A GENDER-ORIENTED CONTRIBUTION TO THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

FINAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 2022

WISE 4ALL WOMEN INNOVATIVE SOCIETY EUROPE

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sustainable communication aisbl

together with the WISE4Challenges partners consisting of

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LIBERA
ASSOCIAZIONI, NOMI E NUMERI
CONTRO LE MAFIE

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1. Executive Summary

In the wake of the previous experience with the 2015 **Wise4All** campaign, S-Com has launched in 2020 the **WISE4Challenges** project to promote women's participation in the debate revolving around the **Recovery and Resilience Fund** and how the latter can be used to reduce social inequalities.

As its primary goal, the project aimed to encourage, incite, and promote the **participation** of **women** and **young** citizens in the political **decision-making** process regarding Europe's post-pandemic "revival". Consistently, in line with the EU policies and priorities, the main focus of the project has been the direct involvement by women to be stepped up to a greater extent in efforts in all representative, decision-making and **advisory fora**, either institutional such as the European Parliament or civil society's, especially with regards to the debate revolving the post-Covid impact strategy, and even beyond.

The project partners have represented different networks and fields of interests at local and European levels to ensure a thorough coverage of the different segments of the civil society. Within this perimeter, the WISE4Challenges project intends to present this report with the aim of delivering the policy recommendations generated during consultations and debates with stakeholders. In the hope that it could represent a genuine effort to 'reshaping Europe' and, not less significantly, to provide a consolidated pathway towards new models of active engagement, creative participatory methods (co-creation and co-design of contents), based on shared commonalities and leading to anticipatory knowledge.

Furthermore, the project has been contributing to the **Conference of Future of Europe** by providing new inputs to the debate on the countless challenges the EU is called to address in the near future. By spring 2022, the Conference is expected to reach its conclusions and provide guidance on future EU action.

This report is structured in **three main parts**, consisting of: an explanation of the applied methodology (Chapter 3); the analysis of the inferred systemic loopholes and the analysis of the results emerged during/from consultation and surveying (chapter 4); a list of policy recommendations (chapter 5).

The action has seen the creation of four pillars (packed in four Working Groups), which are: **green deal**, **gender health**, **social rights** and **education**. Each WG has been coordinated by a designated partner, responsible for the smooth operalization of the activities.

S-Com has coordinated a transversal action with the aim of understanding how the **Recovery and Resilience Facility** (RRF) is perceived by citizens, and how it can represent an opportunity to address and reduce social inequalities.

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The WG have been organised according to the following pattern:

Next Generation EU - Recovery Europe

Led by **S-Com -** international association created in 2005 that works in the field of social research and innovation, participation and digital technologies at European, international and local level. In 2015 S-Com launched WISE4All (Women for innovative society in Europe) campaign aiming to promote the participation of women in social innovation. The campaign has set up an informal European network, composed of 13 organisations.

WG on the Green Deal

Led by **Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP):** as a Brussels-based international umbrella organisation since 2013, WEP promotes and advocates for women entrepreneurs from all business sectors through their non-profit associations across Europe and neighbouring regions.
WEP is also the Secretariat for the Interest Group on Women Entrepreneurs (IGWE).

WG on Education and Culture

Led by **INCOMA**: this WG has been composed by a network of 15 Spanish schools that have been working with INCOMA throughout the project.
The aim has been to gather the experiences of young people and trainers during the pandemic in terms of gender equality, and to learn first-hand how they have coped with the digitisation process.

WG on Gender Health

Led by **University of PISA (UNIPISA):** the unit was composed of a heterogeneous group that conducted the present study according to the members with different academic profiles: sociologists, jurists, healthcare professionals and specialists in communication.
The WG has operated in an academic context, thanks to the contributions of professors, specialists in the medical field, healthcare operators, students, under the coordination of the Department of Political Science of the University of Pisa.

WG on Social Pillar

Led by **LIBERA**: established in 1995, Libera is a network of associations, CSOs, movements and groups advocating for the fight against corruption, organised crime and mafias and the promotion of social justice, transparent politics and democratic legality based on equality. It is present throughout Italy in more than 380 groups at local/national level, whereas at the European level it is founder of the CHANCE European network (Civil Hub Against orgaNised Crime in Europe), representing organisations and activists from about 15 countries.

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2. Introduction

"Gender equality is a core principle of the European Union, but it is not yet a reality. In business, politics and society as a whole, we can only reach our full potential if we use all of our talent and diversity. Using only half of the population, half of the ideas or half of the energy is not good enough."

EC President Ursula von der Leyen.

Although the increase of social inequalities has been recorded in all sectors and towards all societal groups (elders, youngs, vulnerables, men, women), undoubtedly **women** found themselves on the top of the ladder as the **most affected by the COVID-19 crisis.**

As detailed in the **WISE4All Strategic Agenda 2021-2027**, this can be explained by the fact that the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath have surely exacerbated already existing social inequalities between women and men, and therefore affected the two in different ways.

As a response to the crisis triggered by the pandemic, in 2021 the European Union agreed on the creation of a temporary recovery facility called the **Next Generation EU** (NGEU, €750 billion), the central pillar of which is the **Recovery and Resilience Facility** (RRF, €672 billion).

Being the latter conceived as a tool for Member States to mitigate the economic and social impact of the pandemic, the RRF remains an unprecedented move by the EU to achieve social reforms and an important step towards a **more sustainable, digital, green and socially just Europe**.

However, unlike digitalization and green sustainability, the issue of gender equality has been dealt with as a transversal and cross-cutting issue in the EU policies and the RRF instrument, and not given a specific minimum level of expenditure by Member States.

In the RRF Regulation, Member States are called to integrate and promote gender equality objectives in their national recovery and resilience plans, for instance by - as suggested by the Regulation itself - investing in strong care infrastructure as a means of enhancing women's participation in the paid work, with positive prospective effects on GDP and women's economic empowerment.

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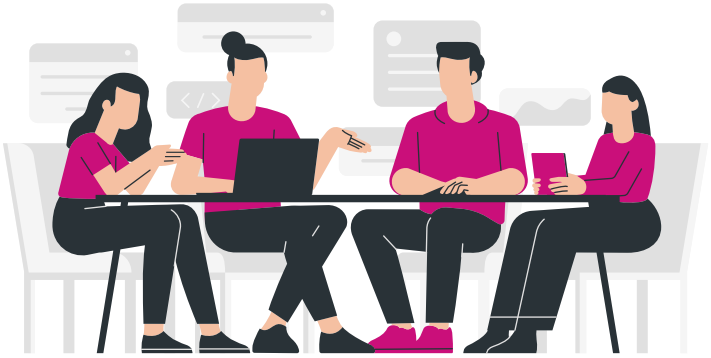
3. Methodology



The purpose of WISE4Challenges project is to involve the largest possible number of audiences, including WISE4All members, universities, citizens, students and social users, through networking, co-design and social sharing practises and activities that could guarantee the highest number of shares, knowledge, subscriptions and engagement on the future European policies.

This has been made possible thanks to partners' own networks and communication channels, instrumental to ensure a strong participation.

For this reason, both the **bottom-up and horizontal approaches** have been the main route to follow in order to discuss the participants' feedback received at the different moments of exchange of the project.

Subsequently, all participants' proposals have been **condensed in this document** addressing EU institutions and the general public.

3.1 Partners' Action Plans

All partners have been responsible for the elaboration of action plans and the choice of the modalities by which to instruct and adjust the 'moments of sharing' to specific needs.

1. The Action Plan by S-Com on the Recovery and Resilience Facility

The action plan on the RRF has been conceived as a transversal activity across all the fields of competences represented in the WGs. The action plan consisted of:

- a survey about the **Recovery debate** to be distributed across partners' own networks.
- video- interviews with **MEPs** from Italy, Spain and Belgium
- an online debate on Recovery and Resilience facilities (see paragraph 3.3)

The **survey** has been distributed in **English** and advertised in the project **newsletters** and through S-Com's own **network**. It aimed at assessing the level of knowledge among citizens and CSOs about the RRF instrument and its operationality (Q1&2), and at identifying which actions could be more valued and hence prioritised in terms of fighting against gender inequalities (Q3-11). The results of the survey are analysed in depth in Chapter 4.1.

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2. The Action Plan by WEP on the Green Deal

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in a complementary way. Research was based on the **intersection between Green Deal Policies/literature and EU Commission studies** and **WEP's Five Pillars .**

A **survey** (Likert scale) in **4 languages** (English, French, Italian and Spanish) have been provided, individual and small group interviews with **rural women leaders** in 3 countries, and a focus group (simultaneous interpretation in 7 languages - English, French, German, Polish, Spanish, Italian and Romanian) have been organised. The engagement with the **Copa-Cogeca Women's Committee** and **WEgate** platform has facilitated the access and engagement with women farmers from across Europe (www.wegate.eu). A total of 306 responses were received from the target audience (women entrepreneurs, women farmers, and women in rural areas). Based on the surveys, interviews have been conducted in a second phase with women in agriculture in Italy, Ireland and Spain to further explore additional information to share.

The ±1-hour long on-line focus group was held with 26 European representatives of the Copa-Cogeca Women's Committee, representing all EU countries. In particular, the focus group aimed to learn in more depth the importance of 'the Multifunctional Farm' and discuss 'Access to finance' for rural women. Several relevant webinars, an on-line short course and an international conference (see paragraph 3.2 and 3.3) have been organised to augment data-gathering

3. The Action Plan by UNIPISA on Gender Health

From a practical perspective, the WG has used information and opinions collected through a series of questionnaires from **students** informed and **trained** on **gender medicine** and **selected personnel of the Department of Medicine** of the University of Pisa. Transversally, the action has been conceived on the base of a **multilevel** approach, consisting of 3 macro-areas:

- a comparative mapping of the institutional actions aimed at promoting the development of gender medicine at international and European level;
- a focus on the current framework of Italian legislation on gender medicine;
- a quality investigation by providing partly-structured questionnaires to the students **(80 in total)** of the Medicine Department.

Accordingly, the WG pinpointed **4 main focal activities**:

1. Identification of a network of interlocutors, that has included the National Conference of Equal Opportunities Organs of Italian Universities; the Guarantee Consolidated Committee of the University of Pisa; the Coordination Centre for Health and Gender Medicine of the Tuscany Region; the Italian National Institute of Health; the PROSIT Interdepartmental Centre; the North-West Tuscany Local Health Agency.
2. Organisation of training/academic courses focusing on "gender medicine".
3. Creation of a Toolkit containing the best practises emerged from the questionnaires/surveys on the application of the gender perspective in medicine.
4. Analysis of the gender perspective with regard to health, safety and security in the workplace.

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4. The Action Plan by INCOMA on Education and Culture

The working group has been composed by **15 Spanish schools** that have been working with INCOMA throughout the project.
The aim was to gather the experiences of **young people and trainers** during the pandemic, to identify any inequalities that may have been caused, and to learn first-hand how they have coped with the digitisation process.
INCOMA has organised **two online debates** with its network of education centres, in which both students and trainers participated. The debates were carried out in online mode, whereas the **surveys** have been delivered through Google Forms and advertised in the newsletters through MailChimp. The WG has also carried out a survey on the topic of the future of education, disseminated both to students and trainers or anyone involved in the field of education, by reaching a total of **164 responses**. All of the surveyees answered questions related to the future of education, digital divide, gender equality and European recovery funds with the intention of concretising different proposals and points of view on the **Future of Education.** All the questions and answers are collected in a specific report with all the evidence. (See ANNEX 1)

5. The Action Plan by Libera on Social Rights

Firstly, Libera used the **survey** in order to collect the opinions of citizens from several European countries on gender inequality.
In a second stage, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data gathered has led to the production of a **toolkit** that will serve as a practical and accessible roadmap for **Civil Society Organisations** for implementing an enhanced bottom-up engagement in EU social policies. (See ANNEX 2)

The Action plan included the following activities:

- A0: invitation to CSOs to participate in the action;
- A1: qualitative research and collection of needs and suggestions;
- A2: presentation of the proposal of the Action Plan;
- A3: training on the role CSO in EU policies
- A4: creation of a toolkit to involve CSOs in EU social policies
- A5: sharing and dissemination of all pillars' outputs

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3.2 National Events

All events listed and described in this and the following paragraphs have been conceived by partners as 'sharing moments', whereby the contents emerged could be returned and further nourished in a circular way.

- **Health and Gender Medicine: from legislation to its application. (May 14 2021) -** The event aimed at reflecting about the legislative implications for the application of gender medicine.

- **On the impact of Covid-19 on the elderly population in a gender perspective (September 14, 2021) -** This seminar was organized along with 5 italian universities: the University of Catanzaro; the University of Bari; the University of Macerata; the University of Salerno. The seminar discussed the guidelines that had been elaborated in the toolkit on gender and medicine.

- **Naming cerimony of Aulla's promenade of Aulla to Maria Fischmann, the first female student graduated at the Department of Medicine of the University of Pisa in 1893. (September 17, 2021) -** The practice of street naming had the essential aim of underlining the importance of women in history. The event saw the participation of the Rector of the University of Pisa, the Head of the Coordination Center for Health and Gender Medicine, the Director of the Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine and the Guarantee Consolidated Committee of the University of Pisa.

- **The personalisation of health care and citizens' participation in the syndemic digital society (Seminar, November, 18th-20th, 2021) -** The seminar was an opportunity to discuss the relationship between gender and medicine as a possible solution to improve the health system, provide better services to citizens and reduce costs.

- **Green and digital transition, the potential of women within the green deal (June, 1, 2021) -** WEP, Copa Cogeca and AgriFoodNetworks organized an online dialogue about the potential of women within the Green Deal.

- **Online room for debate on the Future of Education (May 28th, 2021, online)-** The debate was a small two-room debate on the Future of Education. The topic was divided into two main subtopics: gender equality and digital divide. It lasted 1 hour and was reached by **20 participants,** both students and trainers. It was not recorded as some of them were under 18 years old.

- **The Working Group of the Social Pillar has organised several online meetings** during the project in order to analyse the survey results and develop the toolkit. The WP meetings were internal meetings opened to CSOs and activists around Europe linked to the CHANCE network and involving around 15 participants in total.

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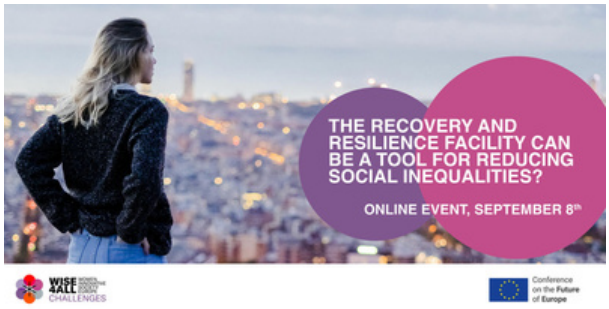
3.3 Final Events

All the final events of the project have been contributing to the **Conference on the Future of Europe**. The latter represents a unique and timely opportunity for European citizens to debate on Europe's challenges and priorities, acting as a bottom-up forum accessible to people well beyond Europe's capitals. EU institutions, national Parliaments, social partners, regional and local authorities and civil society are invited to join.
By spring 2022, the Conference is expected to reach conclusions and provide guidance on the future of Europe.

Title of the Event: THE RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE FACILITY CAN BE A TOOL FOR REDUCING SOCIAL INEQUALITIES?
Date and Place: SEPTEMBER, 8th 2021
Link: https://futureu.europa.eu/processes/Education/f/37/meetings/29899
Organised by S-Com



On the 8th of September 2021, S-Com organised an online debate on Recovery and Resilience facilities. The debate was attended by Members of Parliament: Alessandra Moretti, Pina Picierno, Sara Matthieu and Lina Galvez Munoz. Moreating this panel was Mr. Rolf Falter from DG Comm of the European Parliament Belgian office. In preparation of the debate, the MEPs were interviewed; the interviews are accessible on **WISE4All youtube channel.** A trailer was shown at the event explaining the work done.

The event consisted of two panels: the first panel, entitled 'National Plans: Belgium, Italy and Spain' has seen the involvement of each MEP illustrating the main issues of relevant National Plans in an European perspective. The second panel, entitled 'Belgium, Italy and Spain Survey Results', was run by the project partners who introduced the contents of the surveys. A concluding remark session ended the event.

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Title of the Event: THE FUTURE IS YOURS. EDUCATION, CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORT IN EUROPE

Date and Place: . 8th of October 2021
Link: https://futureu.europa.eu/processes/Education/f/37/meetings/29899
Organised by INCOMA

The final event organised by INCOMA dealt with the three subtopics explained below.

Firstly, a presentation about how to improve the future of Europe through education took place in order to set some basic concepts to be further explored during the discussion. This presentation was held by MaryCruz Arcos, Head of EuropeDirect and CDE Sevilla.

Secondly, a presentation on proposals for the future of education was given by José Vicente Hernández from IES Politécnico (an education centre that has been part of INCOMA's network during the project).

Thirdly, a presentation on the future of education from a gender perspective was given by Dolores Limón Domínguez from Universidad de Sevilla. Furthermore, participants of the Conference on the Future of Europe watched a video interview with the Spanish Lina Gálvez MEP.

Next, the participants took part in two online surveys and questionnaires. One was on the future of Europe and the other one on the future of education. After each survey there was a short analysis of the results by INCOMA. Eventually, the participants had the chance to get involved in a discussion on the results of the online surveys.

International Seminar: Medical education and the contribution of the human sciences. Changes in the profession and new trajectories of care.

Date and Place: November, 5, 2021, Pisa
Link:
https://futureu.europa.eu/processes/Health/f/4/meetings/77947
Organised by UNIPISA

During this event, the French manual "Médicine, santé et sciences humaines" was presented. Some directors of medical universities participated in the event, which was part of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

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Title of the event: WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE GREEN DEAL - OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Date and place: THURSDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2021 AT 10.00

Link: https://futureu.europa.eu/processes/GreenDeal/f/2/meetings/100024

Organised by WEP

The event focused on the knowledge of the potential of women farmers to bring new and innovative products and services to the market, and on the existence of specific measures in the Green Deal and Recovery Program that can help women in farming communities develop and increase their entrepreneurial skills.

Title of the event: GENDER IS 4 ALL - HOW TO RAISE AWARENESS ON GENDER EQUALITY

Date and place: THURSDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2021 AT 18:00

Link: https://futureu.europa.eu/processes/Economy/f/13/meetings/96691?locale=it

Organised by Libera

An event has been organised to illustrate the results emerged from the survey and to launch the Toolkit created during the project.

The contents were discussed with:

- Giulia Baruzzo (Libera International)
- Valentina Zoccali (S-Com),
- Cristina Figueroa (Rey Juan Carlos University),
- Jesús Palomo (FIADYS),
- Anja Kadt (Female Expats United)
- Marta Buggio (CHANCE network – Bulgaria)

It has been streamed live on the Facebook page of Libera internazionale. It lasted 1 hour and was reached by 660 people, with 159 interactions. Still available online.

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4. Inferred systemic loopholes and survey results analysis

4.1. RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE FUND

In January 2021, the EU Parliament adopted a resolution on gender perspective in the post-crisis period, addressing the harmful gendered and intersectional impact of the pandemic. The issues covered are infection risks, increased domestic and gender-based violence, barriers to sexual and reproductive health services, the increased burden of unpaid care work, women's participation in the labour market and the gender impact of the pandemic outside the EU. However, gender equality has not been included in the 11 main criteria for assessing the national RRF plans.

The RRF Regulation did not set a minimum level of expenditure to be allocated to gender equality, in contrast with the climate and digital issues (37% for climate expenditure and 20% for digital transition).

Nonetheless, the Commission considers gender equality as a horizontal requirement that Member States should abide by. Indeed, article 18(4)(o) of the RRF Regulation establishes an obligation upon Member States to take gender equality and gender mainstreaming into account in PNRs. The latter should also take into account the UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 on gender equality, the European Pillar of Social Rights and any existing national strategies on gender equality.

This has been somehow confirmed by the survey. 85,2% out of the surveyees (55 in total) stated that women should be better protected, along with other vulnerable groups such as young people (70%), migrants (81,5%) and disabled (66,7%). Further, 77,8% of the surveyees affirmed that women have been affected by the pandemic in terms of work-life balance. Interestingly, the survey has assessed a stronger involvement of women (68% out of the respondents were women, between the ages of 18-65), and of citizens from Italy (29), Belgium (9) and Spain (8). With a slighter percentage, the other countries involved have been France (5) and the Netherlands (4).

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4. 2. GREEN DEAL

Women farmer\women farm managers are 24% (EU average, ranging from 5% in the Netherlands up to 45% in Latvia and Lithuania) are increasingly recognized as a huge untapped resource, able to bring new perspectives to the EU policies (https://bit.ly/3u0Yd1B). It is known that Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of our economy, and that entrepreneurs are in large part responsible for introducing new, innovative products on the market (https://bit.ly/3tfMXiX). However, women farmers, and women living and working in rural areas, are often disadvantaged by inequality due to rural specificities, often facing a triple divide: digital, rural and gender-based. The lack of infrastructure and services in rural areas end up disproportionately affecting women; they are often on the bottom rung in the EU when it comes to education and training in important digital technologies (https://bit.ly/363V7lB). Accordingly, only 24 out of every 1000 female graduates have an ICT-related degree and, among these, only 6 out of 1000 graduates go on to work in related fields (https://bit.ly/3tgFNuG). Likewise, regarding access to finance, support programs are currently not reaching innovative women; only 2% of all initial funding reaches women-led start-ups (https://bit.ly/3qbiUXI).

For this reason, WEP set out the survey with the aim of reporting back on women's entrepreneurship/women farmers/young women in agriculture and in rural areas, and their potential to lead and contribute to the Green Deal and the Recovery Program. Of the 5 WEP pillars (education, training and mentoring, finance, innovation, government policies and networks) which have been recognized as the key required areas of support, the survey participants determined that education, training, mentoring, and coaching' was the most important (50.9%) alone with access to finance (48.9%), followed by innovation (35.9%), government policies (32%) and networks (30.5%).

4. 3. GENDER HEALTH

The Italy's Minister for Health Prof. Roberto Speranza has put political emphasis on the need for strategic and structural investments to relaunch and reform the Italian National Healthcare System, by looking at sex and gender differences. Similarly, the President of the Italian National Institute of Health Prof. Silvio Brusaferro has underlined that future approaches and research lines should go in that direction.

Gender is also a key issue in relation to health, safety and security in the workplace. According to Legislative Decree No. 81 of 2008, not only are health, safety and security in the workplace neutral concepts, but rather they are capable of embracing gender differences with regard to risk assessment and prevention measures. This legislation assumes that the likelihood of a health alteration depends on the nature and amount of the exposure to certain risks, as well as on each individual's reaction to conditions depending on age, sex, ethnicity, job position, and disability.

In this regard, gender medicine can provide useful insights by linking the biological characteristics of men and women to the different effects observed in male and female workers exposed to the same risks in the workplace, such as chemical, physical, biological, ergonomic, or related to bone and muscle overload, or extra factors pertaining male and female workers' behaviours; cultural and social differences, the distribution of power between men and women; different types of work contracts; care responsibilities, etc.

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The Department of Political Sciences of the University of Pisa has adopted a multidisciplinary approach in analysing best practices and recommendations on effective prevention and risk assessment in the workplace. Accordingly, a specific instrument was prepared in cooperation with the Department of Occupational Medicine. This instrument, targeted to public and private businesses, is aimed at measuring the level of gender sensitivity with regard to health, safety and security in the workplace.

A quality investigation was conducted by providing partly-structured questionnaires to the students (80 in total) of the Medicine Department, who attended the course “Gender and Health” by Prof. Rita Biancheri, to collect and analyse evaluations, opinions and suggestions concerning this approach in order to favor its dissemination at both theoretical and practical level.

4.4. EDUCATION AND CULTURE:

The COVID-19 pandemic has unequivocally changed the education processes and aggravated the situation of those students without resources. Indeed, most of the difficulties relate to the lack of resources, digital literacy and digital divide, being these affecting transversally all components of society. On the other hand, the move to online education has not significantly increased gender inequality, rather consolidated pre-existing vulnerabilities for women.

This has been reflected in the survey data with an audience of 164 people, comprised of students (77%), trainers (19.5%) and others from different areas of education (3,5%), with no preference given to gender (women at 53.7%, men at 46,3%). Not surprisingly, most responses on whether the pandemic has affected gender equality have been more likely to be at a lesser extent than expected. However, gender inequalities has been referred to in terms of unequal distribution of household chores to female students, unequal domestic overload of female teachers, compared to their male colleagues, precariousness of some jobs held by women and an increase in gender-based violence. The lack of resources on the part of both trainers and learners - when they come to dealing with an online education system - has been alluded to. With regard to their performance as student or trainer, 64,6% of the respondents believes that online education has affected them negatively, and wish to go back to face-to-face training or hybrid model.

Even though most of them prefer to return to face-to-face education, it is assumed that training in basic and advanced digital skills and the provision of resources are considered essential to achieve equality in all senses, and a key aspect for future emergency situations. This has been further confirmed by the fact that most respondents (75%) believe that digital education should play a pivotal role in increasing equality and inclusiveness, and that there is a direct link between democratic quality and access to digital resources and information.

Somehow connected to this, when asked how they would like to receive the Recovery Funds from the European Union, 44% out of the surveyed has preferred the 'direct aid' modality, whereas almost 30% of them would have increased allocations under Erasmus+ and European Commission programmes. Lastly, 26% of the surveyed expressed preference via 'social funds'.

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When asked if they think fighting disinformation is essential in order to promote a democratic education, the vast majority of respondents, almost 90%, answered positively. In relation to this, the majority of respondents presented arguments that directly link democracy to the importance of having one's own criteria. Therefore considering that equal access to quality information makes education more egalitarian and democratic.

4. 5. SOCIAL PILLAR

The gender gap remains a social emergency: in the labour market women are still over-represented in lower paid sectors and under-represented in decision-making positions. No Member State has achieved full gender equality and the progress is still slow and reversible for many. Because of that, the European Commission put in place the Gender Equality strategy for the 2020-2025 period that focuses on 6 main pillars:

- Being free from violences and stereotypes: it fights both the direct violences against women and gender stereotypes.
- Thriving in a gender-equal economy: it addresses inequality in job opportunities, wages, access to finance and pensions.
- Leading equally throughout society: it confronts the representation problem caused by the fact that the majority of leading positions are held by men.
- Gender Mainstreaming and intersectional perspectives in EU policies.
- Funding action to make progress in gender equality in the EU.
- Addressing gender equality and women's empowerment across the world through dialogues with third parties: it deals with the EU trade policy and in the EU's neighbourhood and enlargement policies.

It is fundamental to try to expand the concepts of gender. The “gender binary” is the idea that gender is limited to only two categories (man or woman). There are people who identify outside the binary or don't express solely as men or women, yet they continue to refer to gender roles and traits derived from society's typical expectations.

The survey has highlighted that a communication problem exists inasmuch as the action of the EU is mostly unknown and this undermines its effectiveness. About 100 people have filled the Survey (about 7 out of 10 were female). A great majority (69% of the surveyees) are not aware of any policy initiative or project implemented by EU bodies on gender equality. This perception is higher among males.

Not surprisingly, there is a higher interest from females in implementing more acts of law, whereas males focus on sponsoring educational programmes. In this regard, 73% of the participants of the survey said that CSOs can have a significant role in the fight for gender equality in Europe thanks to, on one hand, their close relation to the territories and, on the other hand, to the European values. This can represent an advantage to raise awareness on gender equality and lead a number of successful actions.

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Although it is believed that EU campaigns are an effective communicative tool to promote gender equality, there is still room for improvement of their impact on the matter. For instance, the WithHer campaign was only heard by 22% of the participants. Along with the usual channels (social networks, academic programs, TV spots and advertising, official EU governmental channels and Radio & Podcasts), it is strongly believed (72%) that Civil Society Organisations can use their platform to improve the European Strategy on Gender Equality, and have a significant role in combatting gender inequality in Europe.

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5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Policy recommendation on RRF

All MEPs interviewed agreed on the urgent need for the earmarking of funds for digital transformation and ecological transition (IT, ES, BE), equal opportunities (IT, ES), inclusive education (BE), fair working conditions, adequate social protection (IT, ES, BE) and gender equality (IT, ES). Furthermore, transversal remarkable proposition by MEPs interviewed have been:

- To introduce the obligation for each member state of preserving at least 37% of the expenses for gender equality.
- To include social conditionality in economic governance and to integrate social scope into the EU semester as a means of monitoring social progress.
- To develop the social dimension of the single market as a necessary move for combating poverty; according to the last estimates, 1 European citizen in 5 lives in poverty or at risk of poverty.
- To create a monitoring system able to assess each member state's achievements.

Country-based measures to take at the EU and national levels are:

- To improve the childcare services and adult training in all regions.
- To overcome territorial divide North-South: the south of Italy has about one third of the total population (34%), producing a GDP of barely a fifth of the country (20%), due to serious delay in the infrastructures.
- To decrease the rate of unemployed women by tackling the lack of care services; the average in South Italy is 35,7% - as opposed to the European average of 31,8% -, partially due to the bad condition of public services for children's healthcare in South Italy.

- To promote more investment and reform strengthening research and innovation in social and territorial cohesion.
- To deal with gender equality in order to increase women participation in the environmental and digital sectors

- To strengthen the inclusiveness of the labour market through temporary unemployment schemes for the most vulnerable social groups (women, young people, people with disabilities, people with a migratory background). They will be provided education and training to facilitate their entry into the labour market.
- To increase childcare capacity and strengthen the performance of the education system, supporting women empowerment especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics

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5.2 Policy Recommendations on the Green Deal

For centuries, women have played extremely important roles not only in regional agriculture and food, but also at their home and family. Sadly, they and their significant contributions have frequently been left behind, leaving them unpaid, without a pension, and without a voice. This is also due to the traditional system of passing the farm from father to son, wherein the farmer's wife gets little or no financial benefit.

With the continued decline of rural areas over much of the continent, we need to look for new ways to strengthen small towns and communities so that people, services, and products are available to ensure a higher quality of life, enabling sustainable, regional food production in the circular economy. Accordingly, WISE4Challenges would recommend the following actions:

- To augment the quantity and quality of products and services available in rural areas, in particular through multifunctional farm model. This can support at once new women farmers' earning potential, rural development and regional food production.

- To take measures to improve ecological digital systems within the new green Deal that can help women farmers be more competitive.

- To stir up an 'all hands-on deck' approach that sees not only women but also men involved together to generate ideas and creative solutions.

- To set up an 'Implementation Team' that immediately come together to start prioritising and implementing solutions enabling rural and women farmers to contribute to the GD and RRF.

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- To launch synergic programmes, where entrepreneurial and academic systems can work closely (booming of eco friendly startups, reusing of waste materials, foods scrap, and more): programs for education and training, mentoring and coaching will guarantee the know-how and other forms of support.

- National, regional and local agricultural organisations need to produce, publish, and implement their own Diversity and Inclusion strategies to make certain that women farmers are included in all levels of their organisations.

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5.3 Policy Recommendation on Health Union

The project highlights the lack of/the need for a person-centred medicine to be based on the concepts of proximity and continuity of care, consisting in promoting a more effective interaction with the patient and contributing to the implementation of a therapeutic and prevention(-oriented) pathway attentive to differences. Furthermore, a de-construction of the alleged neutrality of the maculine gender in favour of an inclusive science is needed, with a view of overcoming the reductionism of the mind-body division, expanding medical semeiotics to the complexity of the patient's experience. According to above, we suggest the following actions:

- To implement an intersectional approach among the different areas of medicine and human sciences, which take more into account gender-derived differences, to improve prevention, diagnosis and care.
- To promote and support the teaching of gender medicine, by ensuring adequate levels of training for medical and health personnel.
- To promote and support public information on health and diseases' management from a gender difference perspective.
- To develop useful tools capable of facilitating the transition from a predominantly clinical and bio-medical anamnesis to a narrative medicine of listening and a socio-health integration of needs.
- To create an institutional/academic officer "delegated for gender medicine", who will take care of defining strategic plans for inserting specific modules of formation and training.
- Strengthening of the role of CUGs (Consolidated Committees of Guarantee): they carry out an important "zip" function by providing a space and structure, within which it is possible to project, formalise, and give publicity to initiatives of gender medicine.

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5.4 Policy Recommendations on Education and Culture

The COVID19 pandemic has increased and highlighted the digital divide even further, as it is the case of lack of resources and coverage on the access to the internet or Wi-Fi. Inequality in society is not only evident in the digital divide, but also in education in general. Accordingly, WISE4Challenges gives some recommendations and suggestions, as reported below:

- To enhance IT training for teachers on essential digital skills (basic use of software, information processing, communication, browsing, searching, and filtering of data, information, and digital content).
- To provide financial resources for low-income households, cards with Wi-Fi connection.
- To provide either students and teachers with assistance in using digital tools.
- To adapt the curriculum to the new circumstances, distance and online learning.
- To create a platform for online education, by which the educational centres can access the syllabus, online classes or the material. Smaller group sizes make it easier for students to learn and understand and encourage their participation in class.
- To carry out activities to strengthen gender equality in school: in order to reduce gender inequality in families, the household chores should be shared among all family members in different shifts. A support network can be set up for families with fewer members to help them care for or carry out household chores.
- To use the recovery funds to increase allocations under Erasmus+ and European Commission programmes.
- To start the teaching of European values and identity in primary education: teaching European values and identity could be incorporated either by having lessons such as European citizenship, or by integrating it into other lessons such as maths, or others.

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5.5 Policy Recommendations on Social Pillar

The European Union is one of the global leaders in gender equality: according to the 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index, 14 of the top 20 countries worldwide on gender equality are EU member states. Gender equality is a core value of the EU, a fundamental right contained in article 8 of the TFUE (Treaty on the functioning of the European Union).

In line with our survey results, the levels of society most affected by gender discrimination are: workplace, family, politics, education, health, environment and sport. Therefore, improvements on gender equality should be particularly stressed in several fields, where employment and social rights are at the top level, followed by family, education, policing and law (with higher support towards family among women and education among men).

Here a list of specific policy recommendations as emerged from the surveys:

- To enhance the protection of social rights, such as the right relating to the freedom of movement, combined with the right to protection and assistance and that to 'a fair remuneration'.
- To implement more acts of law to enforce gender equality in EU Member States.
- To improve EU sponsoring of educational programmes with youths.
- To implement committees to oversee gender equality progress in EU Member States.
- To support the leading role of CSOs in fighting for gender equality in Europe.
- To give the European Parliament, European Commission, Educational Institutions, European Union Member States and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights a stronger pivotal role in improving the situation.

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5.6 Concluding Remarks

At the end of the consultations process put in place by the project, some qualitative reflections have emerged.

Firstly, the debate revolving around the RRF is clearly a gender-sensitive issue in either active and more receptive ways. That means that women have been proving to be by far one of the most mindful groups of the debate about the RRF at the EU and national levels and, at the same time, especially those aged between 25 and 45 have showed a good level of generic knowledge of the fund. On the other hand, women identify themselves as the main recipient in need of extraordinary emergency measures from the State.

Secondly, at some points women feel very abandoned by their state, or disappointed by the State's social policies and still being the weakest link in the EU societies. This is leading to two reflections different in kind: firstly, women see more than others inclined to demand for more protection of social fairness by showing more sympathies for the vulnerable groups - to which they feel to belong, along with young people, migrants, disables and other minorities. Women have expressed their preference on the social nature of the State policies to take as a part of the healing practice.

Thirdly, women believe that the Recovery Fund should be used to remedy past societal asymmetries, through a more empowered State's welfarism and subsidiarity vs the austerity politics that Europe has imposed in the past through significant cuts in public health, social benefits, etc.

As a direct consequence to what said above, not surprisingly the vast majority of the surveyed seems to have turned their attention more to the social dimension of the State's policies rather than focusing on economic/market-driven action and strategies in terms of projectivity, competitiveness and free labour market. Indeed, more Welfare, more subsidiarity and more social rights are unequivocally the 'outcry of European women', as if States were called upon to repay the societal inequalities of the past.

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This would mean that States are called to:

1) make the public health system vs private health system more accessible to all;

2) enhance social programmes, such as public housing, social benefits in support of single parenthood, social shock-absorbers, equal pay, social security schemes (pension, unemployment benefit);

3) implement a fairer taxation system;

4) implement a stronger gender budgeting.

In addition to this, the project recorded the need to:

5) increase women's training and education, especially in digital and STEM fields to close the gender gap;

6) improve access to finance and enable women to set up businesses with a view to increasing their economic independence.

To put in other words, rather than in a mere political change, women are ready to stand for a cultural shift and a change of the economic model of reference, that ultimately should pose human beings and their social needs at the very centre of what societal models are supposed to be in the post Covid phase, and certainly in the future of the EU.

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6. ANNEXES

List of annexes:

ANNEX 1: Surveys:

1. survey on RRF
2. Survey on Green Deal - IT - SP - EN - FR
3. Survey on Health
4. Survey on Education and Culture
5. Survey on Gender Equality in EU Politics Survey

ANNEX 2: Publications

1. Report on WISE4Challenges research presented by WEP to Copa Women's Committee
2. Toolkit “GENDERIS4ALL – HOW TO RAISE AWARENESS ON GENDER EQUALITY” by Libera
3. Toolkit: “Gender and medicine The importance of a gender perspective in medical practice to promote the health system” by UNIPISA

ANNEX 3: Tools

1. Miro Co-working Area
2. Conceptual map

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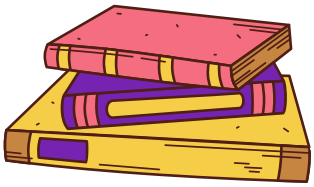
7. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS



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WISE 4ALL WOMEN INNOVATIVE SOCIETY EUROPE CHALLENGES

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