCATION: BUILDING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Education is where Europe's innovation journey begins and it is central to the EIT model.

( 01 / 06 )

- Specific actions
- Communication & Visibility
- Intersectionality

**EIT Community Girls Go STEM**  
Empowering the next generation in sustainability & STEM.

( 02 / 06 )

- Specific actions
- Institutional Change

**STRADA**  
Strengthening women in manufacturing leadership.

( 03 / 06 )

- Specific actions
- Intersectionality
- Institutional Change

**Top Female Founders Sumer School**  
Women's health innovation and entrepreneurship.

( 04 / 06 )

- Specific actions
- Intersectionality
- Institutional Change

**WE Lead Food**  
Women's leadership in agrifood innovation.

( 05 / 06 )

- Cross-cutting Integration
- Communication & Visibility

**Gender Balance in Deep Tech Training**  
EIT Community Deep Tech Talent Initiative.

( 06 / 06 )

- Cross-cutting Integration
- Communication & Visibility
- Intersectionality

**Integrating Gender and Diversity in Educational Media**  
Urban Mobility Explained (UMX).

Good Practice

( 01 / 06 )

## EIT Community Girls Go STEM

Empowering the next generation in sustainability &amp; STEM.

+ Specific actions

∞ Intersectionality

⋮ Communication &amp; Visibility



EIT Raw Materials

Cross-KIC

Launched in 2021, Girls Go STEM (+) equips girls aged 14–19 with digital and sustainability-related skills while challenging stereotypes that limit their aspirations. It is the EIT Community's flagship cross-KIC education initiative, offering a multilingual e-learning platform, interactive digital modules, a challenge-based learning approach, hands-on workshops, mentoring, teacher training and visibility campaigns. The initiative combines engaging learning experiences with the systematic integration of gender-sensitive and inclusive pedagogy into educational content and school curricula.

Impact

Girls Go STEM reached 58,000+ girls across 35 countries (2021–2024). 70% reported increased interest in STEM studies and 50% of teachers improved gender-sensitive classroom practices. Over 1,200 schools and 300 mentors participated. Qualitative results include greater confidence and sense of belonging among girls, stronger teacher capacity for inclusive STEM education, long-term institutional uptake of the e-learning platform and increased visibility of women role models inspiring boys and girls.

Lessons learned

Success was driven by combining gamified digital learning with real-world experiences, collaboration with schools and ministries, strong role-model visibility and alignment with EU entrepreneurial and green competency frameworks.

Challenges persist regarding uneven technology access across regions, inconsistent inclusion of gender content in national curricula and the need for sustained funding and long-term monitoring.

Transferability

( 01 )

Combine digital and experiential learning on practical, future-oriented skills with gender equality.

( 02 )

Empower teachers and mentors as equality multipliers.

( 03 )

Embed gender equality objectives in educational design and partnerships.

( 04 )

Use storytelling and diverse role models to challenge stereotypes.

( 05 )

Leverage cross-sector collaboration to ensure relevance and sustainability

**“GIRLS GO CIRCULAR HAS EMPOWERED ME AND MANY OTHER GIRLS TO TAKE INITIATIVE FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT, STEP INTO STEM, AND HELP CREATE A BETTER FUTURE.”**

Aarvi  
15 years old

Malta

Impact

Between 2023–2024, STRADA engaged over 430 participants (280 mentees and 150 mentors) from 25 nationalities, including more than 200 from RIS countries, awarding over 400 certifications. Fifty events reached more than 130,000 attendees, and 237 digital learning paths were completed. Participants reported strengthened leadership readiness, confidence and professional visibility, expanded industry networks and meaningful cross-generational exchange. The programme increased company commitment to advancing women's leadership and diversity across all levels of manufacturing and created a vibrant, supportive network of women leaders.

Lessons learned

Success was enabled by strong institutional commitment from EIT Manufacturing, integration of mentoring, leadership training and community-building, inclusive programme design ensuring access for RIS participants and collaboration with mentors and industry partners.

Challenges included securing long-term sustainability and funding, balancing participation with professional and personal responsibilities and addressing varying levels of organisational readiness for gender equality initiatives.

Transferability

- ( 01 ) Use mentoring as a strategic tool to foster women's leadership in technical sectors.
- ( 02 ) Combine online learning with peer-to-peer and expert interaction for scalable impact.
- ( 03 ) Engage companies as active partners to strengthen institutional commitment.
- ( 04 ) Apply the model to other innovation domains to build inclusive leadership pipelines.

**“JOINING STRADA’S PROGRAMME HAS BEEN A GAME-CHANGER FOR MY CAREER. THE COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SKILLS I HAVE GAINED ARE INVALUABLE.”**

Participant  
2025

Good Practice ( 02 / 06 )

# STRADA

Strengthening women in manufacturing leadership.

- + Specific actions
- \* Institutional Change

## Strada.

EIT Manufacturing Single-KIC

STRADA (+) tackles gender imbalance in the manufacturing sector by supporting women's leadership and visibility in industrial innovation. Through a structured three-month mentoring and leadership programme combining online learning paths, expert guidance, workshops, community events and peer exchange via an online platform, it equips women leaders with the skills, confidence and networks to advance into decision-making roles. Its integrated approach supports both individual empowerment and systemic cultural change.

Good Practice

( 03 / 06 )

## Top Female Founders Summer School

Women's health innovation and entrepreneurship.

+ Specific actions

∞ Intersectionality

\* Institutional Change



EIT Health

Single-KIC

The Top Female Founders Summer School (+) supports women entrepreneurs in health innovation, strengthening leadership confidence and visibility in a sector where women remain underrepresented as founders and investors. The programme focuses on women-led start-ups developing solutions in women's and family health, integrating entrepreneurship training with mentoring and investor readiness.

Impact

Since 2021, the programme has supported over 100 women entrepreneurs from more than 20 countries, including RIS areas. Dozens of start-ups have been developed or strengthened, with several securing follow-up investment. Participants reported strengthened entrepreneurial and leadership skills, enhanced visibility and networking opportunities and greater awareness of gender gaps in the health innovation ecosystem.

Lessons learned

Success stems from its clear focus on women-led innovation in health, combining business skills, leadership and visibility within one comprehensive format. A strong network of mentors, experts and investors supports participants' growth, reinforced by alignment with EIT Health's mission to promote inclusive entrepreneurship.

Challenges include limited resources to expand to more regions and languages, the need for continued post-programme support and funding and maintaining participant diversity across disciplines and backgrounds.

Transferability

( 01 )

Combine short, intensive training formats with ongoing mentoring to sustain impact.

( 02 )

Target women innovators in underrepresented sectors, linking inclusion + market potential.

( 03 )

Engage investors and experts early to strengthen networks and credibility.

( 04 )

Use alumni networks and storytelling to promote role models and long-term visibility.

**"I LEFT NOT ONLY WITH A BUSINESS PLAN, BUT WITH A NETWORK OF WOMEN INNOVATORS WHO UNDERSTAND THE BARRIERS WE FACE AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM."**

Participant

2024

Impact

Between 2022–2024, WE Lead Food trained over 600 women professionals across more than 60 countries, including participants from 10 RIS regions and engaged over 60 mentors and experts from industry, academia and entrepreneurship. 90% of participants reported increased leadership confidence and career progression. Qualitative outcomes include strengthened leadership capabilities, enhanced professional networks, increased representation of women in agrifood innovation and business ecosystems and greater visibility of women leaders contributing to sustainable food systems.

Lessons learned

Success was driven by a tailored approach responding to women’s professional realities in agrifood, a strong community and alumni network fostering peer support, collaboration with EIT Food partners ensuring sectoral relevance and integration with other EIT Food initiatives supporting entrepreneurship and innovation.

Challenges include limited funding for expansion and long-term follow-up, unequal access to professional networks between regions and the need to reach women in less represented areas and smaller agrifood enterprises.

Transferability

- ( 01 ) Combine leadership and mentoring as dual pillars for empowering women professionals.
- ( 02 ) Target women from underrepresented regions through flexible, online formats.
- ( 03 ) Build strong alumni communities to sustain learning and peer support.
- ( 04 ) Use communication and storytelling to showcase women’s leadership.
- ( 05 ) Equip women to lead across business, policy and research environments.

**“WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS FACE MORE CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING FUNDING, WOMEN- FOCUSED ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMMES LIKE WE LEAD FOOD ARE NECESSARY RATHER THAN JUST INCLUSIVE.”**

Maarten van der Kamp  
Director of Education

EIT Food

Good Practice ( 04 / 06 )

## WE Lead Food

Women’s leadership In agrifood innovation.

- + Specific actions
- ∞ Intersectionality
- \* Institutional Change

EIT Food Single-KIC

WE Lead FOOD (+) empowers women across Europe’s agrifood sector to take on leadership and entrepreneurial roles, addressing persistent gender gaps in decision-making and innovation. The programme supports women professionals, particularly from RIS countries, through leadership training, mentoring and community exchange. Based on the Three Cs of collective leadership – connect, collaborate and co-create – WE Lead Food creates enabling environments where women leaders thrive and are inspired by other women leaders.

Good Practice

( 05 / 06 )

## Gender Balance in Deep Tech Training

EIT Community Deep Tech Talent Initiative.

✳ Cross-cutting Integration

☰ Communication &amp; Visibility



EIT Community

Cross-KIC

The EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative (+) strengthens Europe's capacity in deep tech areas. The initiative is a European Commission's flagship programme, with the goal to train one million people in deep tech by 2025, under which the EIT Community ensures that women and under represented groups have access to learning opportunities and leadership pathways. By embedding gender equality in programme design, the EIT Deep Tech Talent helps close the participation gap in one of Europe's fastest-growing innovation fields.

Impact

36 % women learners, exceeding the 30% target (2023–June 2025). Women reached 50% representation in advisory boards and among speakers. One million deep-tech talents were trained through Pledgers' programmes by March 2025. Qualitative results include the normalisation of women's participation in deep-tech training environments, improved visibility of women innovators and experts in media and events and stronger collaboration across KICs, universities and industrial training providers to promote inclusive innovation.

Lessons learned

Success was enabled by clear, measurable gender targets anchored in programme governance, mandatory gender requirements in partner pledges and calls, transparent monitoring of participation data, high-level institutional commitment and leadership visibility, a woman-led coordination team ensuring continuous attention to equality.

Challenges included sustaining gender balance in male-dominated sectors, varying maturity of equality policies among partners, reliance on voluntary reporting and debates on evolving from minimum targets toward parity or intersectional inclusion.

Transferability

( 01 )

Establish gender balance targets in governance and funding frameworks.

( 02 )

Require sex-disaggregated data reporting and gender policies from organisations.

( 03 )

Include gender criteria in proposal evaluations and calls.

( 04 )

Use communication to normalise women's leadership in deep tech.

( 05 )

Foster collaboration across education, industry and policy for institutional transformation.

**PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY NOT ONLY ENRICHES THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE BUT ALSO ENSURES THAT INNOVATION SERVES SOCIETY'S BROADER NEEDS.**

Prof. Dr. Gonca Telli  
Pledger

EIT Deep Tech  
Talent Initiative

Impact

Interviewees: 73 in 2023 (51% women / 49% men) and 104 in 2024 (47% women / 53% men). Filmmakers: 12 in 2023 (33% women / 67% men) and 22 in 2024 (55% women / 45% men).

Inclusive language and representation standards were adopted in 100% of productions. Qualitative results include greater visibility of women and gender-diverse experts, integration of intersectional perspectives on accessibility, safety and representation and enhanced internal awareness among EIT Urban Mobility staff and stakeholders regarding inclusive communication and gender mainstreaming in education.

Lessons learned

Success was supported by strong leadership commitment to equality and diversity, a formalised monitoring system ensuring accountability, collaboration with women filmmakers and diverse experts and a structured methodology covering recruitment, language, storylines and visuals. Data-driven evaluation and feedback enabled continuous improvement.

Challenges included ensuring full gender balance across all productions, manual gender identification before self-reporting was standardised, limited resources for systematic diversity auditing and ensuring balanced representation across languages and regions.

Transferability

- ( 01 ) Apply self-reported gender and diversity monitoring instead of assumptions.
- ( 02 ) Integrate inclusive production guidelines into communication workflows.
- ( 03 ) Ensure diversity among filmmakers, interviewees, and technical teams.
- ( 04 ) Showcase women and diverse professionals to normalise visibility.
- ( 05 ) Use intersectional analysis and viewer feedback to refine content.

**“DIVERSE MOBILITY STORIES MAKE INCLUSIVE INNOVATION VISIBLE.”**

Maurie Chokoualé  
Media Content Officer  
EIT Urban Mobility

Good Practice ( 06 / 06 )

## Integrating Gender and Diversity in Educational Media

Urban Mobility Explained (UMX)

- \* Cross-cutting Integration
- ... Communication & Visibility
- ∩ Intersectionality



EIT Urban Mobility Single-KIC

The Urban Mobility Explained (UMX) (+) YouTube channel demonstrates how gender and diversity can be embedded in educational media to make learning and innovation more inclusive. Launched in 2023 by EIT Urban Mobility, it hosts short, accessible videos on sustainable urban mobility and innovation, ensuring gender balance and diversity among experts, creators and interviewees. By transforming visibility into a tool for inclusion, UMX promotes a more representative mobility ecosystem across Europe. By December 2025, the channel had produced over 320 videos with 45 filmmakers and nearly 400 interviewees from 100 cities, attracting 55,000+ subscribers and 7 million views.

# 1.4 INNOVATION: EMBEDDING GENDER IN INNOVATION SYSTEMS

Innovation is at the heart of the EIT mission, connecting education, research and business to transform ideas into impact.

✳ Cross-cutting Integration ( 01 / 04 )

✳ Institutional Change

Gender Mainstreaming in Food Innovation Support

✚ Specific actions ( 02 / 04 )

🔗 Intersectionality

✳ Cross-cutting Integration

Gender Smart Handbook for Climate Entrepreneurs

✚ Specific actions ( 03 / 04 )

✳ Cross-cutting Integration

Women in Nordic Intelligent Transport Systems (WIN-ITS 2)

✚ Specific actions ( 04 / 04 )

🔗 Intersectionality

⋯ Communication & Visibility

EIT Community Red Kalyna: Empowering Ukrainian Women Innovators

**Impact** 90 employees were trained on gendered innovation and gender-balanced panels were achieved in all 2024 events (511 women / 529 men). Qualitative impact includes greater understanding of how gender analysis improves design, market fit and trust, early examples of gender-responsive products in development pipelines and improved collaboration between innovation, communication and HR teams.

**Lessons learned** Success was enabled by leadership commitment, practical and time-efficient tools adapted to daily work realities and alignment with EU policy frameworks and clear accountability. Challenges include the need to scale training to partners and regional hubs, varying levels of understanding of gendered innovation across technical teams and limited internal capacity for ongoing expert support.

- Transferability**
- ( 01 ) Introduce gender and diversity as scoring criteria in innovation calls and evaluations.
  - ( 02 ) Provide short, targeted training sessions linked to team portfolios.
  - ( 03 ) Combine internal culture change with visible external communication.
  - ( 04 ) Use data and storytelling to make progress measurable and relatable.

**“WHEN WE STARTED DISCUSSING GENDER IN INNOVATION, PEOPLE REALISED IT IS NOT ABOUT MEETING QUOTAS, BUT ABOUT WEAVING DIVERSITY INTO THE DNA OF HOW WE DESIGN PRODUCTS AND SHAPE THE FUTURE OF FOOD.”**

Małgorzata Druciarek  
Gender & Diversity Senior Manager

EIT Food

Good Practice ( 01 / 04 )

## Gender Mainstreaming in Food Innovation Support

- \* Cross-cutting Integration
- \* Institutional Change



EIT Food Single-KIC

EIT Food (+) approaches gender mainstreaming as an ongoing process embedded in organisational performance, demonstrating its commitment to making gender equality a fundamental aspect of agrifood innovation. In a sector where women remain underrepresented as founders, researchers and innovators, this initiative makes inclusion a core criterion for excellence through gender capacity building and sensitisation sessions enhancing understanding of how gender mainstreaming can be integrated into everyday business practices, compulsory self-paced e-learning on “Gender-Inclusive Agrifood Innovations”, piloting the gender and diversity as evaluation criterion in innovation calls, inclusive communication highlighting women and gender-diverse innovators and a gender-disaggregated data framework.

Good Practice ( 02 / 04 )

# Gender Smart Handbook for Climate Entrepreneurs

- + Specific actions
- ∞ Intersectionality
- \* Cross-cutting Integration



Climate KIC Single-KIC

The Gender Smart Handbook for Climate Entrepreneurs (+) transforms gender equality principles into practical innovation tools for start-ups and accelerators. It equips climate entrepreneurs, investors and support organisations to identify gender gaps in their business models, team composition and market reach. By translating theory into clear checklists and examples, it makes gender responsiveness part of day-to-day innovation work rather than an external requirement, supported by self-paced materials, Train-the-Trainer workshops, programme integration across seven Climate-KIC entrepreneurship programmes and continuous refinement based on participant feedback. It is available in three languages English, Spanish and French.

## Impact

Rolled out across seven programmes in Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia. Hundreds of Handbook downloads via the Climate landing page. Translated into Spanish and French. Start-ups supported through the handbook reported improved awareness and capacity to address gender disparities. Qualitative impact includes gender-responsive products and inclusive services, ESOs integrating gender indicators into programme frameworks and the handbook inspiring the broader Inclusive Innovation Service, scaling the approach across Climate-KIC's portfolio.

## Lessons learned

Success was enabled by user-centred design built with direct input from start-ups and mentors, Climate-KIC leadership prioritising DEI within entrepreneurship activities and a digital, self-paced format adaptable to different cultural and local realities.

Challenges included start-ups initially undervaluing gender inclusion compared to technical milestones, the need to align objectives across funding partners and the importance of ongoing mentoring and follow-up to sustain results.

## Transferability

- ( 01 ) Start small with one practical, user-friendly tool.
- ( 02 ) Combine self-learning resources with expert coaching.
- ( 03 ) Use Train-the-Trainer models to cascade capacity.
- ( 04 ) Co-design materials with target users.
- ( 05 ) Partner with regional innovation hubs to contextualise content.

**HAVING EASY-TO-USE AND ACCESSIBLE TOOLKITS THAT ENTREPRENEURS CAN WORK THROUGH IN THEIR OWN TIME, AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK FROM AN EXPERT ON, MAKES INCLUSION SOMETHING WE CAN ACT ON, NOT JUST TALK ABOUT.**

Thea Bohol  
Social Impact Lead

Climate KIC

Impact

Ten events were delivered: two workshops, three webinars, four national events, and one Congress panel, involving around 140 participants (online and in person) from six countries. The WIN-ITS network expanded to 100+ organisations and communication efforts reached over 5,000 people. Qualitative impact includes revived national Women-in-ITS initiatives in Finland and Estonia, greater awareness among planners and transport agencies that inclusive mobility improves design and safety, new collaborations between EIT UM, Trivector Traffic and universities and international recognition as a Nordic model for gender mainstreaming in mobility innovation.

Lessons learned

Success was driven by cross-Nordic trust and knowledge-sharing built since the first WIN-ITS project, simple and inclusive formats lowering participation barriers and strong leadership and communication support from EIT UM and Trivector Traffic.

Challenges included a predominantly female audience, uneven institutional readiness and funding across countries and the need for continuity and mentoring to maintain momentum after the project end.

Transferability

- ( 01 ) Embed gender and diversity topics into core technical and policy events.
- ( 02 ) Build cross-regional networks to exchange inclusive design practices.
- ( 03 ) Engage men and decision-makers as active allies.
- ( 04 ) Leverage existing networks for cost-efficient visibility and impact.

**EVEN IN PROGRESSIVE ENVIRONMENTS, EXPECTATIONS OF THE 'IDEAL WORKER' STILL MIRROR MASCULINE NORMS.**

Webinar

WIN-ITS 2

Good Practice ( 03 / 04 )

## Women In Nordic Intelligent Transport Systems (WIN-ITS 2)

- + Specific actions
- \* Cross-cutting Integration



EIT Urban Mobility (Denmark) Cross-Nordic & Baltic collaboration (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden)

WIN-ITS 2 (+) shows how inclusive networks can reshape an entire sector. In the men-dominated field of intelligent transport systems, the programme creates a collaborative space where engineers, city authorities and researchers address gender balance not as a quota issue but as a driver of safer, smarter and more sustainable mobility design. By linking Nordic partners and amplifying women's visibility, it changes who is seen as an innovator and decision-maker through regional workshops, thematic webinars, national events, a shared methodology for inclusive events and a communication campaign culminating in a showcase at the ITS World Congress 2025.

Good Practice ( 04 / 04 )

# EIT Community Red Kalyna: Empowering Ukrainian Women Innovators

- + Specific actions
- ∞ Intersectionality
- ⋮ Communication & Visibility



EIT Community Cross-KIC & Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS)

Red Kalyna (+) turns visibility into empowerment. Created in response to the war in Ukraine, it highlights the resilience and creativity of women innovators who were displaced or affected by conflict. The initiative provides visibility, recognition and pathways for learning, networking and collaboration within the European innovation ecosystem. By connecting women across sectors and KICs, Red Kalyna transforms recognition into opportunity, showing how inclusion and solidarity can drive innovation even in times of crisis through open calls, networking events, mentoring, visibility campaigns and a European-level award ceremony.

## Impact

The initiative highlights 10 Ukrainian women innovators annually (2023–2025) and has reached over 1,000 participants through events, ceremonies and online sessions. Engagement from internal EIT stakeholders and external partners continues to grow. Qualitative impact includes enhanced visibility of Ukrainian women innovators at EU and EIT Community levels, a stronger sense of belonging within the European innovation ecosystem, new cross-sector collaborations in education, health and entrepreneurship and recognition of EIT as a platform for gender equality and European solidarity in times of crisis.

## Lessons learned

Success was enabled by a clear and inspiring vision linking gender equality with resilience and recovery, strategic communication supported by multiple KICs, a community-first approach where participants became ambassadors and mentors and cross-KIC cooperation amplifying resources and outreach.

Challenges included limited financial resources requiring creative partnerships, the need for follow-up mechanisms beyond visibility and balancing storytelling with sustainable professional opportunities.

## Transferability

- ( 01 ) Use visibility and recognition as tools to empower underrepresented innovators.
- ( 02 ) Combine celebration with long-term follow-up.
- ( 03 ) Foster cross-KIC and cross-country alliances for resilience and inclusion.
- ( 04 ) Position women innovators as drivers of recovery and transformation.

**RED KALYNA REMINDS US THAT INNOVATION IS NOT ONLY ABOUT TECHNOLOGY, IT'S ABOUT COURAGE, CARE, AND COMMUNITY.**

Red Kalyna  
Project Coordinator

# 1.5 BUSINESS CREATION & ACCELERATION: SUPPORTING GENDER-SMART ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Business creation is a core pillar of the EIT model, turning ideas into ventures and fostering more inclusive entrepreneurship and investment.

✚ Specific actions

( 01 / 04 )

∞ Intersectionality

⋯ Communication & Visibility

EIT Community  
SUPERNOVAS: Making  
Women Shine in the  
Entrepreneurial Universe

✚ Specific actions

( 02 / 04 )

∞ Intersectionality

⋯ Communication & Visibility

EWA: Empowering  
Women in Agrifood  
Programme

✚ Specific actions

( 03 / 04 )

✳ Cross-cutting Integration

✳ Institutional Change

∞ Intersectionality

Gender Mainstreaming in  
Climate Entrepreneurship  
Programme

✳ Cross-cutting Integration

( 04 / 04 )

✳ Institutional Change

⋯ Communication & Visibility

Gender Mainstreaming  
in Start-Ups Support  
(Calls & Acceleration)

Impact

Between 2022–2024, SUPERNOVAS supported 100 women-led start-ups and showcased over 1150 in the Data Room. A total of 524 women were trained in venture investment through Women2Invest, Business Angels Academy and VC Academy. Supported start-ups attracted €87M+ investment, with a 1230× leverage effect (vs. 8× EIT Community average). Women entrepreneurs participated from 23 EU and RIS countries with targeted outreach. Qualitative results include increased visibility and participation of women in entrepreneurship and investment roles, strengthened confidence, leadership and networking capacity, cost-effective international expansion and the creation of a lasting cross-KIC community now recognised as the EIT’s reference platform for gender-smart entrepreneurship.

Lessons learned

Success was driven by strong cross-KIC collaboration, leadership commitment and clear coordination, consistent branding and communication, data-driven monitoring and active engagement of partners, investors, like-minded initiatives, mentors and stakeholders.

Challenges included slow translation from awareness to systemic change, limited resources and uneven data management, maintaining engagement in voluntary activities, the need to strengthen women’s visibility in decision-making roles and balancing communication demands with available staff and budgets.

Transferability

- ( 01 ) Build alliances with initiatives sharing similar goals.
- ( 02 ) Frame gender equality as business and investment value.
- ( 03 ) Ensure women participation translates into leadership influence.
- ( 04 ) Use consistent, engaging communication for visibility.
- ( 05 ) Pair networking and capacity-building with funding and market access.
- ( 06 ) Combine quantitative and qualitative evidence to track impact.

**“SUPERNOVAS CONNECTS WOMEN WITH THE KNOWLEDGE, CONFIDENCE AND VISIBILITY TO LEAD, AS FOUNDERS AND AS INVESTORS.”**

Ana Alcaine  
Project Manager

EIT Manufacturing

Good Practice ( 01 / 04 )

## EIT Community SUPERNOVAS: Making Women Shine in the Entrepreneurial Universe

- + Specific actions
- ∞ Intersectionality
- ⋯ Communication & Visibility



EIT Community Cross-KIC

SUPERNOVAS (+) is the EIT Community’s flagship initiative to close structural gender gaps in entrepreneurship and investment. As a cross-KIC collaboration managed by EIT Food, EIT Manufacturing and EIT Urban Mobility, it strengthens women’s roles as founders, investors and ecosystem leaders, creating opportunities for both entrepreneurs and investors. Its modular design—combining acceleration, training, mentoring, visibility, reports and community building—shows how a coordinated European approach can generate systemic impact and inspire cultural change across sectors.

Good Practice ( 02 / 04 )

# EWA: Empowering Women in Agrifood

- + Specific actions
- ∞ Intersectionality
- ⋮ Communication & Visibility



EIT Food Single-KIC

EWA (+) is EIT Food's flagship entrepreneurship programme for women founders. It supports early-stage women entrepreneurs across Europe in developing sustainable, community-rooted solutions for food system challenges. Launched in 2020, the six-month programme operates across 19 RIS countries, combining personalised mentoring, tailored entrepreneurship training, access to networks and investors, storytelling campaigns, and pitching opportunities to help women advance their ventures.

## Impact

Between 2020–2024, EWA supported 600+ women entrepreneurs through mentoring and training, built an online community with 1,000+ members, enabled the creation of 60+ new start-ups, and helped attract €13.5M+ in funding. A total of €900,000 in prizes were granted to EWA alumni. It addresses regional inequalities in entrepreneurship participation. Qualitative impact includes 80% of alumnae reporting positive career impact and improved entrepreneurial confidence, participants valuing the programme as more supportive and tailored than mainstream accelerators and strengthened local ecosystems through collaboration with regional implementing partners and mentors.

## Lessons learned

Success was enabled by local implementation partners with strong community knowledge, personalised mentoring in local languages, high visibility through storytelling and outreach, and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals and EIT Food's mission.

Challenges include limited time-bound support for start-ups needing longer incubation, variable implementation quality among regional partners, and the need for post-programme alumni support and stronger access to investors.

## Transferability

- ( 01 ) Create women-only entrepreneurship spaces in sectors with gender gaps.
- ( 02 ) Combine 1:1 mentoring with practical business training in local languages.
- ( 03 ) Build alumni networks and communities of practice.
- ( 04 ) Use visibility and storytelling to shift perceptions and attract investors.

**“WITH EWA, WOMEN GAIN ACCESS TO EXPERT GUIDANCE, A VIBRANT COMMUNITY AND VISIBILITY IN THE AGRIFOOD ECOSYSTEM, SO THEIR INNOVATION CAN THRIVE AND MAKE AN IMPACT.”**

Małgorzata Druciarek  
Gender & Diversity Senior Manager

EIT Food

Impact

Between 2022–2024, 10 partner organisations were supported across three continents (Europe, Latin America, Africa, Vietnam). Participation of women-led and mixed teams increased, with improved progression rates from application to acceleration. Dozens of staff, coaches and jury members were trained on recognising and mitigating gender bias and communication materials and applicant pools became more gender-balanced. Qualitative impact includes greater awareness of gender bias and inclusion as strategic value, intersectional lessons informing the expansion into the Inclusive Climate Entrepreneurship Programme in 2024 and institutional change among ESOs embedding gender policies and inclusive practices beyond project cycles.

Lessons learned

Success was enabled by flexibility for partners to tailor activities to their context, long-term collaboration with local ESOs, strong technical expertise from Climate-KIC on climate and inclusion linkages and integrating MEL from the start.

Challenges included one-year funding cycles limiting deeper transformation, modest grant sizes compared to international development programmes and distance and connectivity barriers in remote regions.

Transferability

- ( 01 ) Pair funding with capacity building to incentivise gender mainstreaming.
- ( 02 ) Integrate intersectionality and inclusive MEL frameworks from the outset.
- ( 03 ) Encourage peer-to-peer models among ESOs for knowledge exchange.
- ( 04 ) Develop hybrid (online/local) facilitation for global reach and contextual depth.

**“WHEN ESOS MAINSTREAM GENDER, THE IMPACT SCALES - SHIFTING ENTIRE PIPELINES OF CLIMATE INNOVATORS, NOT JUST INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMMES.”**


Aimee Apel  
Strategic Programmes Orchestrator

Climate-KIC

Good Practice ( 03 / 04 )

## Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Entrepreneurship Programme

- + Specific actions
- \* Cross-cutting Integration
- \* Institutional Change
- ∞ Intersectionality



Climate KIC Single-KIC

This initiative shows how embedding gender mainstreaming into entrepreneurship support organisations (ESOs) can transform climate innovation from within. Launched in 2022, the Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Entrepreneurship Programme(+) partners with ESOs to integrate gender equality into their operations, recruitment, mentoring, funding design and monitoring frameworks. Through capacity-building, micro grants, tailored mentoring and a shared international network, it enables ESOs to embed gender equality across programme cycles.

Good Practice

( 04 / 04 )

## Gender Mainstreaming In Start-Ups Support (Calls & Acceleration)

✳ Cross-cutting Integration

✳ Institutional Change

☰ Communication &amp; Visibility



Co-funded by the  
European Union



Funded by the  
European Union



Co-funded by the  
European Union

EIT Urban Mobility (+)

EIT Jumpstarter (+)

EIT Global Outreach (+)

Single-KIC

Cross-KICs

Cross-KICs

By embedding gender equality and diversity at every stage of entrepreneurship and acceleration funding. From scouting and outreach to evaluation and monitoring, KICs are translating equality goals into measurable practice. These initiatives show that inclusive calls not only improve fairness but also increase the quality and diversity of supported start-ups.

### Activities, tools and impact:

( 01 )

#### Scouting & outreach

EIT Urban Mobility:  
Impact Ventures

Initiative / KIC implementing

Active scouting of women-led start-ups through pre-investment accelerators, target of one-third women-led applicants per cohort.

Results (2022 – 2025)

Women-led applications grew from 22 % (2022) to 30 % (2025), more balanced deal flow at entry stage.

EIT Global Outreach

Tailored outreach campaigns and info sessions for women innovators in targeted regions (Latin America, Africa, Asia).

Share of women applicants increased from 20 % (2023) to ≈ 40 % (2025) in international programmes.

EIT RIS Jumpstarter

Promotion of women founders through visibility campaigns and alumni ambassadors, with strong representation in under-served RIS regions.

Women's participation in cohorts rose from 67 % (2023) to 69 % (2024), wider geographical reach.

( 02 )

#### Call design & eligibility

EIT Urban Mobility:  
Impact Ventures

Initiative / KIC implementing

Diversity criteria built into all calls, "no-diversity cap" limiting points for proposals lacking inclusivity.

Results (2022 – 2025)

Women-led start-ups represented 31 % (2024) of supported ventures, doubling the European average.

EIT Global Outreach

Additional evaluation points for women-led start-ups and female programme managers; criteria communicated in call documents.

Transparent scoring system boosted confidence and participation among women innovators.

EIT RIS Jumpstarter

Inclusive language and gender-sensitive templates introduced in 2024 call cycle.

Increased perception of fairness and accessibility among applicants.



( 03 )

Evaluation & selection	Initiative / KIC implementing	Results (2022 – 2025)
EIT Urban Mobility: Impact Ventures	Gender-balanced investment committees and evaluation panels, diversity data tracked in real time.	Women-led applications grew from 22 % (2022) to 30 % (2025), more balanced deal flow at entry stage.
EIT RIS Jumpstarter	Revised scorecards awarding extra points for women-led teams, 90 % of evaluators briefed on gender bias.	Consistent evaluation practices and more balanced selection outcomes.

( 04 )

Training & capacity building	Initiative / KIC implementing	Results (2022 – 2025)
EIT RIS Jumpstarter	Systematic gender mainstreaming training for staff and mentors across all participating hubs.	Enhanced understanding of inclusion principles, more consistent guidance for applicants.

( 05 )

Visibility & monitoring	Initiative / KIC implementing	Results (2022 – 2025)
EIT Urban Mobility: Impact Ventures	50 % of promotional materials feature women founders, gender data tracked through all programme stages.	( ○ ) Greater public recognition of women entrepreneurs, higher trust in evaluation fairness.
EIT Global Outreach	Visibility campaigns and storytelling highlighting women leadership in international cohorts.	( ○ ) Sustained engagement and growing number of role models across partner countries.
EIT RIS Jumpstarter	Regular publication of gender data and alumni success stories on EIT platforms.	( ○ ) Improved perception of inclusiveness and positive feedback from participants

**“SEEING OTHER WOMEN LEADING AND PITCHING AT JUMPSTARTER MADE ME BELIEVE MY IDEA HAD A PLACE TOO.”**

Participant

RIS Jumpstarter

#### Lessons learned

Success include clear commitment from programme management and evaluators is essential to make gender balance a measurable standard of quality. Practical, low-cost tools, adjusted scorecards, inclusive language, visibility targets can be integrated quickly into existing systems. Regular gender-disaggregated data collection and transparent reporting enable continuous improvement, while cross-KIC exchange of templates and lessons ensures coherence and scalability.

Challenges include varying understanding of gender-sensitive evaluation among technical experts, limited resources to sustain training and mentoring, perceptions that diversity incentives conflict with merit-based assessment, and the need for stronger follow-up support so visibility and inclusion lead to long-term business growth.

#### Transferability

- ( 01 ) Integrate gender and diversity scoring criteria and balanced evaluation panels in all calls for entrepreneurs and investors.
- ( 02 ) Pair inclusive outreach with visibility campaigns highlighting role models and success stories.
- ( 03 ) Provide short, practical training for staff and evaluators on recognising bias and applying fair assessment standards.
- ( 04 ) Share indicators, templates and communication materials across organisations to harmonise practice and multiply impact.

**“A SIMPLE SCORING ADJUSTMENT TRIGGERED A REAL BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE, MORE WOMEN-LED COMPANIES NOW COMPETE ON EQUAL FOOTING.”**

Ido Rosenblum  
Project Manager

Global Platform

**“BY RE-DESIGNING HOW WE SCOUT, EVALUATE AND COMMUNICATE, WE’VE MADE GENDER EQUALITY A BUILT-IN FEATURE OF OUR INVESTMENT PROCESS, NOT AN ADD-ON. IT WILL HELP TO INCREASE OUR AMBITION FOR FUTURE INVESTMENTS.”**

Dani Serra  
Director of Impact  
Ventures Department

EIT Urban Mobility

# 1.6 ONGOING GENDER MAINSTREAMING EFFORTS ACROSS THE EIT COMMUNITY

This section showcases ongoing gender mainstreaming efforts identified across the EIT Community. These initiatives are already in place but not yet validated as full Good Practices. They are featured to recognise active work, celebrate continued commitment and inspire further action across the KICs.

Gender mainstreaming efforts from cross-KICs and EIT-wide initiatives:

Initiative / Cluster Measures 2024

## EIT Community Higher Education Initiative (HEI)

Encouraging applicants through the EIT HEI Calls for Proposals to integrate gender balance into their proposed activities and KPI targets. Example: the [DISCO project \(+\)](#) which embeds gender balance through the [Gender Entrepreneurship Observatory \(GEO\) \(+\)](#).

- \* Cross-cutting Integration
- ∞ Intersectionality

Initiative / Cluster Measures 2024

## EIT Community Strategic Education Cluster

Embedding gender balance and visibility in education and lifelong-learning ecosystems. EIT Campus: blog strategy highlighting women innovators, 51% women as registered users, targeted campaigns for women in tech. EIT Alumni Network: gender-balanced events and storytelling (both in terms of participants and speakers), gender neutral policies incorporated into the strategy plans for 2025 and beyond.

- + Specific actions
- ☰ Communication & Visibility
- \* Institutional Change

Initiative / Cluster Measures 2024

## EIT Community Strategic Synergies Cluster (EIT CSS)

Advancing inclusive innovation through the [New European Bauhaus initiative \(+\)](#) with inclusive calls, simplified language and outreach to diverse applicants. Example: the [CoolCo'S project \(+\)](#), co-designing innovative urban furniture with vulnerable groups, modelling intersectional innovation.

- ∞ Intersectionality
- \* Cross-cutting Integration
- ☰ Communication & Visibility

Initiative / Cluster Measures 2024

## EIT Community Strategic Regional Innovation (SRI) Cluster

Promoting women's entrepreneurship and visibility in RIS regions through community-building, partnerships and staff training on gender equality.

- + Specific actions
- \* Institutional Change

+ DISCO project.  
 + Gender Entrepreneurship Observatory (GEO).  
 + New European Bauhaus Initiative.  
 + CoolCo'S Project.

## Gender mainstreaming efforts of single EIT KICs:

### EIT Culture & Creativity

Governance & Policy

Adoption of the first KIC-wide Gender Policy and Action Plan (2024) aligned with EIT and EU frameworks, setting gender balance targets and data monitoring.



### EIT Health

Governance & Communication

Embedding gender balance across mentorship, evaluation panels and speaker line-ups, alongside support for gender-sensitive innovation and women's health research.



### Climate KIC

Governance & Capacity

Strengthening inclusive recruitment and communication through the JEDI Working Group (2023–2025). Building on this, Climate-KIC has introduced a holistic Gender and Inclusivity Plan, launched internal equitable innovation project sprints and developed new practitioner resources such as the Inclusive Design for Climate Innovation guide, with an Inclusive Climate Finance handbook to follow in 2026.



### InnoEnergy

Capacity & Culture

Online training on Diversity, Inclusion, Respect and Fairness courses completed by 90 % of staff (2024), strengthening inclusive leadership.



### EIT Manufacturing

Innovation & Entrepreneurship

RIS LEADERS competition empowering women innovators from RIS countries through mentoring, training and visibility in manufacturing ecosystems.



### 28DIGITAL

Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Partnership with European Women in VC (2022–2025) to boost women's participation in venture capital through joint training and mentoring, shared investor deal flow and support of annual report findings.



### EIT Raw Materials

Education & Talent

Gender balance actions in EIT-Labelled Master's programmes (2019–2025), increasing female participation and graduation (40%+ in several 2024 cohorts) through targeted recruitment, scholarships, and mentoring.



### EIT Food

Communication & Visibility

Development of gender-sensitive communication guidelines and event checklist (2022) to ensure balanced representation in visuals, storytelling and internal publications, as well as inclusive and accessible events.



### EIT Urban Mobility

Capacity & Culture

Strengthening gender-sensitive recruitment and staff development (2023–2025) through inclusive job descriptions, gender-balanced interview panels, bias-aware hiring guidelines, competence based approach, transparent salary bands, equal treatment during parental leave, trainings on leadership for women, inclusive leadership, self-defence for women, menstrual health in the workplace, workplace harassment.



# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS



( 1.1 ) Seven EIT Community Lessons for Advancing Gender Mainstreaming

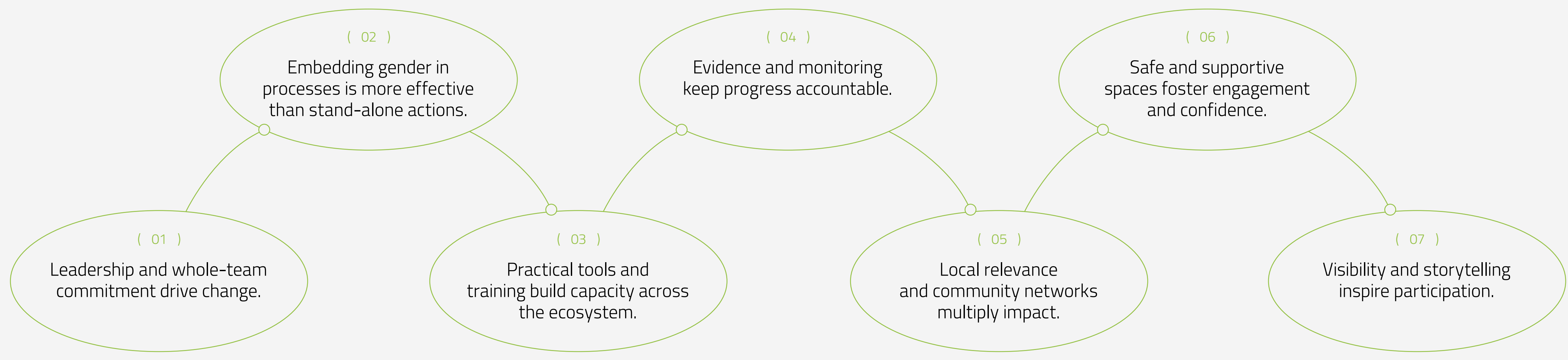
( 1.2 ) Recommendations for Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming

( 1.3 ) Success Stories

( 1.4 ) Bibliography

# 1.1 SEVEN EIT COMMUNITY LESSONS FOR ADVANCING GENDER MAINSTREAMING

A shared roadmap emerging across sectors and areas of the EIT Community's gender equality good practices.



( 01 )

Gender mainstreaming succeeds when leaders signal clear priorities and teams at all levels share responsibility. Collective ownership makes equality part of everyday behaviour and not an optional add-on.

( 02 )

Integrating gender equality into scouting, call design, mentoring, evaluation, product development, and communication ensures impact at every stage. When inclusion is built into workflows and selection process it becomes standard practice.

( 03 )

Short, context-aware training and user-friendly tools; templates, scorecards, checklists, guidelines and inclusive procedures, strengthen staff, experts and partners. Clear criteria and participation targets, supported by gender-sensitive scoring and transparent thresholds, help make selection processes fairer and encourage more inclusive outreach, especially in male-dominated sectors.

( 04 )

Sex/gender disaggregated data, inclusive KPIs and clear reporting turn commitments into measurable practice. Consistent data collection helps refine programmes, track gaps and demonstrate the value of gender-responsive innovation.

( 05 )

Regional hubs, RIS partners and local expertise make gender mainstreaming culturally grounded and accessible. Use of local languages, role-model visibility and community networks boosts confidence and supports long-term ecosystem change.

( 06 )

Women-only and intentionally inclusive formats enable open dialogue, peer learning and participation in areas where women remain underrepresented. These environments strengthen confidence and create pathways for leadership.

( 07 )

Highlighting diverse innovators, showcasing success stories and using inclusive communication encourages aspiration, builds recognition and helps shift norms across innovation ecosystems.

# 1.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Looking ahead: strengthening gender mainstreaming and intersectionality to advance gender equality across the EIT Community and EU innovation ecosystem.

Strengthen governance through gender mainstreaming at all levels. ( 01 )

Gender equality must be integrated into organisational structures, budget, programme design as a shared responsibility. Clear mandates, dedicated roles and resources are essential to ensure sustained gender mainstreaming beyond individual commitment.

Build a coherent gender and diversity evidence framework. ( 02 )

Harmonised indicators, improved data systems and intersectional tracking are needed to monitor progress reliably. Long-term follow-up should capture not only programme outputs but also changes in women's opportunities, career development and well-being to improve the tracking of impact assessment.

Advance gender-responsive innovation through early integration. ( 03 )

Sex/gender analysis should be embedded across the entire innovation cycle, from project design and implementation through to monitoring and evaluation of impact. Ecosystem mapping, training on gendered innovations from an intersectional approach and clear expectations in calls will strengthen the quality of innovations.

Reinforce sector-specific and regional capacity with supportive environments. ( 04 )

Training should be context-specific, adapted to technical and male-dominated sectors and repeated regularly. Local networks, personalised support and safe spaces foster meaningful engagement, while women-only programmes remain essential to address persistent gaps.

Promote well-being, accessibility and real systemic change. ( 05 )

Programmes should integrate measures that support health, work-life balance and caregiving responsibilities, ensuring participation is compatible with different stages of women's lives. Systemic transformation, not individual or group adaptation, is needed to make equality sustainable.

Ensure long-term pathways and inclusive opportunities. ( 06 )

Longer funding periods, dedicated resources, structured alumni support, access to women-friendly investors and expanded mentoring and inclusive networking opportunities are essential to widen participation and sustain long-term change.

# 1.3 SUCCESS STORIES

## Founders & entrepreneurs

Women2Invest (+)

### EIT Community SUPERNOVAS

Rocket Up graduate Julia Katrin Rohde  
Co-Founder & CEO, agriBIOME

**“THANKS TO ROCKET UP, WE SAVED €160,000 AND GAINED WORLD-CLASS MENTORING, A POWERFUL NETWORK, AND EU-BACKED SUPPORT TO FAST-TRACK OUR MARKET ENTRY.”**

Emma Fau  
Business Angels Academy: Evolving Angels graduate

**“THE PROGRAMME HAS ALLOWED ME TO REVIEW CONCEPTS THAT I HAD LEARNED BEFORE, BUT ALSO TO REFLECT ON MY OWN INVESTMENT THESIS AND HAS MADE ME AWARE OF HOW I HAD READJUSTED IT OVER TIME.”**



Emma is the founder of EUcapital and WA4STEAM (+), a growing international community of women angel investors seeking to increase the presence of women entrepreneurs in the STEAM fields.

## EWA: Empowering Women in Agrifood

Kristīne Štikāne  
Gutopia Founder

**EWA HELPED ME TURN A FUNCTIONAL IDEA INTO A CONSUMER-READY PRODUCT.**

Débora Campos  
AgroGrIN Tech (Portugal) Founder

**I REFINED MY VISION AND TURNED CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES.**

Lidia Moroń-Morawska  
Beekeeper

**AS THE FIRST FEMALE FARMER FROM POLAND, EWA WAS A TURNING POINT.**



Gutopia (Latvia) produces plant-based fermented drinks supporting digestive health. Through EWA, Kristīne refined her product and won first prize to scale production.

Débora transforms agri-food waste into clean-label ingredients. EWA mentoring strengthened her strategy and visibility, helping her gain EU-wide recognition.

Lidia expanded her ecological product line and became a role model for rural women entrepreneurs with Pasięka Morawskich (Poland).

## Gender Mainstreaming in Start-Ups Support

- ( 01 ) Women-led scale-up Raicoon expanded to the United States through Global Outreach's GreenScale programme. The CEO led the company's entry into New York, demonstrating how structured internationalisation support accelerates women-led growth.
- ( 02 ) Elonroad (Sweden) offers a high-tech electric road system enabling vehicle-agnostic conductive charging, both while driving and when parked. Through EIT Urban Mobility, Karin Ebbinghaus, CEO at Elonroad, has been able to validate the impact of Elonroad's technology and broaden the company's reach across Europe's mobility landscape.



Monika Štěpánová  
Lightly CEO

**“THE PROGRAMME WAS A GAME CHANGER... DON'T WAIT FOR HELP, ASK FOR IT.”**

Lightly (+) (Czech Republic) develops UV-based technology to detect counterfeit drugs. Through Jumpstarter, Monika sharpened her business model and communication, earned 2nd place in 2023, and won the Grand Final in 2024.

## EIT Community Girls Go STEM

- ( 01 ) Girls Go STEM has gained global recognition, being named one of [HundrED's \(+\)](#) Top 100 education innovations. The initiative also contributed to the EIT receiving the [EU Agency Network Award for Outstanding External Initiative in Diversity and Inclusion \(+\)](#).
- ( 02 ) Maria Metodieva, a secondary-school student from Bulgaria, turned her Girls Go STEM experience into an international STEM path. She co-created FIXON, a wildfire-prevention drone, became a finalist at the Women & Girls in STEM Forum, and won the Best Power Pitch Award at NASA's Conrad Challenge. She was also recognized Bulgaria's Top 20 under 20 (+) competition. Today Maria speaks at EU events as a Girls Go STEM Ambassador, inspiring other girls to see themselves as future scientists and innovators.



Maria Metodieva  
Girls Go STEM Ambassador, FIXON Co-creator

**“I AM SO THANKFUL FOR YOUR SUPPORT THESE PAST TWO YEARS. I REALISED THAT THOSE TWO YEARS HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY MEANINGFUL TO ME AND TO THE PERSON I HAVE BECOME.”**

## EIT Community Red Kalyna: Empowering Ukrainian Women Innovators

( 01 ) In 2023 Iryna Savytska was recognized as one of the top 9 women in Ukraine through the Red Kalyna Award. Being selected for the Red Kalyna initiative gave powerful visibility and direct access to a supportive European network. The programme strengthened the reach of her start-up Bank of Memories (+), a platform safeguarding Ukrainian family stories, by connecting her with mentors, peers and new opportunities for growth. Discover more [success stories \(+\)](#).



## Gender Smart Handbook for Climate Entrepreneurs

( 01 ) Climate-KIC highlights inclusive climate entrepreneurship showing how gender-responsive support helps women founders turn climate ideas into real solutions through stories from:

- + Startup Lab MX
- + Acelera Agro
- + Quintessa
- + Impaqto
- + Climate Hub Tanzania
- + Impacta



## WE Lead Food (x)

**THE DIVERSITY OF WOMEN AND EXPERIENCES IN WE LEAD FOOD WAS EMPOWERING. WE LEARNED AS MUCH FROM EACH OTHER AS FROM THE MENTORS.**

Participant

2024

**THE PROGRAMME GAVE ME TOOLS TO LEAD WITH CONFIDENCE AND CONNECT MY IDEAS TO REAL INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES.**

Participant

2023

# Ecosystem Transformation

## Gender Balance in Deep Tech Training

EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative



Prof. Gonca Telli

**WOMEN SHOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPRESENT THEIR PLACE IN THIS EVOLVING FIELD.**

The Trust4Future (+) partnership trained 600 deep-tech talents, half of them women. Increasing the number of women in deep tech: A conversation with Prof. Gonca Telli from TAGES (+)

## Integrating Gender and Diversity in Educational Media

Urban Mobility Explained (UMX)



**GREAT VIDEO, I HAD NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY IN THIS WAY BEFORE.**

The UMX Brussels Public Transport video [The Transit Accessibility Problem](#) (+) featuring Marie-Amah and the Fat Friendly Association and directed by Muna Traub, reached large audiences and sparked reflection on accessibility and inclusive design.

## Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Entrepreneurship Programme



( 01 ) AfroGreen ClimAccelerator, Westerwelle Foundation established 3 Start-up Hubs in Africa. They supported 20 youth-led start-ups, 10 women-led ventures, created 80 jobs, and reached 20,000+ people in Tanzania, Rwanda and Tunisia, showcasing the power of combining climate innovation with gender inclusion.

Testimonials from Irish Aid Inclusive Climate Entrepreneurship cohort of partners:

**WE NOW INVOLVE MARGINALISED GROUPS INCLUDING YOUTH, WOMEN, AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.**

**DEI TRAINING RESHAPED OUR RECRUITMENT AND MONITORING.**

**WE WERE ABLE TO INTEGRATE A DEI LENS INTO OUR STARTUP SELECTION PROCESS: 60% OF VENTURES NOW COME FROM MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES.**

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