

FEM•ABLE



FEM-ABLE

Promoting women's participation
in the political domain

NATIONAL CASE STUDIES

Deliverable D4.1

Part B

CESIE, All partners

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PREFACE

This document represents a cornerstone output of the FEM-ABLE project, capturing the essence of implementation activities conducted across seven partner countries: Portugal, Lithuania, Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, and Sweden. This comprehensive report reflects the partnership's collective efforts and achievements in promoting gender equality in politics and decision-making roles.

The deliverable is structured into two main sections, each addressing critical dimensions of the project's objectives:

Section A: **A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW OF FEM-ABLE TOOLKIT IMPLEMENTATION ACROSS PARTNER COUNTRIES**

This section offers a detailed account of the FEM-ABLE Gender Equality Strategies implementation at the national level. It documents the activities undertaken, provides an analysis of outcomes, and reflects on the broader impact. By assessing the effectiveness of the FEM-ABLE Toolkit, this section evaluates its role in fostering gender equality within diverse sociopolitical and cultural contexts.

Section B: **EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER EQUALITY IN POLITICS: A COMPILATION OF NATIONAL CASE STUDIES**

This section brings together a series of national case studies showcasing successful initiatives from the partner countries. These case studies delve into the challenges faced, the innovative solutions applied, and the strategies that proved effective. Highlighting at least one best practice per country, this compilation serves as a resource for inspiring future endeavors in advancing gender equality in political spheres.

Together, these sections form a cohesive narrative that not only documents the project's progress but also serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, and advocates working towards a more equitable and inclusive political landscape across Europe.

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SECTION B:

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER EQUALITY IN POLITICS: A COMPILATION OF NATIONAL CASE STUDIES



B.1 INTRODUCTION

The FEM-ABLE project aims to foster gender equality in political and decision-making roles across Europe by **implementing tailored strategies and sharing best practices**. The collected case studies are a pivotal component of this mission, offering insights into successful initiatives, challenges faced, and lessons learned in **diverse national contexts**. These studies are designed to **amplify the project's impact by providing actionable recommendations and inspiring new approaches** to tackling gender disparities.

The case studies compiled in this section serve a dual purpose: they **document the progress achieved** in each partner country and provide a **foundation for cross-country learning and collaboration**. By examining the strategies employed and their outcomes, the case studies contribute to a deeper understanding of how to effectively promote gender equality in politics and leadership across varied cultural, political, and institutional landscapes. This compilation is a **resource for practitioners, policymakers, and advocates committed to advancing equality**.

B.2 CASE STUDY COMPILATION

This section is the core of the document, presenting case studies organized by country and highlighting at least one best practice from each partner. Each case study follows a structured approach:

- ▽ **Introduction and context:** An overview of the country's specific background on gender equality in politics and leadership. **For a deeper understanding of the country context and the strategies developed, consult the respective national reports and Gender Equality Strategies*
- ▽ **Activities overview:** A description of the key interventions and implementation activities carried out within the project framework in each country.
- ▽ **Challenges and solutions:** Analysis of barriers encountered during implementation activities carried out within the project framework, and innovative responses developed.
- ▽ **Good implementation practices:** Highlighting effective and replicable approaches informed by project activities.
- ▽ **Recommendations for dissemination and advocacy:** Suggestions to enhance the visibility, sustainability, and scalability of the strategies implemented.

Through this structure, the case studies offer actionable insights and concrete examples of progress toward gender equality.

B.2.1 PORTUGAL, LUSÓFONA

B.2.1.1 Introduction & context

In Portugal, women currently make up 36.1% of the parliament, reflecting progress in gender representation, though still below the EU average. The nation's journey toward gender equality has been influenced by historical events, notably the dictatorship of the Estado Novo (1926-1974) and the subsequent revolution on April 25, 1974. The end of the dictatorship marked a pivotal moment for feminist movements in Portugal, as it opened the door for greater social and political freedoms, allowing women to advocate for their rights more openly. This legacy was discussed during the first workshop, which explored how the dictatorship stifled feminist efforts and how the post-revolutionary period created space for feminist movements to flourish.

At Universidade Lusófona, gender equality is a key concern embedded within its academic programs, particularly in courses related to social sciences, communication, and law. The university fosters a commitment to inclusivity and diversity¹, recognizing that higher education plays a critical role in shaping societal attitudes. By integrating gender equality into its curriculum, Universidade Lusófona aims to equip students with the knowledge and tools to challenge gender-based inequalities, ensuring that future leaders and professionals are prepared to advocate for a more equitable society. This focus on practical education aligns with the university's broader mission to provide not just theoretical knowledge but also the skills to address real-world social challenges.

B.2.1.2 Activities overview

Between May and July 2024, Universidade Lusófona organized a hybrid event and two in-person workshops aimed at promoting Portugal's National Strategy for gender equality in politics. These events were part of Work Package 4 (WP4) and were designed to disseminate information, raise awareness, and foster dialogue on overcoming barriers to female political participation. Through these initiatives, diverse stakeholders, including students, activists, policymakers, and academics, engaged in critical discussions to propose actionable strategies for creating more inclusive political environments.

“Conversations for Equality” Event

Scope of the Activity

The hybrid event “Conversations for Equality” took place on May 23, 2024, at Auditorium José Araújo, Universidade Lusófona in Lisbon. The event, co-organized by graduating students of Communication Sciences, aimed to spark discussions around female political participation and its barriers. The audience consisted primarily of students between 18 and their early 20s, aligning with the university's target demographic.

Key Highlights

The event featured a debate moderated by students and attended by prominent guest speakers from academia, politics, and media. Topics discussed included the Civic Movement for Parity, barriers to female political engagement, intersectionality in feminism, and the role of men as allies. The session

¹ For further information, please refer to the [Gender and Diversity Plan for Lusófona Education Establishments 2021-2027](#)

emphasized the importance of fostering gender parity across all political spheres and raised significant issues about the underrepresentation of Afro-descendant women in academia and politics.

Effectiveness and Impact

The event successfully created an interactive platform for dialogue, and the participation of final-year students in the organizational process enriched their learning experience. By engaging students in critical thinking and debates on gender inequalities, the event inspired actionable strategies to advocate for systemic change. Most notably, the widespread identification with feminist principles among participants reinforced the collective commitment to gender equality.

“Porto Femme Film Festival and Casa das Associações” Workshop

Scope of the Activity

The first workshop took place on July 9, 2024, in collaboration with Porto Femme Film Festival and Casa das Associações. The event, held at Casa das Associações in Porto, aimed to draw connections between historical and contemporary feminist struggles. A documentary screening provided insights into the role of women during Portugal’s Estado Novo dictatorship and the current state of female political participation.

Key Highlights

The workshop opened with a screening of *Novíssimas Cartas Portuguesas*, which depicted the struggles of Portuguese women under the dictatorship and the role they played in resisting patriarchal structures, while building a bridge with current feminisms. The screening was followed by a discussion led by Municipal Deputy Susana Constante Pereira and research fellow Diana Loureiro. Discussions centered on the challenges women face in balancing professional and personal life, gender stereotypes, and the media's portrayal of femicides. Intersectionality, feminism in healthcare, and the stagnation in the feminist movement were also addressed.

Effectiveness and Impact

The inclusion of women from associative activism played a vital role in driving the discussion forward, contributing valuable perspectives on the systemic barriers faced by women in politics. The workshop highlighted the importance of connecting historical feminist struggles with contemporary challenges, ensuring that the legacy of past movements continues to inspire future generations.

“Debating about women’s participation in political life” Workshop

Scope of the Activity

The second workshop, held on July 27, 2024, focused on women’s participation in political parties across different ideological and generational perspectives. The discussion brought together women from various political backgrounds, from left-wing to center and right parties, as well as activists from associative movements.

Key Highlights

The debate explored gender stereotypes, male dominance in political spaces, and the limitations of Portugal’s parity law. Participants also discussed the importance of public perception and the need for ongoing dialogue to change societal attitudes toward women in politics. The workshop examined the challenges women face in balancing family and professional obligations and called for more equitable

parental leave policies. Concerns about the neglect of women's health issues, such as menstrual leave and the care crisis, were also raised.

Effectiveness and Impact

This workshop allowed for a multifaceted exploration of women's roles in political parties and associative movements. By including diverse perspectives, the event shed light on the complexities of gender equality within political structures. Participants emphasized the need for continued activism and transpartisan collaboration to address these systemic barriers.

Conclusion

The three activities organized by Universidade Lusófona provided critical insights into the barriers women face in achieving gender equality in political participation. Through debates, workshops, and discussions, these events successfully engaged a diverse group of participants in addressing the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, and political ideology. The hybrid event and workshops not only facilitated meaningful dialogue but also inspired participants to take action in advocating for greater political inclusivity. As a whole, these activities contributed to advancing the goals of the FEM-ABLE project, disseminating the National Strategy, promoting gender equality, and fostering a culture of sustained political engagement among women.

B.2.1.3 Challenges and solutions

Impact Assessment Survey

The vast majority of attendees did not fill out the survey, which poses a significant limitation in assessing the true impact of the events. This low response rate introduces potential biases into the data, as it may not accurately represent the broader participant population. Those who did complete the survey may have had stronger opinions or a greater vested interest in the topic, skewing the results.

Additionally, many participants abandoned the survey midway due to its length and the complexity of the questions. The perceived difficulty of the questions likely deterred some from completing the survey, while others may have found the format misaligned with the nature of the activities. The questions required a level of prior knowledge or conceptual understanding that was not always organically introduced through the activities themselves. As a result, facilitators occasionally had to preemptively introduce specific concepts during the discussions to ensure participants had the necessary context to respond. This forced introduction of topics may have shaped the way participants engaged with the material, potentially limiting the natural flow of the debates and their genuine reflections on the issues at hand.

The lack of alignment between the survey content and the event activities highlights the need for more tailored evaluation tools in future iterations. Surveys should be designed to reflect the actual structure and focus of the events, ensuring that participants can respond meaningfully without feeling overwhelmed or unprepared. Furthermore, offering more concise surveys with simpler questions might improve completion rates and provide more reliable data on the event's impact. Integrating real-time feedback collection methods, such as short, in-session polls or post-activity reflections, could also enhance the quality and quantity of responses.

Limited diversity among participants

The first event, held at Universidade Lusófona in Lisbon, saw relatively strong participation, benefiting from the academic setting and the involvement of students during the academic year. However, the two workshops, organized in July at Casa das Associações in Porto, experienced lower attendance. The timing during the summer break contributed significantly to this, as students, a primary target audience, were unavailable or less engaged outside of their academic schedules. Holding workshops during the academic year, when students and faculty are more present and active in university-related events, could help to increase participation and ensure that the discussions on gender equality reach their intended audience.

However, organizing events within academic institutions, even during the academic year, poses another challenge—limited diversity among participants. While universities naturally attract students and faculty, this focus can exclude voices from other educational and socio-economic backgrounds. People with less formal education or from different age groups often have fewer opportunities to participate in these events. In the case of the workshops in Porto, the choice of Casa das Associações was an attempt to reach a broader audience outside the typical university setting, yet the timing in July limited this potential.

Additionally, organizing events solely in Lisbon and Porto, the two largest cities in Portugal, can limit the geographic diversity of participants. Smaller cities and rural areas often lack the same opportunities for engagement in discussions around gender equality and social issues. This regional centralization can contribute to a disparity in participation and engagement, as individuals outside of these major cities may feel disconnected or unable to access these important conversations.

To address both issues—timing and diversity of location—future events could be strategically organized during the academic year but also extended to cities beyond Lisbon and Porto. By holding events in smaller cities or more rural locations, organizers could engage a wider range of participants, offering a platform for more diverse perspectives and ensuring that the conversation around gender equality reaches different regions of the country. Expanding the geographical reach of these initiatives would make the conversation more inclusive and impactful.

B.2.1.4 Good implementation practices identified

CONVERSATIONS FOR EQUALITY	
COUNTRY	Portugal. Implemented by Universidade Lusofona
DESCRIPTION	The activity's primary goal is to hold students responsible for co-hosting the event in order to learn about female political participation while doing so. The events engage young adults and university students in discussions about gender equality, focusing on female representation in politics. The event is designed as a hybrid format, allowing both in-person and online participation, which broadens its reach and accessibility. It includes debates and speeches from prominent figures in politics, academia, and media to foster discussions on key gender issues.
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	Pre-event / Student organisation steps: ○ Invite speakers: Students must choose and invite speakers that they find relevant and interesting within both themes of politics and diverse female representation. ○ Set the subthemes and questions: In order to learn by doing, students must choose the subtopic that connects the various speakers and prepare the

	questions. Additionally, two students should play the role of moderating conversations on the day of the event. ○ Research: A group of students must prepare the contextualization of the topic at both national and European level. This presentation should be introduced at the beginning of the seminar, before the speakers. ○ Publicize and disseminate: A group of students need to be in charge of writing the event sheet, writing and sending the press release, and managing social media. ○ Documenting the event: A set of students should be in charge of photographic and video coverage. Additionally, an event summary should be written in order to publish after the event. ○ Event aftermath: Collectively, students should reflect on what they accomplished, what they learned, what was done better or worse, what they could improve and how the event may have impacted both faculty and students. Organisation of the event itself: ○ Stakeholder Engagement: Co-organized with university students. ○ Event Design: The event includes a hybrid format with physical and virtual components, featuring panel debates and expert guest speakers. ○ Participant Selection: Open to university students and the general public, with targeted invitations to political figures and gender equality advocates. ○ Execution: Moderated discussions, both in-person and online, with time for audience participation and Q&A sessions.
IMPACT ACHIEVED	The event successfully raised awareness of gender inequality in political representation. It fostered a platform for university students to engage in meaningful dialogue and increased their understanding of the importance of gender parity in political spaces.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	- Universidade Lusófona faculty and students - Political representatives and gender equality advocates - Media figures
RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Venue at an university. ✓ A class of university students. ✓ Technology for hybrid (in-person and virtual) participation ✓ Marketing and outreach efforts to gather participants ✓ Guest speakers
CHALLENGES FACED	○ Managing students' expectations ○ Ensuring robust online engagement in the hybrid format, as virtual participants are less likely to engage in discussions.
LESSONS LEARNED	○ Hybrid events require additional engagement strategies to ensure online participants remain involved throughout the event. ○ The academic year is a better time to host university-based events for maximum student engagement.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	This model can be replicated across universities, blending academic engagement with broader public discussions on gender equality. The hybrid format can be used in other educational institutions to expand outreach.

INTERGENERATIONAL FEMINIST STRUGGLES	
COUNTRY	Portugal. Implemented by Universidade Lusofona
DESCRIPTION	This workshop aims to explore the intersection of feminism and political participation, with a special focus on historical and contemporary feminist struggles. A documentary screening is followed by panel discussions featuring political figures and activists, emphasizing the role of women in leadership and decision-making.
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	○ Stakeholder Engagement: Involves a film festival, associative community centers, municipal representatives, and activists. ○ Event Design: Screening of a documentary followed by expert-led discussions on historical and contemporary feminist struggles. ○ Participant Selection: Targets both academics and activists, with an emphasis on including younger audiences. ○ Execution: Focuses on blending historical reflection with modern feminist issues, allowing space for audience interaction.
IMPACT ACHIEVED	This workshop deepened participants' understanding of Portugal's feminist history around the dictatorship and its connection to contemporary struggles. The screening and discussion enhanced knowledge and inspired further dialogue about women's roles in leadership and politics.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	- Porto Femme Film Festival - Local political figures and activists - Academia and students
RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Venue at a community center ✓ Screening rights for the documentary ✓ AV equipment for film screening and discussions ✓ Guest speakers ✓ Facilitation and logistical support
CHALLENGES FACED	○ Lower turnout, partially due to scheduling during the summer holiday period. ○ Difficulty in attracting participants from outside academic circles.
LESSONS LEARNED	○ Holding workshops during the academic year might increase participation, particularly from students and young activists. ○ Combining historical perspectives with modern issues offers a richer discussion.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	This workshop structure, combining historical reflection with contemporary feminist issues, can be replicated in other cities or countries, providing a template for integrating local feminist histories with ongoing activism.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PARTIES	
COUNTRY	Portugal. Implemented by Universidade Lusofona
DESCRIPTION	This workshop focuses on exploring women's roles and challenges within political parties. Participants from different political ideologies and generations share insights on how to promote gender equality within political spaces. The event facilitates in-depth discussions on the impact of gender stereotypes and strategies for increasing female representation in politics.
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	○ Stakeholder Engagement: Includes political leaders, party representatives, and activists. ○ Event Design: Structured as a debate focusing on gender challenges within political parties. ○ Participant Selection: Invitations extend to women from various political parties and associations. ○ Execution: The event emphasizes cross-party collaboration and open dialogue on shared challenges.
IMPACT ACHIEVED	The event helped participants from different political backgrounds to reflect on the challenges faced by women in politics, promoting greater collaboration and inspiring attendees to advocate for internal party reforms to support gender equality.

STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	○ Women from various political parties ○ Activists from associative movements ○ Academics focusing on gender studies
RESOURCES REQUIRED	○ Meeting space ○ Panelists from political parties and associations ○ Facilitation and logistical support
CHALLENGES FACED	○ Managing differing political ideologies within a shared discussion space. ○ Ensuring that all voices are equally represented, despite some participants having more political influence.
LESSONS LEARNED	○ Cross-party discussions are valuable, but moderation is essential to ensure balanced contributions. ○ Encouraging collaboration between political parties can help foster greater advocacy for gender equality reforms.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	Cross-party collaboration on gender equality can be replicated in regional and national contexts. The model of inviting representatives from various political ideologies to discuss common gender-related challenges could foster greater cooperation in advocating for reforms across the political spectrum.

B.2.1.5 Recommendations for dissemination and advocacy

Dissemination and communication

For the successful dissemination and communication of events such as those organized by Universidade Lusófona, it is crucial to develop a robust, multi-channel communication strategy that targets a wide range of stakeholders. One key recommendation is to leverage digital platforms more effectively. Social media, university websites, and email newsletters can all be utilized to raise awareness of upcoming events and to maintain engagement post-event. By creating a clear, consistent online presence, organizers can build anticipation and reach both students and the wider public. Using platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook can help engage younger audiences while simultaneously maintaining professional connections with key stakeholders like policymakers, academics, and activists. The use of hybrid events also offers an opportunity to attract both local and international audiences, broadening the scope of the event's impact.

Another essential component is creating tailored communication materials that resonate with different target groups. For example, students may respond better to visually appealing, concise content that emphasizes the practical benefits of attending, such as learning opportunities or career development. In contrast, stakeholders like policymakers or industry leaders might prefer more formal reports or invitations that highlight the event's alignment with broader gender equality initiatives, such as the FEM-ABLE project. Additionally, creating digestible content summaries from the workshops and events—such as key takeaways or quotes—can help maintain momentum after the events and foster continued discussion. This content can be shared via short videos, infographics, or blog posts to maintain ongoing engagement.

It is also important to collaborate with other institutions and organizations to amplify communication efforts. By forming partnerships with feminist groups, political organizations, and educational institutions, event organizers can expand their audience and benefit from the networks of these partner organizations. Joint communication strategies can involve cross-promotion on social media, sharing of email lists, or co-hosting follow-up discussions. This strategy not only broadens the reach of events but also strengthens relationships between different sectors committed to gender equality. Collaborating with local media outlets and blogs that focus on social and political issues is another way to extend the reach of event outcomes and engage a wider community.

Lastly, communication efforts should focus on ensuring inclusivity and accessibility. This includes making event materials available in different languages, using accessible formats for individuals with disabilities, and providing easy-to-understand summaries for those unfamiliar with academic or policy jargon. Hosting events in multiple cities, including smaller or rural areas, can also ensure that gender equality discussions are not confined to major urban centers. By incorporating these inclusive strategies into the dissemination plan, Universidade Lusófona can ensure that the impact of these events extends beyond academia and reaches diverse segments of society.

Advocacy and new collaborations

Advocacy for gender equality and political participation should focus on building networks of engaged stakeholders who can amplify the message across various sectors of society. A key recommendation is to advocate for legislative reforms that promote female representation in politics, such as further strengthening Portugal's parity law. Engaging with policymakers, feminist organizations, and community leaders can create a concerted effort to push for these reforms at both local and national levels. Events like those hosted by Universidade Lusófona provide a platform for raising awareness among young people, activists, and politicians, fostering a collective understanding of the importance of gender equality in governance. Moving forward, advocacy efforts should aim to transform these discussions into actionable policy changes by engaging directly with lawmakers and public officials.

Building new collaborations, especially with schools beyond the university level, is another crucial aspect of these advocacy efforts. Introducing conversations about female political participation early in the education system helps create a foundation for long-term societal change. By partnering with secondary schools, Universidade Lusófona and its collaborators can organize workshops, debates, and educational programs that emphasize the importance of women's roles in politics from a young age. These partnerships can also include training teachers to facilitate discussions on gender equality and political participation, ensuring that these topics are integrated into the curriculum in a meaningful way. This early engagement not only educates students but also encourages them to become active participants in shaping a more equal society.

Furthermore, forming partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups focused on gender equality can help strengthen advocacy efforts. By collaborating with groups that already have strong community ties, these initiatives can reach a broader audience, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. NGOs can also help facilitate events and workshops in areas outside of major cities, ensuring that gender equality advocacy reaches rural and disadvantaged communities. This decentralized approach is crucial in promoting gender equality nationwide, as it ensures that advocacy efforts are inclusive and reflective of the diverse experiences of women across Portugal.

Finally, it is important to consider partnerships with the private sector to foster gender equality in leadership. Collaboration with companies and business associations can encourage gender-sensitive hiring practices and promote women in leadership roles outside of politics. These collaborations can be mutually beneficial, as they allow businesses to align with gender equality initiatives while providing advocacy groups with additional resources and platforms to promote their cause. By expanding collaborations beyond academia and public institutions to include schools, NGOs, and businesses, advocacy efforts can become more impactful, reaching a wider and more diverse audience.

B.2.2 LITHUANIA, SIF

B.2.2.1 Introduction & context

In the domain of power, which measures gender equality in decision-making positions across the political, economic and social spheres, Lithuania ranked 18th in EU (2022), with the score 45.4 points and it showed improvement (+ 6.1 points). This was the best improvement among EU Member States in this domain since 2019. Advancements in economic decision-making (+ 9.7 points since 2019) have powered this change, followed by improvements in political decision-making (+ 6.2 points since 2019).

The **sub-domain of political power** examines the representation of women and men in national parliaments, government, and regional/local assemblies.

In political power in 2022 Lithuania scored 54.7. Women represented 42.2% of ministers, exceeding the EU average of 33.4%. Only 28.4% of members of parliament were women, lower than the EU average of 33%. In regional assemblies women made up 30.2% of members, the EU average is 29.4%.

In 2023 Lithuanian **score increased even more**: the domain of power is 48.6 and political power 59.1. Lithuania has a women prime minister, and it is one of five out of 27 Member States. In Lithuania, Government was gender balanced (2023) and it is like this in 11 Member States.

The FEM-ABLE National Gender Equality Strategy, developed as part of the FEM-ABLE project, serves as a vital tool for addressing barriers to women's participation in political leadership. This strategy seeks to disassemble the deeply entrenched social, structural, and cultural obstacles that limit women's engagement in political roles.

The strategy was created using an inclusive, participatory approach and is informed by both local and national research, including insights from the FEM-ABLE National Report. This report assessed the state of gender equality in Lithuania, focusing on political representation, legal frameworks, support mechanisms, and societal attitudes.

Based on these findings, the National Strategy targets the key challenges hindering women's political participation.

The National Gender Equality Strategy aims to increase women's participation in political life and elections through several critical initiatives. It focuses on embedding gender equality in political agendas, empowering women politically, and raising public awareness about the importance of women's roles in politics. The strategy outlines key actions such as amending laws to enforce gender balance in political parties, developing educational tools to motivate women. It also calls for support policies to help women balance family responsibilities with political careers, as well as the creation of data monitoring systems to track progress. Networking, mentoring programs, and strengthened political networks for women are also essential components of the strategy, aimed at building long-term female leadership in Lithuanian politics.

Events and workshops held in Lithuania aimed to promote the strategy by fostering dialogue between the stakeholders, allowing them to share their views and ideas, and explore joint solutions.

B.2.2.2 Activities overview

Between April and October 2024, Social Innovation Fund organized one in person event with the representatives from women NGOs - the leaders of the members-organizations of the umbrella organization - Lithuanian women's lobby, two in-person workshops for the politicians and women's leaders, and one online event for wide public. All the events were aimed at promoting Lithuanian National Strategy for gender equality in politics and to discuss the practical steps for the implementation of the strategy, which seeks to create more inclusive political environments. These events were part of Work Package 4 (WP4) and were designed to disseminate information, raise awareness, and foster dialogue on overcoming barriers to female political participation.

“Meeting the Lithuanian Women Lobby Organisation” event

The event took place on April 16, 2024, at the Metropolis Hotel, S. Daukanto St. 21, Kaunas, Lithuania, from 10 AM to 2 PM. It gathered 31 participants, all women, including representatives from the Lithuanian Women Lobby organization. The aim was to address women's political representation in Lithuania and the EU.

Key Highlights

Participants were welcomed and briefed on the event's objectives. The session began with a presentation of the FEM-ABLE project, outlining its activities and results, followed by discussions on the current status of women in politics. A PowerPoint presentation introduced the FEM-ABLE Gender Equality Strategy, detailing legislative measures and support for women politicians. A poster displayed the status of women in Lithuanian politics, emphasizing benefits of political participation and urging political parties to commit to gender equality. Best practices from partner countries aimed at encouraging women's political participation were presented, with handouts distributed to participants. A focused discussion explored the role of women's organizations in enhancing female political engagement during the European Parliament and Seimas elections.

Effectiveness and Impact

The event facilitated critical discussions on strategies for promoting women's political participation and monitoring political parties' gender equality commitments. Recommendations included drafting letters to parties on gender equality issues, fostering collaboration with women politicians, and organizing workshops to build capacity for gender-sensitive policies within political parties. The outcomes included preparations for future meetings and workshops aimed at advancing gender equality in Lithuania.

“Politicians’ clubs MILDA” Workshops

Two workshops were conducted to present the National Gender Equality Strategy and showcase best practices gathered during the project's research phase. Both sessions aimed to discuss ways to promote gender equality in political participation, particularly in the context of Lithuania's local political landscape and the upcoming elections on October 13. The workshops were designed as interactive sessions, fostering awareness and stimulating critical discussions among key stakeholders.

Workshop Details

First workshop was held in Prienai, Lithuania on August 28, 2024, from 11 AM to 4 PM, second - in Kaunas, Lithuania: September 27, 2024, from 10 AM to 3 PM. Participants: Each workshop had 6

women politicians from various political parties, organized in partnership with politicians' clubs, MILDA.

Key Highlights

The workshops began with presentations on the FEM-ABLE project, detailing its activities and outcomes, alongside an overview of key data regarding women's political participation in Lithuania and the EU. Then participants introduced themselves and shared the challenges they face in their political careers, fostering a supportive environment for discussion. A video showcasing the Gender Equality Index and insights into political power was shown, prompting reflections on the need for gender equality in politics. After the introductory part, the strategy was presented, highlighting measures and tools for achieving gender equality in political contexts. The pair discussions were organized to introduce the FEM-ABLE good practices, encouraging collaborative brainstorming on effective strategies. The discussions included the CEDAW and the necessary legislative improvements needed in Lithuania to support gender equality.

Effectiveness and Impact

Both workshops successfully created a platform for female politicians to engage in meaningful discussions about the barriers to their political participation. The interactive format encouraged participants to share personal experiences, enhancing mutual support and understanding.

“Discussions on Gender Equality Strategy” Event

The online event on October 8, 2024, aimed to discuss the importance of women's political representation and encourage participants to advocate for voting for women in the upcoming national elections on October 13. Utilizing the National Gender Equality Strategy and examples of best practices gathered during the project's research phase, the event focused on the obstacles women face in political participation and the benefits of gender equality within Lithuania's local political landscape. The session was designed to raise awareness and stimulate critical discussions among diverse stakeholders.

Participants: 30 individuals from various sectors, including universities, educational centers, NGOs, and private organizations. The audience comprised 24 women and 6 men, ensuring a diverse representation of perspectives.

Key Highlights

The event began with a presentation from the FEM-ABLE team outlining the project's activities and achievements. Participants were introduced to the current state of women in politics in Lithuania and the EU, along with the FEM-ABLE Gender Equality Strategy, including legislative improvement suggestions and support measures for women politicians. Two impactful videos were shown: “What is Gender Equality?” and “Creating the Future Now”. A discussion followed on the stereotypes and obstacles faced by women politicians, emphasizing the need for gender parity in achieving gender equality. Facilitated discussions encouraged stakeholders to consider how they can contribute to gender equality: 1) educators to promote gender equality in educational settings; 2) entrepreneurs: Identifying and supporting women leaders.

Effectiveness and Impact

The online event effectively fostered a collaborative environment for participants to engage in meaningful discussions about women's political representation. Participants gained a comprehensive

understanding of the structural, cultural, and social barriers limiting women's political involvement, and how these can be addressed. The event stimulated discussions on the role of gender quotas and other policy measures, highlighting successful initiatives from other countries to enhance women's representation in politics. The importance of training and empowering women for leadership roles was emphasized, with discussions on mentorship programs, public speaking, and campaign management. The discussions highlighted the necessity of involving young women and those from marginalized communities in political processes, ensuring a broader range of voices in governance. Participants identified practical steps for advancing gender equality in political representation, fostering collaboration among stakeholders and establishing a collective commitment to promoting women's political participation.

Overall, the event not only raised awareness about the importance of gender equality in politics but also encouraged actionable commitments from participants to advocate for women's representation in upcoming elections.

B.2.2.3 Challenges and solutions

The following section details the challenges that arose during the implementation of the events and the solutions to address them.

Difficulty in reaching political figures and local stakeholders

Reaching political figures and local stakeholders presented some challenges; however, we effectively leveraged our networks to address these issues. The Women's Clubs "MILDA" played a crucial role in facilitating connections and gathering women politicians during the two events. By utilizing established relationships within these networks, we were able to enhance participation and foster meaningful dialogue among key stakeholders. This collaborative approach not only strengthened our outreach efforts but also underscored the importance of community and solidarity in achieving our goals.

EC platform was not working

As we were spreading QR codes for the evaluation questionnaires at the end of the events, at one of them we encountered problem, that the EC platform in national languages was not working. We were sending the post-event e-mails with the links for the evaluation of the event to solve this issue.

Less engaging online form of the event

After having the experience of the implementation of the workshops and face-to-face events as well the online event, we might state that more productive and potential to engage participants are face-to-face events. The last event online required more effort from SIF staff to moderate the discussion. The online format of the event offered valuable insights, but we found that face-to-face gatherings were generally more engaging and productive. Based on our experience with both types of events, in-person interactions foster stronger connections among participants, enhancing collaboration and dialogue.

B.2.2.4 Good implementation practices identified

EVENT WITH WOMEN NGOS	
COUNTRY	Lithuania. Implemented by SIF
DESCRIPTION	The Lithuania gender equality strategy developed during Femable project and suggested further to implement continuously in different levels, is based on three following pillars: 1) Empowering women's to actively participate in the elections and to express their support to women's rights. 2) Communicating with political parties to promote gender equality and requiring women's issues to take priority in the political agenda. 3) Advocating voters to support women in the national elections. This strategy previously was introduced and discussed with the biggest Lithuanian women's umbrella organization, Lithuanian women's lobby organization, which unites 40 NGOS across the whole Lithuania. The event was organized in April 2024, prior the elections to the European Parliament and upcoming elections to Seimas (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania). Therefore it was organized as inspiration event to mobilize women's NGO's leaders to implement strategy, give them practical tools and good practices to draw the future action plans.
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	Social Innovation Fund is one of the founders of Lithuanian women's lobby (LWLO) organization, thus it was agreed with the board that the best way is to organize face-to-face event in line with the annual meeting of LWLO.
IMPACT ACHIEVED	The event facilitated critical discussions on strategies for promoting women's political participation and monitoring political parties' gender equality commitments. Recommendations included drafting letters to parties on gender equality issues, fostering collaboration with women politicians, and organizing workshops to build capacity for gender-sensitive policies within political parties.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	Leaders of women's NGOS
RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Venue: rented premises in Kaunas, the city in the middle of Lithuania as the best place to reach it from the remoted areas. ✓ Meeting hall for the session and spaces for the discussions in small groups. ✓ PC, with the internet connection, projector, equipment for the video watching and analysing podcasts in small groups ✓ Handouts with Femable materials, including leaflet, national strategy, posters, ppt presentations with QR codes with the link to the Femable website, Facebook, impact questionnaire and survey of CERV.
CHALLENGES FACED	The biggest challenge, seen from the point of women's NGO's to implement strategy – is lack of the resources to implement the strategy continuously. Not only advocacy campaigns prior the elections have to be organized, but also meetings with the politicians, revising the political programs in terms of the gender equality, and most important empowering women to become politician, collecting the pool of the women's politicians – competitive future candidates, is essential.
LESSONS LEARNED	To implement gender equality strategy, it is necessary to work continuously and mobilize all possible resources. Therefore, several additional steps were implemented: – during LWLO board meetings practical steps of the advocacy campaign were discussed, the letters for the political parties develop, agreed and send prior the

	elections. Women's NGOs were actively involved in different social campaigns to advocate gender equality in the election to Seimas in a year 2024. Thus, most important lesson – active moderation of practical steps after the inspirational event.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	The involvement of the women's NGOs in implementation of the gender equality strategies is crucial, thus it would be great to share the practice to NGOs; women's leaders and activists.

WORKSHOP WITH WOMEN-POLITICIANS	
COUNTRY	Lithuania. Implemented by SIF.
DESCRIPTION	The women's clubs MILDA (Women's Initiative for Democracy in Lithuania), uniting women from the different political parties, were created in different cities across Lithuania. Most active club is established in Kaunas city. This club is led of one of member women politician - on the rotation basis. Club members meet regularly and have thematic topics to discuss. In other Lithuanian cities women politicians' clubs established recently, in others, like Prienai – just have an idea to create such clubs. To strengthen these clubs, two workshops in the frame of Femable project have been organized. One workshop was held in the town Prienai, inviting women politicians and activists, willing to participate in the politics and having an idea to create MILDA club in Prienai. Another workshop – for the members of club MILDA in Kaunas and other politicians – candidates in the elections of the national Parliament. Both workshops aimed to present the Femable National Gender Equality Strategy, along with the examples of good practices gathered during the research phase of the project. The main issue was to discuss the ways of promoting gender equality in political participation, with a focus on the context of Lithuania's local political landscape and upcoming elections of 13th of October.
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	Invitations were sent to women-politicians having high positions in the Municipalities, representatives of municipal councils, members of the women's clubs MILDA. The idea of the project and aim of the workshop was briefly described in the invitation. During the workshop different methods were used: presentations, analysis of the case studies, group discussions, listening of the podcast, video analysis. Logical framework of the workshop: • Gender equality in general and in the political sphere • Why gender balance in politics is needed • Challenges and obstacles for women- politicians to seek better political representation • Analysis of the good practices from Fem-able project and personal experience • Setting plans for future
IMPACT ACHIEVED	Both workshops successfully created a platform for female politicians to engage in meaningful discussions about the barriers to their political participation. The interactive format encouraged participants to share personal experiences, enhancing mutual support and understanding. Women politicians from Prienai decided to meet once again to discuss more detailed the idea of creation of MILDA club in Prienai. Women politicians from Kaunas despite all challenges to try seeking better positions within their parties.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	- Women-politicians - Women leaders

RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Venue: rented premises in Prienai town and Kaunas city. ✓ Meeting room for the session and table for the discussions in small groups or pairs. ✓ PC, with the internet connection, projector, equipment for the video watching and analysing podcasts in small groups. ✓ Handouts with Femable materials, including leaflet, national strategy, posters, ppt presentations with QR codes with the link to the Femable website, Facebook, impact questionnaire and survey of CERV.
CHALLENGES FACED	Women politicians saw gender inequalities in the politics. Some of them doubts about possibility to participate in the activities of the women politicians' clubs MILDA. As a good argument to support idea of creation of clubs MILDA is the example, that in Lithuanian Parliament is established provisional women's parliamentary group, aimed to raise gender inequality problems.
LESSONS LEARNED	Small groups training is best way to organize the event. It is recommended to organize event outside the Municipality or workplace of women-politicians and to create encouraging and safe atmosphere and let women speak openly ensuring that their opinions, expressions will be not published.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	This workshop could be replicated in another towns of Lithuania, or in other countries to gather women from different political parties and to discuss how to empower women politicians to seek better positions within the parties they belong and discuss gender equality problems to be raised and placed and priority topic in the political agenda.

B.2.2.5 Recommendations for dissemination and advocacy

Recommendations for dissemination

Utilize multi-level dissemination channels: to ensure the project's impact reaches broad and diverse audiences, disseminate project information across European, national, and local levels. Use a blend of channels including partner websites, social media, emails, and event presentations. Use your networks to share the information and invite participants.

Use visual Media and digital content: create high-quality, shareable content such as infographics, videos, and testimonials that communicate the importance of gender-balanced representation in politics. Share this content consistently across social media channels to increase visibility.

Engagement in national and EU-level events: participate in national advocacy campaigns, seminars, and public events where the project's findings, materials, and best practices can be shared directly with the public, civil society members, and political stakeholders.

Workshops and events: organise events and present best practices and lessons from your project to a broad audience in the workshops and events. Invite members from civil society, political parties, and educational institutions to attend. These sessions should emphasize strategies for promoting women's political engagement and share successful methods from your experience.

Recommendations for advocacy

Engage political parties in gender balance dialogue: collaborate with political parties to promote gender-inclusive practices, such as gender quotas or balanced candidate selection. Advocate for party

pledges that prioritize women's issues on their political agendas. Share examples of successful gender balance initiatives and the positive impacts of women's representation.

Raise public awareness: launch awareness campaigns targeting the general public to challenge gender stereotypes and emphasize the importance of balanced political representation. Use public messages, educational videos, and infographics to show how women leaders contribute positively to diverse policymaking. Through campaigns encourage voters to actively support women candidates during elections.

Foster Advocacy networks: strengthen advocacy by connecting with NGOs and women's organizations across EU countries to share strategies, resources, and experiences. By establishing these networks, NGOs can create a powerful, unified voice advocating for gender balance at both national and EU levels. This regional collaboration also enhances resource sharing and expands the reach of each organization's advocacy efforts.

Engage with government and policymakers for lasting change: engage national policymakers to secure commitments for continued support of women's political participation. Advocate for legislative changes that support gender equality in politics, such as quotas and gender-sensitive policies. Submit formal policy recommendations, to demonstrate the societal benefits of balanced representation.

B.2.3 GREECE, WDB

B.2.3.1 Introduction & context

The National strategy to foster Gender Equality in politics

WDB for Greece, as all other partners for their countries, implemented a **comprehensive national strategy**:

To begin with, it aims to increase the representation of women in decision-making roles at all levels of government. Its overall goals include fostering a political environment that supports gender equality, counteracts stereotypes, and empowers women with the necessary skills and confidence to engage in political leadership. Public awareness campaigns and mentorship programs are central to this strategy, ensuring that women gain both societal recognition and practical tools to succeed in the political arena.

Key areas of focus include the creation of **mentorship and training programs**, raising awareness about gender diversity in politics, and building networks for women in leadership. The strategy prioritizes the **cultivation of role models**, while tackling societal norms that hinder women's participation in politics. It also emphasizes education and capacity building, helping women develop the skills needed for effective political engagement, and fostering a collaborative environment where gender equality is viewed as a collective effort by all genders.

The strategy is **grounded in practical steps**, such as establishing a national mentoring program, providing leadership training for aspiring female politicians, and promoting gender equality through media campaigns. This approach has high feasibility due to existing networks, Greece's technological infrastructure, and growing societal support for gender equality. However, it faces medium and low feasibility challenges in areas like political support and deeply ingrained cultural norms, which may slow down the pace of change.

Necessity of the events and workshops

The events were deemed essential to address the low representation of women in local politics and the need for **more inclusive political environments**. The events were designed to directly confront this issue by creating spaces where women could be empowered, informed, and encouraged to pursue political roles, helping to close the gender gap in political representation.

By bringing together politicians, stakeholders, and community members, the events aimed to shift societal perceptions of women in politics and highlight the **importance of diversity** in political leadership. Moreover, the discussions, workshops, and mentoring programs provided women with practical tools and strategies, enabling them to overcome barriers and actively engage in politics, thus promoting long-term cultural and institutional change.

In addition to empowering individual women, these events also created **awareness among male politicians and the general public** about the need for gender-balanced political participation. The involvement of local politicians and stakeholders allowed for discussions on how political institutions can be transformed to become more supportive of women, ensuring that political spaces are not only more accessible to women but also more inclusive in their governance and policy-making processes.

Local workshops aimed to confront challenges such as gender stereotypes, lack of mentorship opportunities for women, and insufficient training on navigating political processes.

B.2.3.2 Activities overview

WDB for Greece, as all other partner for their countries, held 3 workshops & events within FEM-ABLE program.

“Women politicians gathering” Workshop

This workshop aimed to engage participants in meaningful discussions and activities focused on increasing women's participation in the political domain. The sessions were designed to be interactive, providing both a theoretical framework and practical exercises related to political engagement and gender equality.

It was held on the 22nd May 2024 at the Multipurpose room of Hugs spiritual art café and lasted 2:30 hours. The workshop successfully convened 12 influential participants from **various political backgrounds**, including local and national figures such as candidates for mayor, regional councilors, and deputy mayors specialized in areas like culture and environment.

The workshop employed a combination of lectures, interactive group discussions, and practical exercises. This approach was intended to facilitate experiential learning and active participation, with a strong emphasis on understanding the challenges and opportunities for women in the political sphere.

The agenda covered a range of topics including:

- Introduction to political participation
- Gender Equality in politics
- Strategies for empowering women in political roles

The sessions were structured to align with the National Gender Equality Strategy, ensuring relevance and impact.

“Open panel discussion with women politicians” Event

This event featured a panel discussion with 30 participants and 5 esteemed panellists. It focused on enhancing women's participation in politics by addressing the challenges and opportunities for women to assume political leadership roles. The interactive panel allowed for a deep dive into various strategies and societal roles that could support this initiative.

It was held on the 22nd May 2024, at the Multipurpose room of Hugs spiritual cafe and lasted for 2 hours. The event attracted 30 participants from various backgrounds, reflecting a broad spectrum of the community interested in gender and politics.

The panel discussion was structured to facilitate an in-depth conversation on enhancing women's participation in the political domain, following a **dual-phase approach: (1) Presentation of the FEM-ABLE project and (2) interactive panel discussion.**

The discussion topics were curated to address several critical areas, such as strategies for enhancing women's participation, role of society and media and networking and support.

“Spotlighting women politicians; Ted-talk style” Event

The second and last event took place on June 29th 2024 in Rethymno, drawing an impressive attendance of 150 participants. The event featured a compelling keynote speech by Ms. **Pepi Mpirliraki**, whose vast experience in both local government and the private sector provided invaluable insights. The event successfully combined an **inspiring presentation** with a detailed exposition of the FEM-ABLE project and its strategies aimed at enhancing women's participation in the political domain.

Regarding the participants, the event attracted a diverse audience of 150 participants, characterised by a significant presence of women, reflecting the focus on female entrepreneurship and political engagement.

B.2.3.3 Challenges and solutions

Reflecting on the implementation process, WDB identified various challenges encountered and the solutions devised to address them. These insights can inform future projects or adaptations of the FEM-ABLE Toolkit.

The ***challenges faced*** are described below;

Cultural resistance

Some locals exhibited resistance to gender equality discussions, viewing them as non-essential. WDB addressed this by incorporating local success stories, role models from within the community and evidence-based data to highlight the benefits of gender equality in politics, thus fostering more open-minded discussions.

Lack of awareness on gender-sensitive policy implementation

Certain local politicians were unfamiliar with gender-sensitive policymaking and how to incorporate gender equality measures into their political agendas. WDB conducted practical, hands-on training sessions that simplified the concept of gender-sensitive policies, showing politicians how to integrate these principles into their existing frameworks. Real-world case studies from other European countries were used to provide context.

Diverse audience engagement

Engaging diverse audience members, especially younger participants, proved challenging, due to a general abstention from politics trend observed among younger people during the last years in Greece. To attract younger demographics, the content was adapted to be more interactive, which proved effective. Access to a younger network of participants was also achieved through the use of our community members' own network.

On the counterpart, below are described the insights gained from the implementation;

Importance of local context

Adapting content to reflect local governance structures and cultural nuances was critical in ensuring the relevance of discussions. What works in urban areas usually differs from rural settings, and flexibility in approach ensures better engagement.

Digital access as an equalizer

Hybrid formats that offer virtual participation helped overcome geographical limitations and expanded the program’s reach to more women, particularly in remote areas.

Early stakeholder buy-in is critical

Involving political stakeholders early in the process, through inclusive discussions and showcasing the benefits of gender equality, was essential in reducing resistance and fostering collaboration.

Collaborative spirit

Engaging diverse stakeholders fostered a collaborative spirit that encouraged a community-wide commitment to gender equality. Partnering with local organizations, media, and community groups helped WDB maximize its impact. Future projects should continue seeking such partnerships to enhance outreach and engagement.

B.2.3.4 Good implementation practices identified

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS	
COUNTRY	Crete, Greece. Implemented by WDB
DESCRIPTION	This practice establishes a structured mentorship program connecting experienced women politicians and leaders with aspiring female political candidates. The program aims to provide guidance, support, and networking opportunities to help women navigate the political landscape and enhance their leadership skills.
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	• <u>Program design</u>: Outline the objectives, structure, and expected outcomes of the mentorship program, ensuring a clear framework for both mentors and mentees. • <u>Recruitment of mentors</u>: Identify and recruit seasoned women politicians and leaders willing to share their experiences and insights. • <u>Mentee application process</u>: Develop criteria for selecting mentees and an application process to identify committed women interested in pursuing political careers. • <u>Matching process</u>: Pair mentors and mentees based on shared interests, goals, and backgrounds to foster meaningful connections. • <u>Training and orientation</u>: Provide orientation sessions for mentors and mentees to set expectations, define goals, and outline communication protocols. • <u>Ongoing support</u>: Facilitate regular check-ins and provide resources for mentorship pairs to help them stay engaged and track progress.

IMPACT ACHIEVED	- Increased confidence and preparedness among mentees for political candidacy, leading to a notable rise in women entering local and regional politics. - Strengthened networks of women in politics, creating a supportive community that promotes collaboration and shared learning. - Enhanced visibility of women leaders, encouraging more women to consider political careers and participate in decision-making processes.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	- Established women politicians and leaders - Local women's organizations - Educational institutions or political training programs - Community advocacy groups
RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Financial resources for program administration, including events and training materials ✓ Human resources for program coordination and support ✓ Venue or online platforms for training sessions and mentorship meetings
CHALLENGES FACED	Difficulty in attracting enough mentors due to time constraints was mitigated by offering flexible mentoring formats (e.g., virtual meetings). Ensuring consistent engagement from both mentors and mentees was addressed through regular check-ins and feedback mechanisms.
LESSONS LEARNED	The importance of clearly defined goals and expectations for both mentors and mentees, leading to more productive relationships. Providing training for mentors on effective coaching techniques shall improve the quality of support offered to mentees.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	This mentorship program model can be adapted in various contexts and regions, with adjustments made to accommodate local cultural and political landscapes. The framework can be easily customized based on the needs and experiences of different communities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH LOCAL ADVOCACY GROUPS	
COUNTRY	Crete, Greece. Implemented by WDB
DESCRIPTION	This practice focuses on establishing local advocacy groups dedicated to women's issues in politics. These groups serve as platforms for discussion, mobilization, and grassroots activism, organizing community forums and outreach programs to raise awareness about the importance of women's political representation.
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	<u>Stakeholder engagement</u>: identify and engage community leaders, local ngos, and women's organizations to support the formation of advocacy groups. <u>Group formation</u>: establish local advocacy groups with clear goals and a focus on gender equality in politics.

	• <u>Training sessions</u>: conduct workshops to train group members on effective advocacy techniques and community organizing. • <u>Community forums</u>: organize regular forums to discuss political issues and women's representation, inviting local politicians and stakeholders. • <u>Outreach programs</u>: develop outreach strategies to engage the wider community, including social media campaigns, informational brochures, and community events.
IMPACT ACHIEVED	• Increased community awareness about gender equality issues. • Empowered women to actively participate in local politics, leading to a rise in women candidates in local elections. • Fostered a supportive network for women in the community, enhancing their engagement in the political process. • Strengthened networks of women in politics, creating a supportive community that promotes collaboration and shared learning. • Enhanced visibility of women leaders, encouraging more women to consider political careers and participate in decision-making processes.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	- Local NGOs - Women's organizations - Community leaders - Local government representatives
RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Financial support for event organization and materials ✓ Human resources for training and facilitation ✓ Venues for hosting community forums and workshops
CHALLENGES FACED	Resistance from traditional community members regarding women's roles in politics was addressed through awareness campaigns and showcasing success stories of women leaders. Logistical issues such as securing venues and coordinating schedules were managed by establishing a dedicated organizing committee.
LESSONS LEARNED	The importance of local context in tailoring advocacy messages for community engagement was highlighted, leading to more effective outreach. Building trust within the community is essential for fostering open dialogues about gender equality.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	This practice can be adapted to various cultural contexts by modifying the outreach strategies and focus areas based on local challenges and opportunities. The framework for establishing advocacy groups is scalable to other regions facing similar gender equality issues.

B.2.3.5 Recommendations for dissemination and advocacy

Recommendations for dissemination

- **Conferences and Workshops:** Utilize events to showcase successful practices and engage stakeholders.
- **Social Media Campaigns:** Leverage social media platforms to share insights and promote awareness.
- **Newsletters and Publications:** Regular updates to stakeholders on the progress and outcomes of gender equality initiatives.
- **Case Study Reports:** Publish comprehensive reports documenting the case studies, methodologies, outcomes, and lessons learned, making them available as downloadable resources on relevant websites.
- **Webinars and Online Training:** Conduct regular webinars to discuss the successful practices, featuring guest speakers who can share insights and personal stories.
- **Key Messages**
 - Policy Change
 - Community Empowerment
 - Public Advocacy
 - Business Partnership

Recommendations for advocacy

Policy Briefs and Position Papers: Develop concise policy briefs outlining the benefits of implementing gender equality strategies, supported by data and success stories from the FEM-ABLE project.

Engage in Direct Lobbying: Organize meetings with key policymakers to present the case studies and evidence-based recommendations for adopting gender equality strategies.

Grassroots Mobilization: Encourage community members to advocate for gender equality initiatives by organizing local campaigns and petitions that demonstrate public support for policy changes.

Create Advisory Committees: Establish advisory boards that include women leaders and stakeholders to provide guidance and support for implementing gender equality practices at the policy level.

Collaboration Opportunities

- **Partnerships with NGOs and Civil Society:** Collaborate with non-governmental organizations focusing on women's rights, political engagement, and social justice to leverage resources and networks for greater impact.
- **Engagement with Academic Institutions:** Partner with universities and research institutions to conduct studies on the effectiveness of gender equality strategies and disseminate findings through academic channels.

- Cross-Sector Collaborations: Explore partnerships with private sector organizations committed to diversity and inclusion, fostering initiatives that encourage women's political participation.
- Networking Events: Organize networking events that bring together different sectors (government, civil society, academia, and business) to share experiences and foster collaborative solutions to common challenges.
- International Networks: Engage with international organizations and networks focused on gender equality (e.g., UN Women, European Women's Lobby) to share practices, gain insights, and influence broader policy agendas.

B.2.4 ITALY, CESIE

B.2.4.1 Introduction & context

In Italy, gender inequality in politics remains a pressing issue, particularly when it comes to women's representation in decision-making roles. In 2022, only 14.4% of mayors across Italy were women, and this percentage is even lower in Sicily, where just 7.2%² of mayors are female. This reflects broader regional disparities in gender representation and highlights the need for targeted measures to address this gap.

It also scores poorly on the Gender Equality Index, with a significant gap in the **"Power"** domain, which includes political representation. The country's deeply patriarchal society continues to perpetuate misogyny and sexism, further limiting women's participation in political leadership and decision-making roles.

In this context, the FEM-ABLE National Gender Equality Strategy developed under the FEM-ABLE project becomes a critical tool for addressing these issues. This strategy aims to dismantle the deeply ingrained societal, structural, and cultural obstacles that prevent women from fully engaging in political leadership.

The strategy was developed through an inclusive and participatory approach, drawing on local and national research, including the FEM-ABLE National Reports. These reports examined the state of gender equality across Italy, with specific focus on political representation, legal frameworks, and societal attitudes. Based on these findings, the strategy was designed to address the most pressing issues hindering women's political participation. It includes a mix of long-term structural changes, such as legislative reforms, alongside short-term initiatives like capacity-building workshops and public awareness campaigns.

The strategy is built around 6 core priorities: **education, capacity-building, networking, inclusion & diversity, legislative measures, and research & monitoring**. These pillars are essential for ensuring that individuals, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to contribute to decision-making roles and political leadership across Italy.

Events and workshops conducted in Palermo, are integral to **promoting the adoption** and success of this strategy. These gatherings created platforms for dialogue between key stakeholders, including university students, legal professionals, and local political figures, allowing them to share their experiences and explore collaborative solutions.

B.2.4.2 Activities overview

In Italy, 4 events were conducted in the city of Palermo, Sicily, each designed to engage different stakeholder groups and address critical issues related to women's political participation and representation.

² European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). (2022). Gender Equality Index 2022: Italy - Factsheet. [Link](#)

“Institutional gathering; advancing work-life balance” Workshop

The workshop was held at Palazzo Comitini, engaging 10 local political figures. Their expertise and active engagement enriched the discussions, which brought important issues to the forefront.

A significant portion of the debate centred around the topic of **gender quotas**, exploring both the pros and cons. Those in favour of gender quotas argued that such measures are necessary positive actions to encourage women's participation, acknowledging that women have historically faced, and continue to face, greater challenges and barriers in entering the political arena—thus not being on an equal footing with men. On the other hand, opponents raised concerns about meritocracy, the risk of tokenism, and the fear that quotas could lead women to feel undervalued as if their achievements are not recognized on their own merit.

Despite the formal roles of the participants, the workshop facilitated **open debates**, highlighting significant disagreements and diverse perspectives on the inner workings of local and national politics. The participants' willingness to share both professional viewpoints and personal experiences added substantial value to the dialogue.

“Inspiring students to champion gender equality strategies” Event

An event with 20 political science students from the University of Palermo was particularly valuable for fostering **intergenerational dialogue**. The active involvement of participants, regardless of their role or age, created a unique platform for debate—something not commonly seen in the political arena.

It combined both traditional and non-formal learning methods, including **interactive quizzes and facilitated debates**, which helped deepen participants' understanding of the issues. Although none of the participants had prior experience with such interactive methods, they were receptive and enthusiastic about the new approach. The discussions, which extended beyond the scheduled time, revealed a strong interest in further exploring the complexities of gender dynamics in politics, media, and education.

Younger participants brought forward critical issues, such as the **cultural norms** that discourage girls from pursuing careers beyond **traditional caretaking roles** and the **lack of investment** in empowering girls for decision-making positions. Despite acknowledging the progress made in recent decades, they emphasized the need for continued efforts and change.

Engaging with **students** proved highly beneficial, as they demonstrated curiosity and a strong willingness to participate in public debates. Feeling **underrepresented by institutions**, particularly within the Italian political system, students expressed a need for self-advocacy and empowerment.

Their involvement as key stakeholders within the university environment made it easier to initiate these discussions. The interaction with adults, professionals, and peers allowed students to voice frustrations and collaboratively explore solutions.

The evaluation phase revealed that students were highly satisfied with the participatory approach, the inclusion of young voices, and the opportunity to initiate grassroots discussions. The event successfully met its goals of **promoting critical thinking** about gender equality, **increasing awareness** of women's

underrepresentation in political spheres, and encouraging a more inclusive approach to education and participation in decision-making roles.

“Gender Equality: Reflecting on the past, shaping the future” Event

The third event of the FEM-ABLE project, held at the University of Palermo, focused on raising awareness and stimulating reflection on gender equality in Italy, past, present, and future. Engaging university students and doctoral candidates, the event emphasised the **broad nature of political engagement**, showing how activism goes beyond institutions and can take the form of **protests, grassroots movements, and collective actions**.

The event, supported by Professors Ida Fazio and Giovanna Fiume, gathered 20 participants from gender studies and sustainability programs. Giovanna Fiume shared her experiences as a feminist activist, linking personal experiences to broader political structures and highlighting key moments in Italian history that shaped the gender equality movement. Fiume's intervention underscored the power of activism beyond formal politics, inspiring participants to view **politics as an ongoing social effort**.

A major component of the event was a **motion debate**, where participants explored the pros and cons of mandatory gender quotas in political institutions. Split into 2 groups, one for and one against the motion, they argued their cases with randomly assigned roles. Those favoring quotas emphasized their importance in ensuring balanced representation and overcoming structural barriers. In contrast, the opposition raised concerns about meritocracy, tokenism, and reverse discrimination. The debate pushed participants to think critically about the complexity of gender quotas and their broader societal implications.

The event allowed students to practice **debating techniques**, sharpen their argumentation skills, and gain a nuanced understanding of gender equality in political representation. This reflective experience reinforced the project's mission to foster active engagement with gender issues across different levels of society.

“Debating a motion on gender quotas” Event

The fourth FEM-ABLE project event at the University of Palermo's Political Science Faculty engaged undergraduate students in a dynamic session centered on gender equality in politics. Through interactive activities, the event enhanced students' understanding of gender strategies, such as gender quotas, and connected them to the broader socio-political dynamics of feminist movements.

The session opened with a participatory quiz on international, EU, and local gender equality issues, setting the stage for introducing the FEM-ABLE project and its National Gender Strategy. Students showed particular interest in resources like the guides on inclusive language and leadership courses for women, which UNIPA currently lacks, thus **identifying potential areas for improvement within their institution**.

The motion debate that followed allowed students to critically engage with the material. This format, which deviated from traditional teaching methods, was highly appreciated for its use of **non-formal education**, fostering active participation. The event underscored the importance of integrating gender equality into political education and creating reflective, participatory environments that empower future leaders to challenge inequalities and advocate for change.

B.2.4.3 Challenges and solutions

During the implementation process, several challenges were encountered that required creative and adaptive solutions to ensure the success of the activities. The following section outlines these challenges and the strategies employed to overcome them.

Difficulty in reaching political figures and local stakeholders

Engaging political representatives from the city hall and regional government proved challenging due to their busy schedules and limited interest in participating in events of this nature. To overcome this barrier, a "snowball effect" method was employed, where initial contacts within the political landscape were encouraged to invite their colleagues and other influential figures. This approach gradually expanded the network of participants, ultimately increasing the reach and impact of the event. Additionally, leveraging existing relationships and networks helped secure the participation of key political stakeholders.

Political disagreement among participants

The workshops encountered significant political disagreement among participants on key topics related to women's participation and representation. Contentious issues included whether the definition of "women" should include transgender individuals and differing opinions on the implementation of gender quotas. To manage these disagreements, the facilitation team employed a neutral, inclusive approach, ensuring that all viewpoints were respectfully heard and considered. Structured debates and mediated discussions were introduced to channel these differences into constructive dialogue, fostering a deeper understanding among participants despite their differing views.

Poor participation and engagement from attendees

Some attendees were reluctant to actively participate in discussions and share their opinions, possibly due to the formal nature of the topics or fear of public speaking. To address this, the event incorporated various participatory activities designed to break down barriers and encourage involvement. Non-formal methods, such as interactive quizzes, small group discussions, and gamified elements, were introduced to create a more relaxed and engaging atmosphere. These activities successfully increased attendee participation by making it easier for individuals to express their views in a supportive environment.

Low involvement of men in gender equality discussions

Partly due to the perception of gender equality as a "women's issue," a lack of awareness about its benefits for men, and discomfort in discussing gender roles. To address this, events were reframed to highlight how gender equality benefits everyone, and male role models (i.e. Ninni Terminelli) were engaged as speakers.

B.2.4.4 Good implementation practices identified

THEMATIC CARDS GAME	
COUNTRY	Sicily, Italy. Implemented by CESIE
DESCRIPTION	The thematic card game is an informal and collaborative activity designed to facilitate the exchange of ideas and foster collective solutions within the political arena. The topics covered were drawn from the research phase conducted at the start of the FEM-ABLE project and reflected in the national report, ensuring that the themes discussed were grounded in real-world findings and context-specific realities. <i>*Initially, the activity was conceived to be played on a Snakes and Ladders board, symbolising the ups and downs of women's political participation. However, to better align with the institutional setting where it would be implemented, the concept was adapted to a more formal approach using thematic cards</i>
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	Participants were introduced to a set of cards structured around key themes identified during the research phase. These themes reflect both challenges and opportunities in relation to women's participation in politics, as highlighted in the national report. The deck was divided into the following thematic clusters, each containing a "CHALLENGE" (SFIDA) card and an "OPPORTUNITY" (OPPORTUNITÀ) card: • Gender Bias & Stereotypes • Societal Attitudes & Cultural Norms • Role Models • Double Standard & Scrutiny • Career and Private Life Balance • Intersectionality • Media Influence • Systemic Barriers Participants were each given a card to discuss. The participant with the "Challenge" card started the discussion by reflecting on the assigned topic for 5 minutes. The facilitator then linked the discussion to the corresponding "Opportunity" card, ensuring a logical flow, and encouraging participants to build on each other's insights. This interactive process created a dynamic exchange where participants explored different aspects of women's political engagement through collective dialogue. For example, a participant might discuss a "Challenge" card on "Societal Attitudes & Cultural Norms," which would then be followed by a connection to an "Opportunity" card on "Creating support networks and promoting gender equality." This method encouraged deeper exploration and active debate.
IMPACT ACHIEVED	- Participants gain awareness of the barriers women face in entering the political arena. - They develop an understanding of how priority areas of intervention are interconnected, revealing the structural nature of segregation.

	- The exercise highlights the benefits of integrating non-formal methods into formal institutional contexts.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	Professionals in the local political arena, policy-makers, and promoters of women's participation in governmental and institutionalized settings. It can easily be adapted to other contexts and implemented with diverse groups, such as the general public, students, educators, and more.
RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Set of cards divided into two decks: Challenges and Opportunities ✓ Snakes and ladders board (in an informal setting) (see the resources attached)
CHALLENGES FACED	Time management presents a challenge, requiring careful facilitation to ensure all topics are adequately covered and all participants have enough time to discuss the topic assigned.
LESSONS LEARNED	Working with institutional stakeholders and policy-makers does not necessarily result in resistance to non-formal methodologies. Guiding participants out of their comfort zones with innovative approaches generates valuable discussions and outcomes.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	The practice offers strong potential for scalability, as it allows participants to self-reflect on systemic dynamics within their own national or local contexts. The method is adaptable and can be tailored to different professional and cultural environments, making it suitable for broader applications.

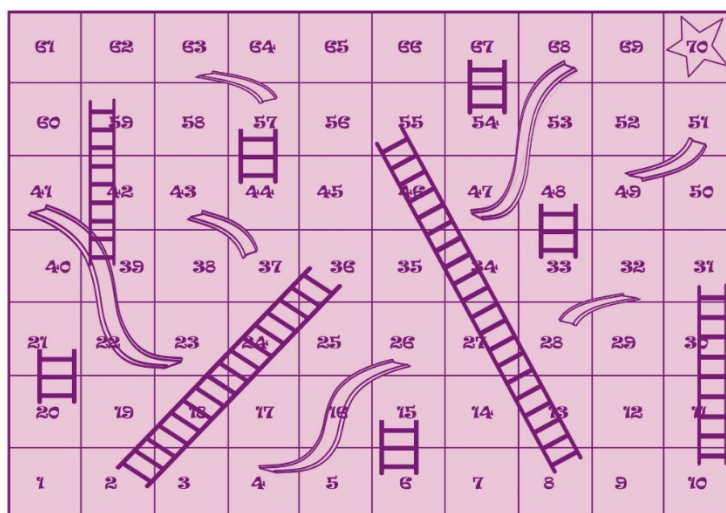
***Resources for thematic card game**

(1) Thematic cards in Italian, divided by thematic clusters – challenge & opportunity.

BIAS DI GENERE E STEREOTIPI



(2) Snakes and ladders board



MOTION DEBATE ON GENDER QUOTAS

COUNTRY	Sicily, Italy. Implemented by CESIE
DESCRIPTION	A motion debate focused on the implementation of mandatory gender quotas in all Italian political institutions. Participants were divided into 2 groups, each tasked with defending opposing positions—either for or against the quotas. The debate aimed to engage university students and researchers in critical discussions about gender equality in politics, offering an interactive way to explore the topic by adopting different perspectives. The debate also allowed participants to develop their argumentation skills, practicing how to present and defend a position, even if they did not personally agree with it. <i>*Alternatively, if the group of participants is large, a third group can be included to act as an impartial jury that listens to and evaluates the two debating groups. The jury assesses the quality of the arguments, adherence to the rules, and the effectiveness of the presentations.</i>
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	Participants are briefed on the debate format and provided with background information on the issue of gender quotas. Roles (either for or against the motion) are then assigned randomly to the groups —one supporting the introduction of mandatory gender quotas and one opposing it. <i>*If the development of the argument seems stuck or if students are not very familiar with the topic, you can provide suggestions with pro/against arguments, such as:</i> Pro arguments - Balanced representation: Ensures equal participation from all genders. - Overcoming structural barriers: Helps address systemic obstacles that hinder equal representation. - Improved quality of political decisions: Diverse perspectives lead to more well-rounded decision-making.

	- Successful international examples: Draw on models from countries where gender quotas have proven effective. - Temporary measure: A transitional tool to achieve long-term gender equality. Against: - Meritocracy and competence: Quotas may overlook merit in favour of gender. - Risk of tokenism: Candidates may be seen as symbolic, and not valued for their skills. - Reverse discrimination: Quotas could be perceived as unfair to other groups. - Cultural problem, not legislative: Gender imbalance is more deeply rooted in cultural norms than in laws. - Natural representation: Suggests that representation should emerge organically in a meritocratic system. Each group is given some time to prepare their arguments, drawing on existing research and their reflections. They then are given 2-5 minutes to present their case – which is controlled by a stopwatch. The other group then respond to the arguments from the oppositor using the same time. Followed by a second round for rebuttals and a closing statement from both sides. A moderator ensures that the debate follows the rules, gives equal speaking time to both sides, and encourages constructive dialogue. Participants are briefed on the debate format and provided with background information on the issue of gender quotas. Roles (either for or against the motion) are then assigned randomly to the groups—one supporting the introduction of mandatory gender quotas and one opposing it. Each group is given time to prepare their arguments, drawing on existing research and personal reflections. They are then allowed 2-5 minutes to present their case, which is timed by a stopwatch. The opposing group responds within the same time limit. This is followed by a second round of rebuttals and closing statements from both sides. A moderator ensures the debate follows the rules, provides equal speaking time to both sides and encourages constructive dialogue. After the debate, the jury convenes to discuss the following considerations: the quality of the arguments presented, the effectiveness of counter-arguments, communication skills and adherence to debate rules. The jury then announces the winning group and explains the reasons for their decision. Participants are then encouraged by the moderator to reflect on what has been discussed. They are invited to share their thoughts on the activity. What was learned about political participation and gender equality? Were any arguments presented that made them reconsider their initial position?
IMPACT ACHIEVED	The debate enhanced participants' critical thinking and argumentation skills while deepening their understanding of the complexities surrounding gender quotas in politics. It also fostered engagement with gender equality issues and provided a platform for students to reflect on how policies affect institutional representation. The exercise promoted greater awareness of both the benefits

	and potential drawbacks of such policies, allowing participants to critically evaluate their positions.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	- University of Palermo students and doctoral candidates, particularly from gender studies and political science programs. - Professors and academic experts, including historians and gender studies specialists. - CESIE, which organized and facilitated the event.
RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Debate moderator and facilitators. ✓ Background materials and research on gender quotas and political representation. ✓ Chronometer.
CHALLENGES FACED	Some participants found it difficult to defend a position they did not personally agree with, which led to initial hesitation in the debate. Managing time effectively within the debate structure to allow for comprehensive discussions while maintaining momentum.
LESSONS LEARNED	Randomly assigning positions forced participants to think outside their comfort zones, leading to more nuanced reflections on the topic. Providing clear guidelines and resources beforehand is essential to ensure that participants feel confident and prepared. The debate format is an effective tool for raising awareness and fostering engagement with complex social issues, such as gender equality in political representation.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	The motion debate format can be easily replicated in other educational or professional settings. It encourages critical reflection and fosters diverse perspectives, making it a valuable method for exploring key societal challenges. This model could be adapted to different contexts by selecting topics relevant to the local community.

B.2.4.5 Recommendations for dissemination and advocacy

To ensure the effective dissemination and adoption of these gender equality practices and strategies, the following efforts were undertaken:

Dissemination and communication

Before the events in Italy, a promotional poster was created and distributed both digitally and in print. Following the events, a dissemination campaign was launched across various media platforms; Instagram, facebook, organisations' websites, LinkedIn, etc. A press release, articles, and social media posts were published to share the outcomes of the events with a broad audience.

Moreover, the following materials were produced to be distributed and used during the conduction of the events;

- FEM-ABLE tote bags
- FEM-ABLE folders
- Roll-up banner (85x200 cm)
- Bookmarks (15x5 cm)
- Badges featuring a quote by bell hooks *"feminist are made, not born"*
- Printed versions of the FEM-ABLE Policy Toolkit and FEM-ABLE National Strategy documents



These efforts significantly enhanced the visibility and impact of the project, fostering greater engagement with gender equality strategies.

Advocacy and new collaborations

The project successfully engaged **political stakeholders, local networks, and organisations** within the region, establishing or strengthening collaborations with the following entities:

- City Hall of Palermo
- City Hall of Bolognetta
- City Hall of Ciminna
- Emily Palermo Association
- Global Thinking Foundation
- Equal Opportunity Committee of the Palermo Bar Association
- UDI Palermo
- Antimafia Commission

Additionally, new connections were made with **universities**, particularly with researchers and professors specializing in relevant fields. The project also strengthened partnerships with University Associations, including:

- University of Palermo (UNIPA)
 - o Political Science Department, UNIPA
 - o Law Department, UNIPA
 - o Gender Studies doctorate, UNIPA
 - o Center for Sustainability and Ecological transition, UNIPA
 - o Students' associations, UNIPA; Vivere scienze politiche, Intesa scienze politiche, Intesa giurisprudenza

These advocacy efforts and collaborations have expanded the project's reach, bolstering support for gender equality initiatives and fostering new opportunities for ongoing engagement and impact.

B.2.5 SPAIN, La Xixa

B.2.5.1 Introduction & context

In Spain, women's political representatives represent 44,3% of the MPs and 43,3% of the Senators, continuing their progression in assuming key political positions³. Taking into account both chambers, Spain ranks sixth out of the EU countries counting most female representatives in 2024 with 43,7% of the total. Spain is often taken as an example of quick political progress and changes regarding women's rights from the 1980s until today, but it is the vitality and diversity of its feminism that maintains the impetus for social changes and the increment in women's representation in leadership positions and political all-level participation.

In La Xixa, we consider our lives as political arenas and stages of daily political conflicts that mirror the power structure of societies. This is the reason why we considered it relevant to implement the National Strategy with activists, educators, and community leaders directly related to grassroots movements and local social issues. The slogan "The private is political" perfectly represents our intersectional perspective on what politics represents, and on how important it is for more women to be involved at all levels and positions of policy- and decision-making and policy implementation.

B.2.5.2 Activities overview

The activities, both events, and workshop, targeted a wide and diverse audience and aimed especially at influencing on beliefs and behaviours through participatory and non-formal methods. More than teaching content on gender equality in politics, the implementation of the National Strategy intended to raise awareness on gender-related barriers to accede to leadership and visible positions in political and public spaces. Opening dialogue and debates through theatrical activities, circle of words, and Forum Theatre plays proved to be an efficient method to engage young voters, stakeholders, community leaders, educators, and scholars in the National Strategy objectives, converting them into Fem-Able ambassadors.

"Onades de Dones" Event

The first event featured the inaugural rehearsal of the play "Onades de Dones" ("Women's Waves"), presented by La Xixa's theatre company, La Xixa Lab. Co-created by the Theatre Director Marina Pallares-Elias using the "Theatre of the Yes" methodology, the play draws on the personal and intimate experiences of five actresses. "Onades de Dones" explores women's roles in public spaces and their involvement in social decision-making. Following the presentation, an open discussion allowed participants to reflect on women's representation in society and share their own experiences. To conclude the event, an activity based on Image Theatre methodology gathered valuable feedback from participants, who described the experience as "empowering," "gratifying," "reflective," "liberating," and "connecting."

The principal topics addressed were the necessity of safe environments for women leaders where they could freely express their fears, obstacles, and work collectively on their problem-solving abilities without being confronted with paternalism and scrutiny reinforcing the impostor syndrome.

³ EIGE Statistics database: power, 2024 (data from the third quarter of 2024). Consulted online on 08/10/2024: [Link](#)

Participants felt that the platform offered by the event in La Xixa corresponded to their need for support. The fact that some young men also participated to the event facilitated the debate on how to be a good ally for gender equality as a person identifying as a man. The play also opened a discussion on women's participation in public and political spaces, where participants shared that the power itself should change in its ways to be exercised on people, work teams, collectives, and groups.

“Co-construction of a Forum Theatre piece: How do we, women, participate in politics?” Workshop

The workshop focused on creating a **Theatre Forum play** through four sessions, designed to empower a predominantly female group by helping them embody their experiences and express themselves on stage. Conducted engagingly and experientially, the sessions fostered active learning and discussion throughout the play development process. The first session aimed to bring personal stories to life in public spaces while encouraging collective problem-solving. The second session centered on raising awareness of using one's voice and body as tools for empowerment. The third session highlighted the significance of collective effort and solidarity in strengthening the group. The final session addressed societal conflicts by integrating them into public spaces. The workshops were led by Mamadou Diol and Ana Bustamante, both esteemed experts in Theatre Forum and Theatre of the Oppressed.

As the workshop followed the creation of Forum Theatre pieces of 5 small groups, there were specific times to debate and share experiences related to politics, power dynamics and to occupying political and leadership positions as women. Forum theatre, following the debates, consolidates itself as a key political tool to challenge power structures and oppression. Participants agreed that its focus on reality, away from fiction, makes it a unique space for resistance and awareness-raising. It was highlighted how, through collective creation, power dynamics are made visible, questioning who has a voice on stage and who occupies spaces in daily life, local communities, work, on artistical or political stage, but also in public space.

The debate emphasised intersectionality, recognising that all our identities influence how power is participated in and exercised, as well as represented. Participants concluded that the creative process they have been through not only gives them a strong connection with their voice and body but also invites self-criticism, forcing them to reflect on their privileges, which is at the same time an empowerment and empathy tool.

In this activity, the importance of theatre was highlighted as a space to generate a collective and individual crisis - understood as provoking changes -, mobilising the audience to step out of their comfort zone and rethink how power is exercised and lived in society. The function of forum theatre, according to the participants, is also to facilitate debate and the collective search for solutions.

Theatre Forum piece, “Un Tema de Genere”

The last event, organised with the grassroots feminist collective **Feministes de l'Esquerra de l'Eixample**, took place on Sunday, 29th of September 2024 from 12:00 to 14:00 in a public space at the junction of two pedestrian busy streets. The event presented a Theatre Forum piece, “Un Tema de Genere” (“A Gender Matter”) performed by the theatre company of La Xixa, La Xixa Lab. The piece takes place during the job interview for a waiter/waitress at the restaurant “La Nébula”. The last two finalists, Monica and Robert, with very good references and professional experiences, will have to demonstrate their best skills to the interviewer to finally be the chosen one. The conflictual situations

featured opened a debate where spect-actors and spect-actresses tried to find solutions and express their opinions. The event counted more than 40 spectactors and spectactresses, all enthusiastic and engaged in the event.

The second part of the event opened various topics addressed by the Spanish National Strategy. Participants discussed how women in power can sometimes reinforce patriarchal structures by adopting aggressive leadership styles. They called for alternative leadership models that promote cooperation, care, and horizontal structures.

Barriers like **paternalism**, **impostor syndrome**, and **double standards** were identified as key challenges, pointing out gender bias, stereotypes, and work-life balance as further limits of women's leadership opportunities. The group emphasized the need for supportive networks and changing power dynamics to prevent violence in conflict resolution.

B.2.5.3 Challenges and solutions

Presential format

To concretely achieve the objectives of the National Strategy, the idea of La Xixa was to use interactive and participatory methods, so both events were presential, and needed further coordination and dissemination efforts. Finally, both events reached the expected number of participants and the fruitful collaboration with the Feminists of the Esquerra Eixample contributed to the success of the second event, which exceeded the foreseen audience.

Public space intervention

An event in a public space requires specific coordination, so several members of the team were involved in its organisation and preparation, as well as the excellent partnership with the local feminist collective.

Working with young voters

This target group is particularly heterogeneous, composed of some very politicised participants, and others not at all, thus it can be challenging to work with young voters on a political topic. At the same time, it is a crucial life point to generate higher engagement in politics and participation. Using participatory methods, Theatre, and creating open debates proved to be a powerful tool.

Knowledge assessment section of the questionnaire

This section of the questionnaire didn't exactly correspond to the actions we were implementing, focused on influencing beliefs and attitudes by raising awareness and empowering community stakeholders, not giving more formal information on gender equality in politics, but at the same time, it was a good introduction to the project and explaining the questionnaire. Despite our best efforts, some participants criticised the questionnaire, defining it as "linear", "institutional" or "not suited".

The *impact assessment* was revealed to be a demanding process. To produce high-quality reports and ensure that participants filled out the questionnaire, it has been necessary to amplify the project support team.

The questionnaire and approach of the FEM-ABLE project, which focused on women's political representation, received criticism from participants, who would have liked a *more intersectional*

and less binary approach to the concept of “Women” in order not to fall into essentialism. For example, a participant wrote in the impact assessment questionnaire as possible improvement:

“I understand that historically most things have been established based on the male-female binarity, but it would be interesting to define what we call a woman, as a non-binary person there are many political discourses whose feminism and definition of a woman is exclusionary and extremely narrow. Integrate the aspect of how dissident gender identities can be impacted in this context.”

To answer this need, we worked on reframing the project’s presentation with an intersectional approach, as well as using inclusive language.

B.2.5.4 Good implementation practices identified

FORUM THEATRE IN PUBLIC SPACE	
COUNTRY	Spain, Barcelona, implemented by La Xixa Teatre
DESCRIPTION	“Forum Theatre in public space” consists of fostering a public discussion based on a conflictual situation performed through Forum Theatre. It was designed to foster collective debate about gender inequalities mechanisms and trigger individual action and problem-solving ability. The play is crafted through a collective and creative investigation, drawing on real-life experiences, including stories from both the audience and the actresses. The play specifically examines daily challenges faced by women due to patriarchal systems, headlining how normalized this oppression has become in society. By actively engaging the audience in problem-solving, Forum Theatre fosters a deeper understanding of social issues and empowers participants to envision alternatives.
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	Enumerate the key steps taken to implement this practice, such as stakeholder engagement, event design, participant selection, and execution. To implement this event, the first step is engaging with a local feminist collective or group that aligns with the themes of gender-based discrimination and/or violence. Together, select a venue within their district and choose a suitable date, ideally on a weekend for better accessibility. Next, coordinate the necessary human and material resources, including artists, a Joker or facilitator, technical support, and the equipment needed for an outdoor performance. The play should focus on issues related to gender, ensuring relevance to local experiences. To perform, at least 3 characters are crucial in Forum Theatre: The oppressor, the character who exercises the oppression, the oppressed, the character who experiences some form of oppression or conflict, and a secondary character, that serves to reinforce the story and might act as a passive witness, ally, or unintentional accomplice. Communication before the event is necessary. To reach a wide and diverse audience, La Xixa recommends promoting the event through stakeholders,

	using social media, newsletters, and also direct invitations via WhatsApp or Telegram. On the day of the event, setup begins 2 hours before the performance, allowing early attendees to take their seats while support staff invites passersby to join the audience. Hosting the event outdoors is highly recommended, as performing in a public space encourages spontaneous participation from passersby, including individuals who may not be familiar with feminist topics, politics, or theatre. This helps to bring a wider range of perspectives and enriches the discussion by involving people from different backgrounds, as well as responding to cultural rights and civic participation for all citizens, supporting everyone to feel legitimate. At the start, the Joker introduces themselves and the artists, explains the concept of Forum Theatre, and engages the audience with an interactive warm-up game. The play then begins, highlighting everyday instances of gender-based discrimination and violence that often go unquestioned. When the conflict in the play reaches its peak, the Joker pauses the performance, inviting audience members to become spect-actors/actresses, offering alternative solutions by acting out different outcomes. The Joker guides the discussion, determining which proposals to explore. The spect-actor/actress steps into the role of the chosen protagonist at a specific moment in the play. This participatory process encourages critical reflection on the issues portrayed. Each new situation generates new debates and it creates opportunities for participants to relate to their own experiences, and share their feelings. The event concludes with the Joker thanking the artists and participants and leaving the audience with insights from the collective exploration.
IMPACT ACHIEVED	Enhanced ability to recognise and confront microaggressions and discrimination through real-life scenario rehearsals. Engaged with diverse perspectives on gender inequalities during open forums, deepening understanding of the issue's complexity. Explored alternative solutions with a focus on non-violent responses. Reflected, from an intersectional perspective, on experiences shaped by patriarchal social models. Participants identified as men gained a greater awareness of the violence and discrimination faced by women due to their gender. Experienced a sense of community and belonging through shared stories in a safe, supportive environment. Developed empathy and critical thinking by stepping into others' shoes
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	- A grassroots feminist collective from the district to connect with a larger and more diverse audience beyond usual theatre or visual art attendees. This collaboration also enhances the legitimacy to perform within the area.

	- At least 3 comedians familiar to Theatre Forum and in direct improvisation. - One facilitator or joker involved in feminist activities.
RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Financial resources ✓ Salaries for the theatre company ✓ Human resources: ○ At least 3 comedians familiar with Theatre Forum or a theatre company familiar with Forum Theatre method, able to present a play focused on gender discrimination. ○ A Joker, a person linking the audience with the stage, especially during the forum. We recommend that this person is engaged in feminist issues and topics. ○ A technician / technical support ○ One person to coordinate the event: define the agenda, gather the needs of every stakeholder (the comedians, the collective), coordinate the service providers (technicians, municipality, etc) ○ Staff to organise the space for the audience and the stage ✓ Material resources: ○ Chairs for the audience ○ A delimited space for actors and actresses to play ○ A place for comedians to change clothes and go to the bathroom, store their personal items. <i>*Because this play is performed in a public space:</i> ○ Sound system and mixing table ○ 1 microphone for every comedian and joker. ○ 2 microphones for the audience. ○ License to play in public space (depending on your local law)
CHALLENGES FACED	Weather conditions: Outdoor events are often at the mercy of unpredictable weather. This required flexibility, both in terms of adjusting the audience disposition and modifying the on-stage setup if needed. Stakeholder coordination: Managing a diverse array of stakeholders and support providers presented logistical complexities. Each group had different views on the event and requirements, and it was crucial to have clear communication and be flexible to maintain the event's goals and co-construction. Availability of support staff: It is essential to ensure the availability of teams and support staff well in advance, particularly since the event takes place on weekends. This requires pre-event coordination, as the on-site organisation often involves multiple roles, each with specific responsibilities. Public space and noise considerations: Performing in a public space requires sensitivity towards the surrounding neighbourhood. Noise levels had to be monitored closely to avoid causing major disturbances. Ensuring respectful engagement with the local community was essential for the event's success.
LESSONS LEARNED	Organising an initial in-person meeting with the feminist collective was important to establish a strong bond before the implementation phase. The event emerged from a collaborative planning and organisational process, with

	communication fine-tuned from the initial outreach to the final speaker on the day itself. As a result, the event flowed smoothly, with mutual support throughout the implementation. Presenting the play during a local district festivity, in partnership with a feminist collective rooted in the community, further legitimised our presence. The visible display of both FEM-ABLE and the collective's symbols reinforced the event's professional yet accessible image. This was emphasised by the open-air format, which eliminated any prior requirements for attendance, making it inclusive rather than elitist. Selecting a prominent location on the weekend was also strategic. The square where we performed was highly visible, situated at the intersection of two busy pedestrian streets, making it an ideal spot to attract Sunday passersby from the neighbourhood.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	The practice exhibits significant potential for scalability and adaptability across various contexts and regions. The Forum Theatre method can be effectively implemented by anyone trained in it, making the activity accessible to diverse realities. Adaptability to local contexts: To address specific regional issues, the content of the play should be tailored to reflect the experiences of women in that place. This ensures that the themes resonate with the audience, fostering a deeper connection and relevance. Logistical flexibility: While the practice is ideally suited for outdoor settings, it can also be adapted for indoor venues. In enclosed spaces, the need for technical support, such as microphones and sound amplification, is often reduced or eliminated. This indoor approach can be particularly advantageous in inclement weather, although it may necessitate enhanced prior communication efforts, including on-site posters and displays to inform attendees. Variety of settings: The Forum Theatre can be performed in multiple settings, including educational institutions (schools and universities), community centres, or public events. Additionally, the duration of the event is highly flexible, ranging from 30 minutes to 6 hours, as demonstrated by Mamadou Diol's practices in Senegal. Emotional Considerations: It is important to recognise that the impactful nature of the play may evoke strong emotional responses and potential conflict among participants. Therefore, facilitators must approach these discussions aware of their audience and with a deep understanding of the dynamics at play, ensuring a safe environment for all participants to engage in meaningful dialogue.

B.2.5.5 Recommendations for dissemination and advocacy

Dissemination and communication

The dissemination and communication strategy involved collaborating with organisations and collectives, and through various online channels.

A **QR code-poster** provided access to previous FEM-ABLE results during events and workshops, and we facilitated the link to the FEM-ABLE website during the organisation of the events and post-workshops. **Social media, including Instagram and WhatsApp Groups**, were used to engage the community and stakeholders, focusing on women's representation and power dynamics. We also communicated after each activity implemented on social medias, sharing our experiences of implementing the Strategy. During the second event, several FEM-ABLE posters were also placed in the street and square, offering a great visibility to the project.

Participants from the workshop and events were actively spoken to **act as ambassadors** for the National Strategy's value and objectives. The toolkit has also been shared with co-organisers, and participants of the first event to stimulate interest.

Advocacy and new collaborations

La Xixa's perspective, based on the organisation's values and the feedback of participants of each FEM-ABLE implemented activity, emphasises the importance of not only increasing representation of people identifying as women but also promoting more diverse women leaders, considering race, age, social class, religion, origin, sexual orientation, education level, etc... The topic of **intersectionality** in women's political representation and participation was central throughout the implementation of the FEM-ABLE project in Spain.

A key issue in dismantling barriers for women in political leadership is rethinking the **way power is exercised**. The debates in the implemented activities stressed this issue, with participants sharing their wish for alternative models of power:

"That we are not disarming and that the horizontality is a great gift."

"It is very difficult to change society, but we must not give up trying."

"[If we want to have success without being sexist], we need a feminist society!"

The project highlighted the need for training, using theatrical techniques, to empower women's representation and participation in political and public spaces. To combat **internalised stereotypes** and the **impostor syndrome**, community leaders and activists expressed the need to find their own voice and body presence when expressing opinions, as well as creating safe spaces to address common and individual challenges.

Advocacy through **Theatre Forum** performances, held in strategically chosen public spaces, creates spontaneous communities where participants can feel, react, and express their views. These spaces challenge preconceived ideas about representation in daily life and foster a more engaged society.

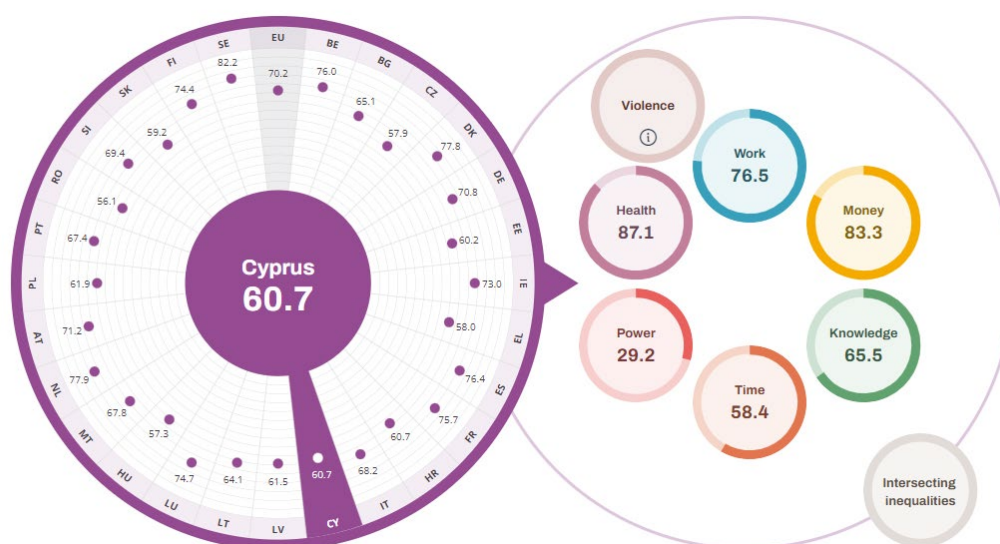
Additionally, the project introduced new collaborations with **grassroots feminist collectives**, as the Feminists of the Esquerra de l'Eixample and **students**, and workshop participants expressed interest in receiving updates about the FEM-ABLE project results.

B.2.6 CYPRUS, CSI

B.2.6.1 Introduction & context

In Cyprus, gender inequality in politics remains a serious issue, particularly when it comes to women's representation in decision-making roles. For the year 2023, Cyprus ranked 21st among European Union member states in terms of gender equality. The 2024 UN report on Gender Equality and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) places Cyprus 39th globally, highlighting steady progress toward the 2030 targets. Additionally, the 2024 World Economic Forum report shows an improvement for Cyprus, moving up to 86th place from 106th ⁴

Cyprus also performs poorly on the Gender Equality Index, particularly in the "**Power**" domain, which includes political representation. The country's deeply patriarchal society continues to reinforce misogyny, sexism and discrimination based on gender stereotypes further restricting women's participation in political leadership, decision-making roles and in the political arena.



In this context, the *FEM-ABLE National Gender Equality Strategy*, developed as part of the FEM-ABLE project, serves as a vital tool for tackling these challenges. The focus of the overall strategy orbits around *fostering gender inclusivity and equality within the political landscape*. The strategy seeks to break down the deeply entrenched societal, structural and cultural barriers that hinder women from fully participating in political leadership roles.

The strategy was developed using an inclusive, participatory approach, informed by both local and national research, including the FEM-ABLE National Reports. These reports analysed gender equality in Cyprus, focusing on political representation, legal frameworks and societal attitudes. Using these insights, the strategy was crafted to tackle the key barriers to women's political participation. It incorporates a combination of long-term structural reforms, such as political party reforms, supportive

⁴ [Gender Equality Index 2023-Cypurs](#) | [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2024](#) | [World Economic Forum's Annual Report 2023-2024](#)

infrastructures and social attitudes and short-term measures like capacity-building workshops, comprehensive trainings and public awareness campaigns.

The strategy is built around 7 core priorities: **active participation, work-life balance, balanced media representation, education, training, law implementation, role models**. These pillars are crucial to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to participate in decision-making roles and political leadership throughout Cyprus.

The events and seminars-workshops held in Nicosia and Limassol in Cyprus play a key role in advancing the adoption and success of this strategy. These gatherings provided a platform for dialogue among key stakeholders, including political figures, NGOs, Universities, education centres, schools, former parliamentary candidates, female entrepreneurs, women and men in corporate and founders and co-founders of local businesses, enabling them to share experiences, thoughts and concerns and further familiarise themselves with the importance of National Strategies.

B.2.6.2 Activities overview

In Cyprus, 2 events were conducted in the cities of Nicosia and Limassol, each designed to engage specific stakeholder groups and tackle key issues surrounding women's political participation and fair societal representation in general

“Live Podcast with MEP female candidates” Workshop

The interactive workshop and informative seminar was held in Nicosia, at the recording studios of ‘Black Lemon Tv’, Nicosia, Cyprus, engaging 10 key stakeholders, including prominent figures in the local political arena. Their expertise and active participation enhanced the discussions, bringing crucial issues to the forefront.

The live podcast discussion centered on the **underrepresentation** of women in politics at both national and EU levels, exploring and expressing actions for enhancing women representation in the political arena. The conversation examined the country's restrictive support infrastructures and societal attitudes-influenced and impacted by media representations- that hinder progress, as well as the effectiveness of gender quotas as a stepping stone. Ultimately, it recognised that education is the backbone and a crucial step in laying the groundwork for practical action toward achieving gender parity and equal representation.

Despite the participants' formal roles as podcast guests, the event encouraged **open discussions**, revealing significant key points and a variety of perspectives on the dynamics of national and EU politics. Participants’ willingness to share both professional insights and personal experiences greatly enriched the dialogue and the podcast recording.

“National Conference for women empowerment in business and beyond” Event

An event with over 250 attendees of which 67 actively participated in FEM-ABLE’s activities, marked a significant milestone for Cyprus, due to the thematic area of the conference and the target group of the thematic area. The active involvement of participants, regardless of their background, employment status or field, created a unique platform for discussions and information sharing on business, with a broader political context. The combination of diverse elements and layers within a single conference is not typically found in events of a similar nature.

The National Conference featured discussions and workshops that focused on **empowering women** across various sectors, including business and politics, while highlighting Cyprus's National Gender Equality Strategy. The Conference combined **traditional and contemporary activities, blending panel discussions, workshops, booths and social experiments** in a single National Conference, all focusing on women empowerment. The combination of these elements resulted in both informative and interactive sessions, advancing the engagement of the audience in further exploring and understanding key thematic areas presented under women empowerment, such as, the business and political sectors.

The event fostered engaging discussions, highlighting **practical strategies and real-life examples** shared by female speakers from diverse fields in business and politics. By incorporating EU perspectives alongside local examples and best practices, the conference showcased a rich array of insights and varied approaches to addressing the challenges faced by women in these sectors.

The involvement of key stakeholders from different backgrounds was a driving force to initiate these discussions. The interactions amongst all participants and speakers, allowed conference attendees to share insights, foster collaboration and inspire change.

This blending of activities and diverse backgrounds underscores the **importance of collaboration** and shared experiences in driving meaningful change, highlighting that **collective efforts** can lead to innovative solutions for empowering women in both business and politics, ultimately supporting the goals outlined in the National Gender Equality Strategy, as addressed during the Conference.

The evaluation phase of the conference, as reported by the organisers, revealed that participants were highly satisfied with the participatory approach, the interactive elements incorporated throughout the event and the diverse range of speakers and themes presented. The event, along with CSI's facilitation of the informative booth, the initiation of the social experiment, and participation in a panel discussion, successfully met its goals of **improving awareness** of women's empowerment in business and politics, encouraging more active involvement by bringing together diverse stakeholders to foster dialogue and collaboration.

B.2.6.3 Challenges and solutions

Throughout the implementation process, various challenges emerged that demanded adaptive and flexible approaches to ensure the success of the activities. The following section details these challenges and the strategies used to address and overcome them.

Difficulty in reaching local stakeholders

Engaging key local stakeholders and representatives from key organisations was challenging due to the plethora of events and panel discussions offered during the pre-elections period. To address this, a 'snowballing effect' was implemented and a vivid dissemination strategy was initiated, where initial direct contacts were encouraged to invite colleagues and other interested figures. This approach gradually broadened the network of participants, enhancing the reach out and thus impact of the event.

Disagreement among EU examples and actions presented

The events faced considerable disagreement among participants on key EU examples shared and actions presented, aiming the improvement of women's participation and representation in the political field and beyond. Concerns were raised about how the European Union engages with national citizens and the role of the country's political figures in this process. Controversial topics also emerged regarding the active involvement of men in addressing these issues and how they should address such topics. To navigate these challenges, the facilitation team adopted a neutral and inclusive approach, ensuring that all opinions were respectfully acknowledged and considered. Structured discussions, detailed preparation and clear references to the National Gender Equality Strategy developed through the project, were utilised to transmute these differences into constructive dialogues, promoting a deeper understanding and engagement with the topic, despite the varied viewpoints.

Low engagement from attendees

Some attendees were hesitant to participate in the survey due to the formal nature of the topics or expressed strong disagreements with the EU, leading to reluctance in completing the questionnaires. To address this, the events incorporated 'safe spaces' for both small and large group discussions, creating a more comfortable environment for participants and speakers to exchange viewpoints and receive answers, despite the formal setting. Digital tools, such as tablets and QR codes were used to facilitate the completion of questionnaires. Additionally, experienced staff and well-prepared speakers enhanced participant engagement, offering targeted support and encouraging active involvement and participation.

B.2.6.4 Good implementation practices identified

LIVE PODCAST	
COUNTRY	Nicosia, Cyprus. Implemented by CSI
DESCRIPTION	A podcast recording with a live audience is an interactive event, taking both the form of an interactive workshop and an informative seminar, where a podcast episode is recorded in front of an in-person audience. This format allows for real-time engagement, with audience members able to ask questions, contribute to discussions and react to the conversation as it unfolds. It creates a dynamic atmosphere, blending the intimacy of a podcast with the energy of live interaction, often resulting in spontaneous, insightful contributions from both speakers and attendees.
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	Contact key speakers: Determine the specific topics of the podcast and identify potential speakers who are knowledgeable and engaging on those subjects. Set the Date: Choose an appropriate date for the live podcast recording, ensuring it aligns with the availability of key speakers and participants. Recording Studio: Secure a recording studio equipped with the necessary audio and visual equipment to ensure high-quality production. Verify that the space accommodates both the speakers and the live audience. Event dissemination and communication: Create relevant visuals, promote the event in social media, send direct invitations to key stakeholders, speakers and potential audience members. Clearly outline the podcast's theme, purpose and details on how to participate, including the date, time, location, duration and

	what a live podcast can offer. Highlight the importance of audience participation and encourage attendees to submit questions during the podcast. Preparation: Coordinate with speakers to prepare content and discussion points. Share questions with speakers in advance for preparation. Keep communication flowing, making sure that all speakers are aligned with the topics and the expectations of the event. Live Recording: Conduct the live podcast, engaging with both speakers and the audience. Facilitate discussions and manage audience interactions to maintain a dynamic and inclusive atmosphere. Post-Event Follow-Up: After the recording, send thank-you notes to participants and audience members. Share the recorded podcast through appropriate platforms, ensuring it reaches a wider audience. Feedback Collection: Gather feedback from participants and listeners to evaluate the podcast's success and areas for improvement, informing future events.
IMPACT ACHIEVED	- The involvement of the speakers helped raise awareness of the barriers women face in politics, via real life examples shared in a non-formal and specific thematic oriented discussion, ultimately promoting a collective commitment to advancing women's rights and representation in the political sphere and strengthening community awareness. - By addressing pressing issues related to women's representation in politics, the live podcast fostered meaningful discussions among the audience, encouraging active participation and a deeper and straightforward understanding of the importance of gender equality in political decision-making, regardless of political affiliation representations. - The podcast provided a platform for MEP women candidates to share their experiences, challenges and successes in the political arena, inspiring and empowering listeners—especially women—for engagement.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	Political figures, MEP women candidates, university and research department representatives, NGOs, Independent research and education centres, organisations promoting diversity, equality and inclusion, education bodies, activists, former parliamentary candidates
RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Recording studio with space for live audience ✓ Well prepared facilitators
CHALLENGES FACED	Overall, striking a balance was vital to maintaining a dynamic and interactive environment throughout the event; Time management posed a significant challenge during the initiative, as it was essential to balance the recording process with audience contributions and engagement. Ensuring that all topics were adequately covered while allowing sufficient time for discussion and audience involvement required careful planning. Additionally, effective facilitation was crucial in guiding the conversation and posing targeted questions that would foster deeper dialogue among participants.
LESSONS LEARNED	The effectiveness of creating an informal yet informative event, can result in greater impact. Recording the discussions allowed participants to access the content at any time, reinforcing the value of the insights shared. It was important to verify the recording process to ensure quality and accessibility. The interactive nature of the event provided a unique opportunity for

	attendees to learn from key figures in a more private setting, fostering connections that might not occur in traditional formal discussions.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	The live podcast recording on a specific thematic area allows attendees from diverse backgrounds to access a wealth of information in a single session. The inclusive nature of the discussion (open discussion) allows for a comprehensive understanding of the topic, which can be adapted and implemented in similar contexts to engage a broader audience and promote knowledge sharing. The approach is flexible and can be customised to fit various professional and cultural settings, making it appropriate for a wide range of applications.

SOCIAL EXPERIMENT	
COUNTRY	Limassol, Cyprus. Implemented by CSI Cyprus
DESCRIPTION	A social experiment on gender stereotypes is an interactive activity aimed at challenging preconceived notions about gender roles and expectations. Participants are presented with real-life identities or figures and asked to match biographical information based solely on physical characteristics. This setup encourages participants to confront their initial judgments. Audience contributions reveal unconscious biases and the broader impact of societal stereotypes. The goal is to prompt participants to think critically before making assumptions, fostering awareness and reflection. Through this experiment, participants can better understand the influence of gender norms on everyday life and the importance of promoting equality within the social, political and business world.
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	Identification of IDs and Explanation of the Experiment: Select diverse real-life identities or figures, ensuring in elevating key social aspects depending on what is desired to be achieved in the social experiment on gender stereotypes. Present a combination of identities and back and backgrounds to represent various stereotypes. Prepare a clear explanation of the social experiment, outlining its purpose and how it will challenge participants' perceptions of gender roles. Agreement of Participation: Reach out to individuals whose identities will be used in the experiment, seeking their consent and explaining how their information will be utilised. Ensure they are comfortable with their participation and the context of the experiment. Bios Collection: Gather biographical information for each identity. This information should be kept confidential until revealed in the experiment. Instructions on Physical Appearance and Event Attendance: Provide guidelines on how the identities will present themselves during the event. This may include specific clothing, accessories or behaviours to help embody their roles. Ensure that the identities understand their roles in the event and how they will interact with the audience (eg. no verbal interaction with the audience). Material Hand Over to IDs: Prepare and distribute supporting tools to the different IDs (eg. boards and pins) for the audience to pin a piece of information based on their guessing. Distribution of Material to Audience: At the event, read or provide audience members with materials outlining the experiment's structure, rules and

	instructions for participation. This should include how they will guess, and match identities based on physical characteristics. Distribute biographical pieces of information to the audience. Guess and Match Activity: Invite audience members to engage in the guessing game by matching the physical appearances of the identities to the corresponding bios without prior knowledge of the actual identities. Participants should focus on their perceptions and assumptions based solely on what they see. Reveal Correct Information for the Identities: After the guessing activity, reveal the correct biographical information for each identity. Facilitate a discussion on the results, encouraging participants to reflect on their assumptions, biases and the influence of societal stereotypes on their judgments. Debrief and Discussion: Conclude the experiment with a group discussion allowing participants to share their thoughts, insights and feelings about the experience. This reflection can deepen the understanding of gender norms and the importance of promoting equality.
IMPACT ACHIEVED	- Participants become aware of the various barriers women encounter in accessing the political arena, including those influenced by intersectional factors and double standards that often hinder their progress. - They gain insight into the interconnectedness of priority areas for intervention, illuminating the structural nature of segregation and how different identities can compound the challenges faced by women in politics. - The social experiment enhanced awareness of biases, by effectively illuminating participants' unconscious biases and stereotypes and encouraging them to critically reflect on their initial judgments and assumptions regarding gender roles and expectations.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	Women in managerial positions and leaders, women organisations supporting women empowerment, Local female entrepreneurs, the corporate and business world, Directors, founders and Co-founders of businesses
RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Real-life identities or figures, along with accompanying biographical information to facilitate the matching activity. ✓ Resources and materials including boards and pins or digital platforms for displaying information and capturing audience responses, as well as instructions and guidelines for participants to follow during the experiment. <i>*(See below an example)</i> ✓ Facilitators and volunteers for guiding the activity and facilitating the audience, ensure a safe and respectful environment for all participants
CHALLENGES FACED	Finding and securing a diverse and representative identities was crucial to ensure varied perspectives, requiring a well thought research and communication with the potential participants. It was important for the audience to grasp the purpose and potential impact of the experiment, which required clear communication and engagement strategies. Time constraints also posed a challenge, as conducting the experiment within a limited timeframe made it difficult to facilitate timely discussions. Ensuring the accuracy of the information presented and effectively conveying the intended message of the social experiment was essential, requiring thorough preparation and a thoughtful approach to the facilitation of the activity.

LESSONS LEARNED	Live social experiments emphasise the potential for meaningful dialogue to challenge societal norms and foster greater awareness and inclusivity. The social experiments highlight the importance of engaging the public actively to convey messages effectively. By involving participants in discussions, they were encouraged to reflect on their unconscious biases, prejudices and stereotypes. This engagement also acted as a means for deeper understanding of unconscious bias and stereotypes but also prompted participants to critically assess their perceptions and assumptions about gender roles.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	The potential for replicating live social experiments lies in their adaptability and accessibility across various contexts and audiences. These experiments can be implemented in different settings, allowing diverse participants to engage in discussions about social norms and biases. They enable individuals to collaboratively explore complex issues, making it easier to replicate the format and objectives in future initiatives aimed at fostering awareness and inclusivity. By facilitating a social experiment, a platform for interactive dialogue is automatically created, as the message is conveyed clearly and straightforwardly. Social experiments simplify complex issues, ultimately leading to increased awareness and inclusivity.

**Resources used for the social experiment activity: Board*



B.2.6.5 Recommendations for dissemination and advocacy

To promote the effective dissemination and adoption of these gender equality practices and strategies, the following initiatives were implemented:

Dissemination and communication

Prior to the events in Cyprus, promotional posters and visuals were designed and circulated in mainly digital form and print formats. After the events, relevant post-events posts, videos and snapshots were initiated across multiple media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, collaborators and sponsors of the National Conference, advancing the dissemination campaign of the FEM-ABLE project. Relevant newsletters were also published to communicate the outcomes of the events to a wider audience.

Additionally, the following materials were created for distribution and use during the events:

- Informative Flip books in a printed format
- FEM-ABLE pens
- FEM-ABLE stickers
- FEM-ABLE board posters
- CSI flyers
- FEM-ABLE goodie bags
- FEM-ABLE small posters
- Social experiment boards, pins and bios
- FEM-ABLE flowers
- FEM-ABLE balloons



Advocacy and new collaborations

The project effectively engaged **political figures from political parties, political stakeholders, local networks and organisations, NGOs, Universities, Educational Centres, Corporate and business sectors, local female entrepreneurs** leading to the establishment or strengthening of partnerships with the following entities:

- DYSI/EPP
- AKEL/The Left
- Movement of Ecologists - Citizens' Cooperatives/ The Greens
- University of Limassol
- AIPFE Cyprus
- CARDET Cyprus
- KPMG Larnaca (female principals)
- PWC Nicosia (female directors)
- Diversity Charter Cyprus
- Lucy's detailing garage (Female entrepreneurs in vehicle maintenance as a male dominated field)
- KIDIT Cyprus (Female founders and co-founders of local businesses)
- Unity Growth (Male business promoting and actively supporting women empowerment)

With all the aforementioned political stakeholders, local and national businesses, NGOs, organisations, institutions and political affiliations, the events strengthened existing collaborations and introduced new ones, laying a solid foundation for fruitful and sustainable partnerships in the future. These advocacy initiatives and collaborations have broadened the project's scope, enhancing support for gender equality initiatives and creating new avenues for continues engagement and impact.



B.2.7 SWEDEN, RVB

B.2.7.1 Introduction & context

Sweden's position in Gender Equality rankings

Sweden remains a leader in gender equality within the EU. According to the 2022 Gender Equality Index, Sweden ranked among the top performers in the domain of power, achieving a score of 78.7 compared to the EU average of 55.0.

In political power:

- Women comprised 46% of parliament members, surpassing the EU average of 33%.
- 50% of ministerial positions were held by women, highlighting Sweden's commitment to gender-balanced governance.
- In regional councils, women made up 48% of representatives, significantly above the EU average of 29.4%.

Despite these successes, regional disparities and challenges in rural areas persist, requiring targeted interventions.

FEM-ABLE National Gender Equality Strategy for Sweden

The FEM-ABLE National Gender Equality Strategy builds on Sweden's achievements while addressing specific gaps, particularly in rural governance. Developed as part of WP3, the strategy integrates insights from the National Report for Sweden, including recommendations from focus groups and surveys.

Core objectives

- Embed Gender Equality in policies: Ensure gender-sensitive policies and quotas are implemented at local, regional, and national levels.
- Support women in balancing roles: Introduce childcare support, mentorship programs, and flexible working arrangements for women balancing personal and political careers.
- Raise awareness: Launch campaigns to challenge stereotypes and highlight women's contributions to governance.
- Monitor progress: Establish systems to track representation and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

B.2.7.2 Activities overview

Between June and November 2024, Region Västerbotten organized two in-person workshops and one hybrid event as part of WP4 under the FEM-ABLE project. These activities aimed to disseminate Sweden's National Gender Equality Strategy, raise awareness, and foster dialogue on creating more inclusive political environments. By engaging diverse stakeholders, including women leaders, policymakers, and youth advocates, the activities focused on overcoming barriers to women's political participation in rural and local governance.

“Discussing gender challenges in rural areas in Vasterbotten” Workshop

Date: June 3, 2024 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Location: A Working Lab, Umeå, Sweden

Participants: 8 participants, including local government representatives, youth leaders, and civil society advocates.

The session focused on advancing gender equality in rural governance as part of the FEM-ABLE project and Sweden’s **National Gender Equality Strategy**.

The workshop began with an introduction to the FEM-ABLE initiative and a presentation of key data highlighting the challenges women face in achieving political participation in rural areas. Facilitators underscored the need for targeted actions to address these challenges.

Participants openly shared personal experiences regarding the obstacles they encounter in local governance, creating a safe and supportive environment for dialogue. Interactive discussions identified systemic barriers such as ingrained cultural norms, rural depopulation, and the lack of mentorship opportunities for women in leadership roles.

In group sessions, attendees collaborated to design mentorship programs tailored to the unique needs of rural areas. These strategies emphasized sustainability, community engagement, and practical ways to support women leaders.

The workshop was impactful, fostering meaningful conversations and generating actionable solutions. Notably, local leaders expressed a commitment to establishing mentorship programs aimed at supporting and empowering women in rural governance.

“Mentorship as a tool for fostering gender equality” Workshop

Date: June 4, 2024

Location: A Working Lab, Umeå, Sweden

Participants: 6 attendees from local political parties and grassroots organizations

This workshop built on previous discussions by focusing on implementing gender-sensitive policies at the local level. Facilitators presented legislative tools, good practices from Sweden and the EU, and inspiring case studies of successful women-led governance initiatives. Small group exercises helped participants draft potential policies and outline steps for integrating gender equality into decision-making. The session fostered collaboration and increased participants' confidence in advocating for gender-sensitive policies, resulting in draft policy recommendations and commitments to share these insights with their organizations.

“Engaging male allies in gender equality” Event

Date: November 26-27, 2024

Location: Clarion Hotel and Universum, Umeå (with online participation)

Participants: 47 attendees, including policymakers, academics, civil society members, and youth leaders

The event opened with a presentation of FEM-ABLE's activities and results, alongside an analysis of Sweden's progress on gender equality in politics. Keynote speakers shared insights on systemic barriers to women's representation, including cultural norms and structural challenges in rural areas.

Panel discussions featured experts from academia and civil society, covering topics such as "Digital Tools for Gender Advocacy" and "Engaging Male Allies in Gender Equality." Breakout sessions encouraged collaborative brainstorming, with participants developing strategies for enhancing mentorship programs, increasing youth engagement, and leveraging technology to promote inclusivity.

Facilitated discussions focused on practical actions for overcoming barriers, with participants sharing commitments to advance gender equality initiatives in their communities.

Effectiveness and impact

The hybrid event expanded the reach of FEM-ABLE's initiatives, fostering dialogue among a diverse group of stakeholders. Key outcomes included:

- The establishment of a regional mentorship framework to support emerging women leaders.
- A commitment to integrate gender equality topics into youth outreach programs.
- Recommendations for enhancing digital infrastructure to improve accessibility for rural communities.

B.2.7.3 Challenges and solutions

The challenges faced are described below;

Difficulty reaching political figures and local stakeholders

One of the key challenges encountered during the implementation of workshops and events in Västerbotten was engaging political figures and local stakeholders. Despite initial difficulties, Region Västerbotten leveraged existing networks and relationships to overcome this obstacle. Partnerships with local organizations and community leaders were instrumental in increasing participation.

Collaborating with women's groups and local NGOs helped to identify and connect with key political figures. These partnerships underscored the importance of community solidarity in addressing gender equality. This approach ensured meaningful dialogue among stakeholders, enriching discussions and generating actionable insights for advancing gender parity in governance.

Difficulty in encouraging participants to complete evaluation forms

One challenge faced during the events was the difficulty in motivating participants to complete the evaluation forms. Despite providing QR codes linking to the post-event surveys, many attendees either did not complete the forms or only partially filled them out. This limited the ability to collect comprehensive feedback on the events' impact.

To address this, follow-up emails with survey links were sent to participants, accompanied by a clear explanation of the importance of their feedback. Personalized reminders and incentives, such as access to summary reports or participation certificates, were also offered to encourage responses.

While response rates improved slightly following these efforts, the challenge highlighted the need for more engaging and accessible evaluation methods in future events, such as incorporating on-site feedback stations or simplifying the survey process.

Challenges with participant engagement

The event highlighted variations in participant engagement, particularly in fostering active discussions and collaboration among attendees. While the in-person format provided opportunities for meaningful interaction, encouraging all participants to actively contribute required additional effort from facilitators.

Region Västerbotten staff employed strategies such as structured group discussions, targeted questions, and interactive activities to stimulate participation. Facilitators ensured that all voices were heard, creating an inclusive and supportive environment.

These efforts successfully enhanced participant engagement, leading to valuable insights and actionable outcomes. The experience reaffirmed the strength of face-to-face events in building connections and fostering collaboration, and future activities will continue to prioritize in-person formats for their proven effectiveness.

On the counterpart, below are described the insights gained from the implementation;

Utilize local networks

Collaborating with established community organizations and local stakeholders proved essential for engaging key participants and fostering meaningful dialogue. These networks were instrumental in identifying relevant stakeholders and ensuring their active participation in the events.

Ensure alternative evaluation methods

Encouraging participants to complete evaluation forms was a challenge. Providing follow-up options, such as email reminders and simplified feedback processes, minimized the risk of missing valuable insights and maintained the quality of post-event evaluations.

Focus on in-person interactions

Face-to-face events demonstrated their strength in building trust, encouraging collaboration, and facilitating deeper discussions. This format consistently proved to be the most effective for advancing gender equality initiatives and will remain a priority in future activities.

By addressing these challenges with adaptive solutions, Region Västerbotten successfully implemented the FEM-ABLE project's activities, demonstrating the importance of flexibility, collaboration, and community engagement in achieving project goals.

B.2.7.4 Good implementation practices identified

EMPOWERING LOCAL LEADERSHIP	
COUNTRY	Region Vasterbotten, Sweden. Implemented by RVB
DESCRIPTION	The "Empowering Local Leadership" workshop, held in Umeå on June 3, 2024, focused on fostering gender equality in rural governance. Designed as a participatory event, the workshop brought together policymakers, youth leaders, and civil society representatives to address the systemic barriers that women face in rural political participation. The workshop aimed to provide attendees with actionable tools and strategies to promote gender parity at the local level. By incorporating discussions on mentorship, community engagement, and rural-specific challenges, the event encouraged participants to co-create solutions tailored to Västerbotten's unique context.
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS/METHOD	(1) PRE-EVENT PREPARATION STEPS Stakeholder engagement: Identify and invite policymakers, youth organization leaders, and representatives from rural municipalities. Collaborate with local academic institutions and NGOs to provide expert facilitation. Theme development: Select workshop themes such as "Mentorship for Women in Leadership" and "Addressing Rural Depopulation's Impact on Gender Equality." Develop a structured agenda that includes presentations, group discussions, and strategy sessions. Materials and resources: Prepare handouts and visual aids summarizing Sweden's National Gender Equality Strategy and its application in rural governance. Create participant guides to facilitate discussion and strategy development. Publicity and outreach: Use social media campaigns and targeted outreach to encourage attendance from rural areas and underrepresented groups. Distribute pre-event surveys to gather baseline data on participants' knowledge and expectations. Logistics: Secure the venue at A Working Lab in Umeå, ensuring accessibility for all participants. Arrange refreshments and accommodations for attendees traveling from remote locations. (2) EVENT EXECUTION Opening session: Introduction to the FEM-ABLE project and Sweden's National Gender Equality Strategy by a facilitator from Region Västerbotten.

	Expert presentations: Keynote address on rural governance challenges and opportunities for gender equality. Data-driven insights into the impact of rural depopulation on women's representation in local politics. Group discussions: Participants were divided into smaller groups to explore specific barriers to women's participation in governance. Topics included cultural norms, lack of mentorship, and limited access to leadership training. Interactive strategy development: Groups worked collaboratively to design solutions, such as mentorship frameworks and community-led advocacy campaigns. Facilitators guided discussions to ensure actionable outputs. Feedback and reflections: Participants shared their key takeaways and reflected on potential applications of the strategies discussed.
IMPACT ACHIEVED	- <u>Awareness raised:</u> participants left with a stronger understanding of gender equality policies and their relevance to rural governance. - <u>Actionable strategies:</u> the workshop produced tangible solutions, such as mentorship programs and youth engagement initiatives, tailored to västerbotten's needs. - <u>Community connections:</u> the event fostered collaboration among diverse stakeholders, building networks for future gender equality efforts.
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	Region Västerbotten coordinators Local policymakers and municipal representatives Youth leaders and civil society advocates Academic experts on gender and rural governance
RESOURCES REQUIRED	✓ Venue: A Working Lab in Umeå. ✓ Facilitators: Experts on gender equality and rural governance. ✓ Materials: Presentation slides, participant guides, and summary handouts. ✓ Logistics: Catering, technical equipment, and transportation arrangements for rural attendees.
CHALLENGES FACED	Diverse representation: Balancing perspectives from urban and rural stakeholders while ensuring inclusivity. Engagement across groups: Encouraging active participation from attendees with varying levels of familiarity with gender equality concepts. Scalability of solutions: Ensuring that the strategies developed are feasible for implementation across Västerbotten's diverse municipalities.

LESSONS LEARNED	Interactive formats enhance impact: Group discussions and collaborative activities were highly effective in engaging participants and generating actionable outputs. Targeted outreach is essential: Future events should aim to include more male participants and individuals from underrepresented communities to foster diverse dialogues. Localized examples resonate: Using case studies and data specific to Västerbotten helped participants connect with the material and see its practical relevance.
POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION	The workshop model is replicable across rural and urban regions, offering a structured approach to addressing gender equality in governance. Its participatory format and focus on mentorship and community-driven solutions make it adaptable to different local contexts. Future iterations could include follow-up activities to monitor the implementation of strategies developed during the workshop.

B.2.7.5 Recommendations for dissemination and advocacy

Dissemination and communication

Utilize multi-level dissemination channels

To maximize the FEM-ABLE project’s impact in Sweden, dissemination efforts should target audiences at European, national, and local levels. A blended strategy that combines online and offline channels can ensure broad reach:

- Partner networks: Leverage the established networks of Region Västerbotten, universities, and civil society organizations to distribute project outcomes and materials.
- Social media platforms: Use social media to share updates, event highlights, and educational content. Target diverse demographics through tailored campaigns on platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
- Local media: Collaborate with local newspapers, radio stations, and community newsletters to share key findings and encourage public engagement.

Use visual media and digital content

High-quality digital content can effectively communicate the importance of gender-balanced political representation.

- Infographics and videos: Create visually engaging materials that highlight the key outcomes of the project, such as increases in women’s political participation and successful mentorship programs.
- Participant testimonials: Share stories from workshop attendees and stakeholders to personalize the message and inspire action.

- Interactive content: Develop online quizzes or animations to engage younger audiences in understanding gender equality concepts.

Engagement in National and EU-Level events

Actively participating in advocacy campaigns, public seminars, and policy roundtables can amplify the project's reach:

- Advocacy campaigns: Join existing national campaigns for gender equality or create new ones highlighting FEM-ABLE's findings.
- EU platforms: Present the Swedish implementation outcomes at EU-level conferences, sharing lessons learned and strategies that could benefit other regions.
- Public seminars: Organize or contribute to seminars that connect policymakers, academics, and the public to discuss gender-balanced governance.

Workshops and Events

Workshops provide an opportunity to directly share best practices and build community support:

- Targeted invitations: Invite stakeholders from political parties, civil society, and education to attend workshops that showcase FEM-ABLE's methods and findings.
- Practical focus: Use sessions to explore strategies like mentorship program development and youth engagement, offering attendees tools to replicate successes.
- Cross-sector collaboration: Design workshops that encourage collaboration among participants from diverse sectors, fostering a unified approach to addressing gender imbalances.

Advocacy and new collaborations

Engage political parties in gender balance dialogue

Collaborate with political parties to embed gender balance in their practices and policies:

- Promote quotas: Advocate for gender quotas in candidate selection processes.
- Share success stories: Highlight the positive outcomes of gender balance in politics, such as improved governance and diverse policymaking.
- Policy commitments: Encourage parties to prioritize women's issues in their agendas and make public pledges supporting gender equality.

Raise public awareness

Challenging gender stereotypes and emphasizing the value of balanced political representation requires focused public awareness campaigns:

- Media campaigns: Use educational videos, infographics, and interviews with women leaders to illustrate the societal benefits of gender parity.
- Encourage electoral support: Develop messages that urge voters to back women candidates during elections, emphasizing their unique contributions to policymaking.
- Youth outreach: Target younger generations through school programs and social media initiatives to foster early awareness of gender equality.

Foster advocacy networks

Establishing strong networks of advocacy groups can amplify efforts for gender equality:

- Collaborate with NGOs: Build partnerships with national and EU-level organizations to share resources, strategies, and experiences.
- Cross-border cooperation: Create a regional coalition of gender equality advocates to strengthen lobbying efforts and enhance resource-sharing.
- Unified advocacy voice: Use the network to collectively address common barriers to gender equality and propose unified solutions.

Engage with government and policymakers for lasting change

Advocacy efforts should aim for institutional changes that ensure long-term support for gender equality:

- Legislative recommendations: Propose specific laws, such as mandatory gender quotas and policies that address systemic barriers to women's participation.
- Policy dialogues: Organize discussions with national policymakers to secure commitments for gender-sensitive governance reforms.
- Evidence-based advocacy: Use FEM-ABLE findings to demonstrate the societal benefits of balanced representation, creating a compelling case for policy change.

By combining these dissemination and advocacy strategies, FEM-ABLE can create lasting impacts at local, national, and European levels, driving progress toward gender-balanced governance in Sweden and beyond.

B.3 FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR ACTION

Globally recognized reports and goals make one thing clear: **gender equality challenges are real, measurable, and urgent—not matters of opinion or debate.** Evidence from key international entities like the United Nations (UN), the World Economic Forum (WEF), and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) consistently highlights disparities in economic, political, and social spheres.

The UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 places gender equality at the core of global progress, calling for the elimination of violence against women, ending harmful practices, and ensuring women's full participation in leadership and decision-making roles. However, achieving these targets remains a significant challenge.

The [2024 Global Gender Gap Report](#) by the World Economic Forum estimates that, at the current pace, it **will take 134 years to close the gender gap.** This sobering statistic underscores the need for immediate and sustained global action. Meanwhile, the Gender Equality Index by EIGE tracks progress within the EU, revealing persistent gaps, particularly in power and economic independence. These reports provide critical data and benchmarks that show gender inequality is deeply embedded in our societal structures. Addressing it requires more than good intentions—it demands targeted policies, structural reforms, and relentless advocacy.

Who's going to wait 134 years for true equality?

Hearing that true equality may take 134 years is more than disappointing—it's unacceptable. That's over a century, more than five generations. Achieving gender equality, especially in politics, means dismantling centuries-old norms and systems that have excluded women from decision-making spaces. Progress has been made, but it is often slow and inconsistent.

In many countries, barriers remain. Some lack legal frameworks supporting women's political participation, while others are constrained by cultural biases. Yet, we know that when women participate in politics, society benefits: policies become more inclusive and communities thrive.

What can we do to accelerate change?

Structural reforms and gender quotas: Gender quotas are a proven way to increase women's representation in politics. While not perfect, quotas ensure that women are not just symbolically included but meaningfully participate in leadership. The EU encourages member states to adopt these measures to ensure balanced representation.

Education and early empowerment: Change begins with shaping the attitudes of the next generation. We need to foster environments where girls see themselves as future leaders and boys learn to value female leadership. Programs promoting gender equality in schools are crucial to creating a culture that supports women in politics.

Media representation: How women leaders are portrayed in the media influences public perception. Positive, empowering narratives can either build up or tear down women's authority. We need stories that depict women as strong, capable, and influential leaders who belong in positions of power.

Let's draw inspiration from remarkable women

Throughout history and into the present, **extraordinary women** have paved the way, reminding us why we must continue to work toward a more equitable world. Their courage, wisdom, and determination inspire us to keep pushing for change, not just for today, but for generations to come.

Emmeline Pankhurst once declared:

“We are here, not because we are law-breakers; we are here in our efforts to become law-makers.”

Let’s step into our rightful place and shape a future where everyone has a seat at the table.



Angela Davis reminded us:

“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.”

We must challenge barriers and push for a world where equality is non-negotiable.

Malala Yousafzai said:

“One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world.”

Her words underscore the transformative power of education in creating a more equal and just society.



Her words remind us that the fight for equality is about stepping into our rightful place, making our voices heard, and shaping a future where everyone has a seat at the table. True equality won’t happen by waiting. It will happen because we, like those who came before us, take action to make it a reality.

B.4 CONCLUSIONS

The FEM-ABLE Project adopted a **practical, experiential approach to promote gender equality strategies and increase women's political participation**. Moving beyond traditional lectures, the project emphasised interactive workshops, seminars, and public events to engage participants dynamically. Implementing these strategies across diverse national contexts enriched the project, highlighting the adaptability and effectiveness of different methodologies.

The experiences shared in the national case studies demonstrate how each **country's unique approach** contributed to a broader understanding of gender equality challenges and solutions. The **heterogeneity of methodologies** employed—ranging from debates and experiments to theatre and podcasts—demonstrates the strength of implementing different strategies with the same objective across diverse cultural and social contexts, emphasising the importance of adapting methods to fit local needs and backgrounds.

These best practices illustrate that achieving gender equality in political participation requires **multi-faceted efforts: structural reforms** such as positive legal measures, **educational programs** to cultivate new mindsets, and **cultural initiatives** to dismantle deeply rooted stereotypes. Only by addressing these multiple dimensions can we create lasting and meaningful change.

By fostering **dialogue, reflection, and action**, the FEM-ABLE project highlights that while the contexts may differ, the **shared goal of empowering women in politics remains universal**. The journey toward equality is enriched by this diversity, reinforcing that **real change** happens through collaboration, creativity, and a commitment to building a more equitable future.



The FEMABLE partnership

B.5. PARTNERS

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