



Regional Studies Association (RSA) Annual Conference

[SS13: Exploring Gender Equality in Policy: Regional and Rural Perspectives - Details](#)

Agenda

9 May 2025 – 10.30 -12.00h (Porto, Portugal) - Room: 141

The Regional Studies Association's [Annual Conference 2025](#) is being held in partnership with the School of Economics and Management at the University of Porto, Portugal. Under the topic Navigating Regional Transformation, this four-day conference brings together academics and policymakers to exchange news, views and research findings from the fields of regional studies and science, regional and economic development, policy and planning.

The European Association for Innovation in Local Development ([AEIDL](#)), the [University Valladolid](#) and the [Polytechnic Institute of Viseu](#) organised a Special session on Exploring Gender Equality in Policy Regional and Rural Perspectives ([SS13](#)).

The special session is part of the Horizon Europe project [GRASS CEILING](#) (Gender Equality in Rural and Agricultural Innovation Systems), which is a multi-actor three-year project, aiming to empower rural women and increase the number of socio-ecological innovations led by women in agriculture, the rural economy and rural communities.

The session seeks to create a space for reflection on the needs, possibilities and opportunities for mainstreaming gender in European regional policies. It also seeks to inspire rethinking of monitoring systems for (a) gender equality progress, (b) the development of policies and initiatives that prioritise women's needs for public support and (c) examine impact of changes.

This special session is set within a critical policy development framework, with the Long Term Vision for rural areas with targets to 2040, the recommendations of the Strategic Dialogue on Agriculture, the Vision for Agriculture and Food and the Roadmap for women's rights, the new mandate of the EU Commission after 2027, the new Multiannual Financial Framework including relevant strategic areas such as Cohesion and Agriculture (2027-2034), as well as the five-year SDG compliance framework, among others.

The discussion will examine the extent to which gender mainstreaming has been integrated into European regional policies, explore the unique challenges faced by women in these areas, highlighting disparities in access to resources, public services, training, representation, and the impact of policies on their economic and social well-being.

The discussion aims to promote dialogue on proposals and solutions for the policy cycle with various stakeholders.

Panelists and the audience will reflect on key challenges in order to adequately monitor both women's needs and the effectiveness of policies. Important challenges to examine the nature and impacts of political, economic, social and environmental changes are: (i) Lack of gender-disaggregated data; (ii) Limited comparative studies on rural women across Europe and (iii) Absence of identification and tools/support to replicability of best practices from certain areas making it difficult to scale successful initiatives.

Timing	Agenda item	Panelists
10.30 – 10.35	Welcome and introduction	Blanca Casares – AEIDL (European Association for Innovation in Local Development)
10.35 – 10.45	The European Policy Forum for women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas: public policy initiatives and the use of EU Funds	Blanca Casares – AEIDL
10.45 – 10.55	Integrating gender equality into Community-Led Local Development (CLLD): Insights from LEADER and Local Action Groups	Raquel Pastor Carretero – AEIDL
10.55 – 11.05	Mapping women in agriculture and rural areas: descriptive statistics from Horizon-funded projects	Marie Lalanne – Joint Research Centre, European Commission
11.05 – 11.15	Gender inequality in rural and urban areas across Europe	Elsa Fontainha and Tanya Vianna de Araújo – ISEG Research University of Lisbon. Horizon project GEPINC
11.15 – 11.25	Women and innovation in the Spanish agricultural sector: Key findings from the European GRASS CEILING Project.	Margarita Rico – PhD. University of Valladolid (Spain)
11.25 – 11.35	Women’s advocacy for river protection in Poland	Daria Zozulia – Jagiellonian University. Institute of Geography and Spatial Management
11.35 – 11.45	Agricultural landscapes and biocultural memories through generations of innovative woman farmers	Cristina Amaro da Costa – Polytechnic Institute of Viseu
11.45 – 11.55	Young women returning to rural and low-density regions after higher education: ecologies of investment and regional development	Sofia Marques da Silva & Sara Faria – Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences; Centre for Research and Intervention in Education – University of Porto
11.55 – 12.00	Closing	Blanca Casares – AEIDL Raquel Pastor Carretero – AEIDL

Exploring Special Session Talks

The European Policy Forum for women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas: public policy initiatives and the use of EU Funds

Blanca Casares Guillén – AEIDL (European Association for Innovation in Local Development)

The presentation will highlight the role and initiatives of the [European Policy Forum](#) for women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas in the frame of [GRASS CEILING project](#). It will also provide an overview of public policy actions and strategic use of EU Funds to empower women, drive innovation, and support inclusive rural and regional development across Europe.

Integrating gender equality into Community-Led Local Development (CLLD): Insights from LEADER and Local Action Groups

Raquel Pastor Carretero – AEIDL (European Association for Innovation in Local Development)

This presentation introduces the possibilities for European Local Action Groups (LAGs) to integrate a gender perspective into the design, implementation, and monitoring of their local development strategies. Concrete examples of how groups can incorporate this vision into each of the phases are included, along with a synthesis of the identified challenges and medium to long-term strategies to advance these objectives.

Mapping women in agriculture and rural areas: descriptive statistics from Horizon-funded projects

Marie Lalanne – Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Commission

This presentation showcases the results of text mining and mapping of keywords such as *women-led innovations*, *women farmers*, and *women in agriculture and rural areas* within Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe project descriptions. By analysing these datasets, the presentation will highlight key figures and provide regional maps that visualize women-focused initiatives across EU agricultural and rural landscapes.

Gender inequality in rural and urban areas across Europe

Elsa Fontainha <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7870-3556> and Tanya Vianna de Araújo <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6993-7043> – ISEG Research University of Lisbon. Horizon project GEPINC

This presentation aims to: (i) explore the potential for developing a regional index by adapting the methodology and data sources of the EIGE Gender Equality Index; and (ii) compare gender inequalities between rural and urban areas in Europe using data from the 2023/2024 European Social Survey module *Gender in Contemporary Europe*. The analysis applies Complexity Theory and Network Analysis to reveal spatial patterns and relational dynamics in gender inequality across European regions.

Women and innovation in the Spanish agricultural sector: Key findings from the European GRASS CEILING Project

Margarita Rico – PhD. University of Valladolid (Spain)

This presentation shares key findings from the European [GRASS CEILING project](#), focusing on women and innovation in the Spanish agricultural sector and the [Spanish Living Lab](#) of the project. It highlights women's roles as innovators, the barriers they face, and policy recommendations to foster inclusive innovation and gender equality.

Women's advocacy for river protection in Poland

Daria Zozulia – Jagiellonian University. Institute of Geography and Spatial Management

This presentation explores issues of gender equality in environmental policy through case studies of how women across Poland, including rural areas, engage in grassroots initiatives to defend and restore rivers. It traces their motivations, activities, effects and challenges faced in promoting environmental sustainability.

Agricultural landscapes and biocultural memories through generations of innovative woman farmers

Cristina Amaro da Costa – Polytechnic Institute of Viseu

This presentation explores agricultural landscapes and biocultural memories shaped by generations of innovative women farmers highlighting the vital role these women play in preserving traditional knowledge, fostering sustainability, and transforming rural spaces through creativity and resilience, with a focus on case studies in Portugal.

Young women returning to rural and low-density regions after higher education: ecologies of investment and regional development

Sofia Marques da Silva and Sara Faria – Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences; Centre for Research and Intervention in Education. University of Porto*

This presentation focuses on the experiences of young women who return to their home region after graduation to invest in their lives and professional projects. Drawing on a questionnaire distributed to young adults who have returned to their home region after graduating from university (N=108), and biographical interviews (N=14) with young women, this presentation focuses on drivers, priorities and scales of investment of young women when returning.

Organisation contacts:

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