GRASS CEILING

D5.2

Policy toolkit to develop and monitor inclusive agricultural and rural development policies

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Deliverable D5.2

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AFCO: EU Agri-Food Chain Observatory
AKIS: Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems
AROPE: At risk of poverty and/or social exclusion
CAP: Common Agricultural Policy
CEAP: Circular Economy Action Plan
CLLD: Community-Led Local Development
CoR: Committee of the Regions
DATAM: Data-Modelling platform of resource economics
DEGURBA: Degree of urbanisation
DG AGRI: European Commission Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG EMPL: European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG JUST: European Commission Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
DG REGIO: Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EAGF: European Agricultural Guarantee Fund
EC: European Commission
ECF: European Competitiveness Fund
EIGE: European Institute for Gender Equality
EPF: European Policy Forum
EPRS: European Pillar of Social Rights
ERDF: European Regional Development Fund
ESF: European Social Fund
EU: European Union
FADN: Farm Accountability Data Network
FSDN: Farm Sustainability Data Network
FemAI: Female Achievement Index
FemDI: Female Disadvantage Index
FSDN: Farm Sustainability Data Network
GRASS CEILING: Gender Equality in Rural and Agricultural Innovation Systems
JRC: European Commission Joint Research Centre
LA: Liaison Agency
LEADER: Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale
LTVRA: Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas
NACE: classification of economic activities in the European Union (EU). The term NACE is derived from the French title: Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne.
NRPP: National Regional Partnership Plan
NUT: Nomenclature of Territorial Units
MFF: Multiannual Financial Framework
PMEF: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
WP: Work Package

01 Introduction and methodological approach

Since its inception in 2022, **GRASS CEILING Horizon Europe project has been dedicated to creating an environment where women can lead socio-ecological transitions, developing innovative responses to environmental and social challenges while enhancing the resilience of rural areas and communities**. The project has been carried out through the articulation of **nine Living Labs**, **involving 72 rural innovators**, engaging male innovators, and connecting relevant stakeholders, including through the European Policy Forum (EPF or hereafter 'the Forum') for women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas.

The Forum provided a platform for dialogue among policymakers, experts, and practitioners, ensuring that the proposed framework is aligned with both European and national policy realities and the diverse needs of rural territories.

The project adopts a **multi-layered and participatory approach to formulating policy recommendations and influencing policy**. This process integrates evidence from multiple work packages and actively involves stakeholders across levels.

Deliverable 5.2 ***Policy tool kit to develop and monitor inclusive agricultural and rural development policies*** **consists of this report or technical note describing the development process for the Policy Toolkit. It is complemented by the Demonstrator, which is available online and brings together all the tools.**

The **Policy Toolkit to develop and monitor inclusive agricultural and rural development policies formulated within the framework of Work Package 5 on co-creation of recommendations and tools** for policy and knowledge and innovation systems that boost women's role in the sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas.

The **Policy Toolkit** will serve as a practical instrument to guide policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders in designing, implementing, and monitoring inclusive agricultural and rural development policies. It aims to **go beyond** a conceptual framework or **this technical note by offering a visual and interactive tool**, integrated into the GRASS CEILING website in a dedicated section (https://www.grassceiling.eu/policy-toolkit/). This online space will allow users to navigate and explore the toolkit's components in an intuitive and dynamic manner.

Following this introduction and the presentation of methodological aspects **(Chapter 1), this technical note first outlines the key components of the policy toolkit (Chapter 2),** which brings together interrelated instruments to support inclusive and gender-responsive policy development, evaluation, and monitoring in agriculture and rural development. These include: (i) a **gender proofing template for agriculture** to assess the inclusiveness of policies in fostering women-led

innovation; (ii) **a template and training webinar for gender benchmarking of farm and rural policy**[1]; (iii) a **step-by-step checklist for policymakers**, designed to guide policy development processes from start to finish, ensuring that inclusiveness remains a central pillar; and (iv) **a data strategy to establish a Rural Women Innovation Compass as a multidimensional indicator framework.** The Compass maps existing monitoring systems, integrates gender-disaggregated data, and identifies gaps, while also incorporating practitioner and policy feedback from the European Policy Forum (EPF) for Women-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas and aligning with EU monitoring systems such as the Rural Observatory. **The Policy Toolkit takes the form of a demonstrator prototype designed to showcase its functionality**. It also includes inputs provided to EU consultations, references and supporting material to reinforce the proposed approach.

In addition, **the work on these Tools complements the previous Deliverable 5.1**[2] **Report with policy recommendations on inclusive transition policies for farming and rural areas**, further operationalising its guidance through a data-driven and practical tool to support managing authorities in advancing gender equality in rural areas. The recommendations are intended to inform EU, national, and regional policy frameworks in the current and forthcoming programming periods, particularly in the context of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the post-2027 reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the articulation of the Vision for Agriculture and Food and the review of the EU Gender Equality Strategy.

In particular, the Policy Toolkit also includes the comprehensive roadmap to advance gender equality in rural areas across the European Union, aimed at policy makers with a total of 77 recommended actions. It builds on extensive research, stakeholder engagement, and policy dialogue, and is structured around seven interconnected Focus Areas that together reflect the key dimensions of inclusive rural transformation. Each Focus Area articulates a set of specific policy needs and structural limitations, emerging policy opportunities, and a proposed time-bound course of action (with targets to 2025, 2030 or 2035).

Together, **Deliverables 5.1 and 5.2** (this technical note) establish both the **strategic vision and the operational mechanisms** needed to integrate gender equality into agricultural and rural policymaking.

The final chapters of this technical note are structured as follows: **Chapter 3** presents the key insights gathered through the **European Policy Forum**, with a particular focus on the **November 2025 session on policy tools**, where the work developed for the Policy Toolkit was presented and discussed. **Chapter 4** summarises the main conclusions and reflections from the analysis, and **Chapter 5** provides the list of references used.

[1] Deliverable 4.1 – Template and Training Webinar for Gender Benchmarking in Farm and Rural Policy

[2] Casares-Guillén, B., Pazos-Vidal, S., 2025. *Report with policy recommendations on inclusive transition policies for farming and rural areas*. GRASS CEILING Project, Deliverable 5.1. Horizon Europe. https://zenodo.org/records/17206321

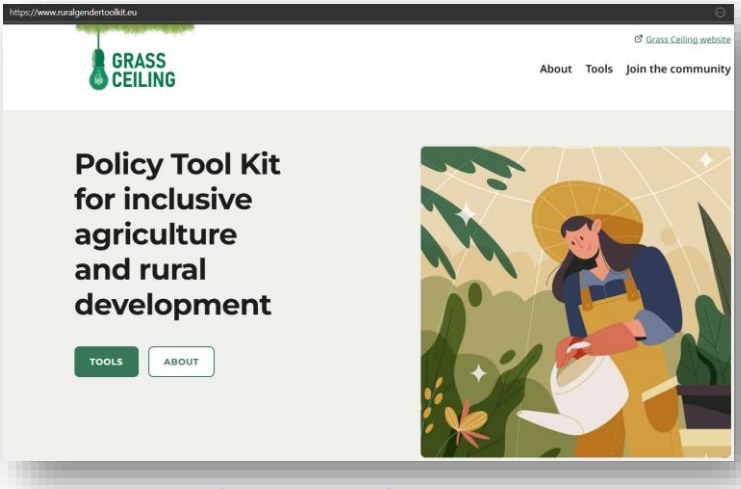
02 GRASS CEILING Policy's Toolkit

The **Policy Toolkit** is a practical instrument developed within the *GRASS CEILING* project to support policymakers in designing and monitoring inclusive, gender-responsive agricultural and rural development policies. Prepared by **AEIDL (European Association for Innovation in Local Development)** in collaboration with the project coordination team and with contributions from other partners, the Toolkit has been co-created through the *European Policy Forum for Women-Led Innovation*. It translates GRASS CEILING research findings into actionable policy resources, presented as a **Demonstrator Prototype**.

The Toolkit **is composed of interconnected tools designed to facilitate inclusive policy development, implementation, evaluation, and long-term monitoring in agriculture and rural development**. Each component addresses a specific stage of policymaking, ranging from ex-ante assessment and benchmarking to planning and monitoring. An explanatory video that allows us to navigate through the Demonstrator can be found at the following link: https://youtu.be/EH4evr53zkU.

Figure 1 presents the homepage of the Rural Gender Policy Toolkit (accessible at https://www.grassceiling.eu/policy-toolkit/), which offers direct access to key sections such as *About the Policy Toolkit,* where the purpose, scope, and methodological approach are introduced; a dedicated *Tools* area, which hosts the full collection of resources developed within the project; and the *Join the Community* section, which invites users to engage further, share insights, and connect with others working on gender equality in rural areas, through the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas. The Demonstrator also provides a link to the main *GRASS CEILING project website*, where users can access all project materials, results, and related information developed throughout its duration.

Figure 1. Homepage of the Rural Gender Policy Toolkit



Source: https://www.grassceiling.eu/policy-toolkit/

As shown in **Figure 2**, the *Tools* section of the Policy Toolkit presents five core instruments:

1. **Data Strategy & Integration: Rural Women Innovation Compass** – positioned at the top of the structure, this tool provides a framework for exploring and analysing data related to women-led innovation in rural areas. It aims to support policymakers in assessing how effectively data is being used to understand, support, and scale rural women's innovation. It provides a structured approach to assessing data availability, quality, and integration across programmes, highlighting gaps and opportunities for improvement. By mapping key indicators and connecting insights from multiple sources, the Rural Women Innovation Compass enables evidence-based decision-making and strengthens the design of initiatives that empower women innovators in rural areas. It guides users toward building a more coherent, inclusive, and data-driven strategy that maximises impact.

2. **Gender Policy Benchmarking & Proofing Tool for agriculture** – designed to evaluate the gender-responsiveness of existing policies and identify areas for improvement. It is linked to Deliverable 4.1 – Template and Training Webinar for Gender Benchmarking in Farm and Rural Policy and facilitated the development of Deliverable 4.2 – Synthesis Report on Gender Benchmarking in European and National Agricultural and Rural Policies.

3. **Roadmap to Advance Gender Equality in Rural Areas** – a forward-looking strategy outlining key actions for 2025, 2030, and 2035. It was developed under Deliverable 5.1 Report with policy recommendations on inclusive transition policies for farming and rural areas, presents 77 recommended actions structured around seven interconnected Focus Areas.

4. **Step-by-Step Checklist for Policymakers** – a practical guide that supports the full policy cycle, ensuring inclusiveness is embedded from design to implementation and review. It guides policymakers and managing authorities through seven key steps — from defining strategic goals and mapping users to developing data frameworks, governance systems, and participatory engagement processes.

5. **Inputs to EU Consultations** – the European Policy Forum has actively contributed to six European Union policy consultation processes, ensuring that the perspectives and evidence gathered through GRASS CEILING are reflected in the design of forthcoming policy frameworks. The contributions were made to the following consultations:
    - EU agricultural policy – strategy to promote generational renewal
    - Social Economy Action Plan (mid-term review)
    - EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030
    - Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights
    - EU's next long-term budget (MFF) – implementing EU funding
    - Intergenerational Fairness Strategy

Figure 2. Tools included in the Rural Gender Policy Toolkit

Data Strategy & Integration: Rural Women Innovation Compass

At the core of the GRASS CEILING Policy Toolkit, linked to Deliverable 5.2 on the development and monitoring of inclusive agricultural and rural development policies, the Data Strategy & Integration: Rural Women Innovation Compass serves as the methodological backbone of the demonstrator.

READ MORE

Gender proofing template for agriculture

A practical framework to ensure that agricultural and rural policies effectively integrate gender equality considerations. It identifies common gender biases and offers targeted measures to promote equality structured around a set of goals.

READ MORE

Roadmap to advance gender equality in rural areas

A forward-looking roadmap outlining actions for 2025, 2030 and 2035, structured around seven key areas ranging from legal reforms and financial support to innovation, governance and cultural change.

READ MORE

Step-by-step checklist for policymakers

This practical checklist, developed by AEIDL within the GRASS CEILING Horizon Europe project, provides a clear roadmap for building the Rural Women Innovation Compass.

READ MORE

Inputs to EU consultations

Tools for different stakeholders to improve the gender perspective of policies affecting rural areas.

READ MORE

Source: https://www.grassceiling.eu/policy-toolkit/

The homepage of the Policy Toolkit also provides direct access to join the community created through the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, which currently brings together **131 members** from across 25 countries, including women innovators, farmer organisations, rural development networks, researchers, advisory services, local authorities and civil society actors.

During the final two months of the project, a targeted campaign has been launched to encourage the transfer of **European Policy Forum members** who have been actively engaged throughout the GRASS CEILING project into this broader community. This ensures continuity, strengthens collaboration, and supports the long-term sustainability of knowledge exchange and advocacy for women-led innovation in rural contexts.

2.1. Data strategy and integration for building a Rural Women Innovation Compass

Current monitoring systems often lack sufficient gender-disaggregated information and fail to capture the specific contributions and challenges of women in agriculture and rural development. Without robust and comparable data, policymaking risks reinforcing existing gaps rather than addressing them.

To ensure rural development policies are equitable and responsive, it is essential to promote inclusive data practices and gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation frameworks that incorporate disaggregated data reflecting the diverse needs of different population groups.

A key limitation is the persistent lack of gender-disaggregated and rural-specific data, which restricts accurate analysis and policy formulation. Although macro-level data may be available, detailed information about women's roles and needs at farm and community levels remains scarce. This challenge is further intensified by the absence of gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation systems, which limits accountability and the ability to track progress effectively. Without comprehensive sex-disaggregated data, particularly at local and regional levels, policy interventions tend to be gender-blind, overlooking structural inequalities and failing to acknowledge the full range of women's contributions and experiences in rural contexts.

The proposal of a **Data strategy and integration for building a Rural Women Innovation Compass responds to this need by assessing diverse data sources, identifying gaps, and developing a multidimensional set of indicators tailored to women-led innovation**. Thus, this Compass will provide policymakers with a practical framework to design, monitor, and evaluate interventions that effectively support women's roles in sustainable agriculture and rural transformation.

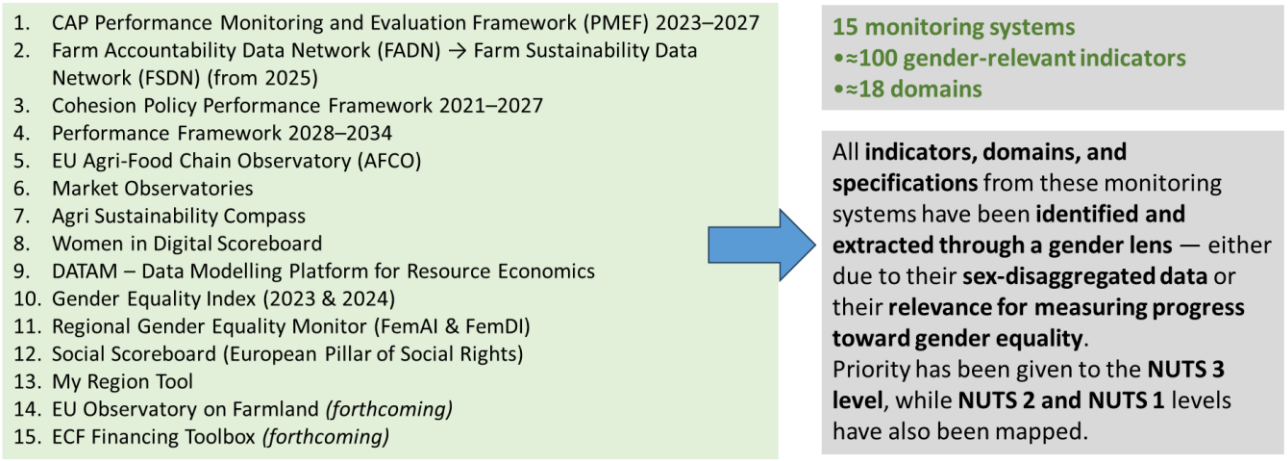
2.1.1. A gender-sensitive mapping of current European monitoring systems

This subsection presents a comprehensive mapping and gap analysis of the monitoring systems most relevant to assessing gender equality, and broader socio-economic and sustainability objectives to favour an inclusive transition.

As shown in Figure 3, a total of **15 mandatory monitoring systems** across different policy areas were analysed. This process enabled the extraction of **more than 100 gender-relevant indicators**, classified into **18 distinct domains**. These domains were subsequently used to align and position the **Rural Women Innovation Compass** within **its 9 domains**, based on the availability and comparability

of data.

Figure 3. Overview mapping of main European monitoring systems



Source: own elaboration

It is important to note that the 2025 Gender Equality Index, published annually by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), was only released on 2 December 2025, which prevented a detailed review of the indicators it contains. However, based on the preliminary analysis conducted during the final month of the GRASS CEILING project, no significant changes are expected, as the new index includes 27 indicators compared to the previous 31, and 13 domains instead of 14 in the earlier version. Therefore, the indicators currently mapped are considered to be adequately covered, also given that the index generally provides information at national level, which is not directly relevant for the Rural Women Innovation Compass.

The analysis in Table 1 begins with the **CAP Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (PMEF) 2023–2027**, the **Farm Accountability Data Network (FADN)** from 2025 converted to **Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN)**, the **Cohesion Performance Framework 2021-2027**, and the **Performance Framework 2028–2034.**

Subsequently, the analysis of Table 2 continues mapping and identifying gender indicators, drawing also from another set of monitoring systems, such as the **EU Agri-Food Chain Observatory (AFCO), market observatories** and the **Agri Sustainability Compass**. Cross-cutting social and gender-focused instruments are examined, such as the **'Women in Digital' scoreboard**, the **Data-Modelling platform of resource economics (DATAM) - Socioeconomic indicators for the Life Sciences sectors**, the **Gender Equality Index 2023 and 2024,** the **regional gender equality monitor** including the **Female Achievement Index (FemAI)** and the **Female Disadvantage Index (FemDI)**, and the **Social Scoreboard** linked to the European Pillar of Social Rights **(EPSR)**. In addition, broader territorial and societal monitoring systems have been considered, including **My Region Tool**. Finally, attention will be given to forthcoming initiatives, notably the **EU Observatory on Farmland** and the **ECF Financing Toolbox**.

To better understand how gender-specific aspects are captured and where improvements are needed, **the mapping includes: the source** (legislative basis or online reference, and the origin of the data); and **the existing indicators or specifications disaggregated by sex.** In addition, it is complemented by **a global analysis of the available information and the main gaps to inform the proposal to be offered to the Rural Observatory** (section 2.1.2 of this report).

Table 1. Mapping of main European monitoring systems for Agriculture and Cohesion

CAP Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (PMEF) 2023–2027

The CAP Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (PMEF) 2023–2027 is the system the EU uses to track how the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) delivers on its economic, environmental, and social objectives. It sets out common indicators, data sources, and reporting rules to measure performance across all Member States. The framework ensures accountability, supports evidence-based policymaking, and allows comparison of results and impacts throughout the 2023–2027 CAP programming period.

Sources

Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

- ANNEX I impact, result, output and context indicators pursuant to Article 7
- ANNEX XIV reporting based on core set of indicators pursuant to Article 142 Indicators for the European Agriculture Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

PMEF Indicators data on Agriculture

Existing gender-disaggregated indicators or specifications

- Impact Indicators: I.23 (Attracting young farmers) including 1. number of new farm managers by sex; 2. number of new young farm managers by sex, I.24 (Jobs in rural areas)
- Result Indicator: R.36 (Generational renewal)

Farm Accountability Data Network (FADN)

The Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN) is the EU's official system for collecting microeconomic data from a representative sample of farms across Member States. It gathers detailed information on production, income, costs, labour, and farm structures to assess the economic situation of the agricultural sector. FADN provides evidence for policymaking, evaluation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and research on farm-level performance and sustainability. From 2025, it have been converted to Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN).

Sources

Farm economics

Eurostat Database
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries

- Agriculture (Online data code: agr)
  - Farm structure (ef)

Regulation (EU) 2018/1091 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on integrated farm statistics and repealing Regulations (EC) No 1166/2008 and (EU) No 1337/2011

Existing gender-disaggregated indicators or specifications

- Farm indicators by age and sex of the manager, economic size of the farm, utilised agricultural area and NUTS 2 region (ef_m_farmang)
- Land and labour productivity of agricultural holdings by sex of farm manager and type and size of the farm (ef_m_pry)
- Share of holdings by sex of farm managers and NUTS 2 region (ef_m_sex_sh)
- Main agricultural labour force by age and sex of the farm manager, farm type of the agricultural holding and NUTS 2 region (ef_lf_main)
- Agricultural labour force by legal entity, work status, sex of worker, economic size of the agricultural holding and NUTS 2 region (ef_lf_leg)
- Agricultural family labour force by age, sex of farm manager and NUTS 2 region (ef_lf_fam)
- Tenure of agricultural holdings by utilised agricultural area, sex and age of farm manager (ef_mp_tenure)
- Agricultural holdings and utilised agricultural area by training, age and sex of farm managers (ef_mp_training)
- Agricultural holding and utilised agricultural area by vocational training, sex and age of farm managers (ef_mp_voctraining)
- Type of other gainful activities directly related to the agricultural holdings by age of the manager, utilised agricultural area, farm type and economic size by NUTS 2 region (ef_oga_type)
- Beneficiary of rural development support measures by age, sex and training of farm manager and NUTS 2 region (ef_rd_man)
- New farm managers by sex (ef_fsi_nfm)
- Average farm labour force by work status and sex of farm manager (ef_fsi_lf)

Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN)

Since 2025, the Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN) is the new EU-wide system designed to extend FADN by covering not only economic but also environmental and social aspects of farming. It collects harmonised farm-level data on issues such as labour, resource use, climate impact, and social sustainability. FSDN supports evidence-based policymaking by providing a comprehensive view of how farms contribute to the EU's sustainability and CAP objectives.

Sources

Regulation (EU) 2023/2674 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 November 2023 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1217/2009 as regards conversion of the Farm Accountancy Data Network into a Farm Sustainability Data Network

Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/1417 of 13 March 2024 supplementing Council Regulation (EC) No 1217/2009 setting up the Farm Sustainability Data Network with rules for annual income determination, holding sustainability analysis and access to data for research purposes, and repealing Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1198/2014

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2746 of 25 October 2024 laying down rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1217/2009 setting up the Farm Sustainability Data Network and repealing Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/220

Existing gender-disaggregated indicators or specifications

See Annex I of Regulation (EU) 2023/2674, topic Social-Gender balance.

Recital 6 of Regulation (EU) 2023/2674, indicates: Data are currently collected mainly to assess economic aspects of holdings. There is, however, a need for the overall sustainability of holdings to be assessed, including on the basis of environmental data linked to soil, air, water and biodiversity, as well as data covering the social dimension of farming, with particular attention given to the situation of women and young people as farmers and farm workers.

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2746 established:

Gender (column G) Gender shall be specified for the holder(s), manager(s) in the categories where they can appear (categories 10 to 30 and 70 from groups 'regular unpaid labour' UR or 'regular paid labour' PR).

The gender is indicated by a code number, i.e.: 1 man 2 woman

Member States that have legal provisions or practices recognising that individuals may not fall into male and female categories or may not wish to be associated with one of them may use additional codes.

Men, Women (columns G1 and G2) The number of men and women shall be given only for categories 50 and 60 from groups 'unpaid regular labour' UR and 'paid regular labour' PR and 80 from the group 'externals' EX. For category 80 'externals' this information is optional. Member States that have legal provisions or practices recognising that individuals may not fall into male and female categories or may not wish to be associated with one of them may use additional columns.

Important to note:
As of 2025, the Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN) is set to replace the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN). FSDN Liaison Agencies (LAs) are the organisations within each EU Member State responsible for organizing and coordinating the collection of farm-level data for the FSDN. Their main duties include creating farm selection plans, compiling lists of participating "returning farms," and electronically transmitting the collected farm return data to the European Commission.

Proposed subtopics, variables and categories (European Commission, 2023):

Generational Renewal

- Subtopic: Security about farm succession
- Subtopic description: Plan for farm manager succession
- Variable description: Indication of the presence of a plan for farm manager succession
- Categories: (i) Gender of the previous farm manager; (ii) Gender of the farm manager; (iii) Gender of the foreseen future manager

Social Security

- **Additional retirement schemes**
- Subtopic description: Access to additional retirement schemes by farm manager and farm workers
- Variable description: Share of farm manager and workers who access to additional retirement schemes
- Categories:
  - Gender
  - Category of labour

- **Access to social protection schemes**
- Subtopic description: Share of farm managers and workers who are beneficiaries of social

protection schemes
- Variable description: Share of farm managers and workers who are beneficiaries of social protection schemes
- Categories:
  • Gender
  • Category of labour
  • Type of social protection scheme

- **Leaves and care responsibility**
- Subtopic description: Time used by farm manager and workers for care leaves reported
- Variable description: Number of days used by farm managers and workers for care leaves
- Categories:
  • Gender
  • Category of labour
  • Type of care giving activity

Working Conditions

- **Working hours**
- Subtopic description: Working hours of the farm manager and workers
- Variable description: Average number of working hours per day of the farm manager and workers on farming related activities and non-farming related activities
- Categories:
  • Category of labour
  • Gender

- **Category of labour**
- Subtopic description: Category of labour by characteristics of farm manager and workers
- Variable description: Total number of farm managers and workers (persons and AWU)
- Categories:
  • Gender
  • Nationality
  • Age

- **Wage**
- Subtopic description: Daily wage
- Variable description: Average daily wage of workers
- Categories:
  • Category of labour
  • Gender
  • Nationality
  • Age

- **Work accidents**
- Subtopic description: Work-related accidents
- Variable description: Accidents incidence rate in the farm
- Categories:
  • Category of labour
  • Age
  • Gender
  • Type of accident

Social inclusion

- **Disability**
- Subtopic description: Disability of the managers and workers
- Variable description: Number of managers and workers with disability
- Categories:
  - Type of disability
  - Gender

- **Vulnerability**
- Subtopic description: Farm managers and workers belonging to vulnerable groups
- Variable description:
  - Indication that the farm manager belongs to a vulnerable group
  - Number of workers belonging to vulnerable groups
- Categories:
  - Type of vulnerable groups
  - Gender

Education, training and advice

- **General education level**
- Subtopic description: General education level of farm manager and workers
- Variable description: Indication of the education level
- Categories:
  - Category of labour
  - Gender

- **Training**
- Subtopic description: Training related to the management of the farm activities, including agricultural practices, marketing, accountancy
- Variable description: Average hours of training per manager and worker
- Categories:
  - Category of labour
  - Gender
  - Type of training

Economic attractiveness of the farming sector

- **Contribution of farm income in farmers' total income**
- Subtopic description: Contribution of income from farming and farm-related activities on total income for each farm manager
- Variable description: Share of income from farming and farm-related activities in total income from each farm manager
- Categories:
  - Category of non-agriculture source of income
  - Gender

- **Wage**
- Subtopic description: Daily wage
- Variable description: Average daily wage of workers
- Categories:
  - Category of labour

- Gender
- Nationality
- Age

Cohesion Performance Framework 2021-2027

The Cohesion Performance Framework 2021–2027 is the system used to monitor how EU cohesion policy funds deliver on investment priorities and objectives during the current programming period. It establishes common output and result indicators, milestones, and targets to track progress across Member States and regions.

Sources

Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund

- Annex I Common Output and Result Indicators for ERDF and the Cohesion Fund – article 8(1)
- Annex II Core Set of Performance Indicators for ERDF and Cohesion Fund referred to in article 8(3), to be used by the Commission in compliance with its reporting requirement pursuant to point (h)(iii) of article 41(3) of the Financial Regulation

Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060 - the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)

- Article 16 Performance framework
- Article 17 Methodology for the establishment of the performance framework

Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2025) 61 final Performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027.

2021-2027 ERDF-CF-JTF Common Indicator metadata

Existing gender-disaggregated indicators or specifications

- The existing indicators, in terms of their unit of measurement, pertain to the level of the user, participant, connected population, impacted population, or beneficiaries, initially without specification regarding sex-disaggregated data.
- The ESF+ foresees that common indicators related to personal data should be broken down by gender (women, men and non-binary persons).
- Only one result indicator of the ERDF related to Interreg refers to Participations in joint actions promoting gender equality, equal opportunities and social inclusion (RCO82).
- As a general rule, the general ex ante conditionality will be applicable to those investment priorities where the interventions either require the respect of the principle of gender equality or aim to achieve the promotion of gender equality. In particular through the involvement of the equality body and training of staff of the authorities in the management & control of the ESI Funds.

Performance Framework 2028–2034

The Performance Framework refers to the proposed EU governance and monitoring architecture built into the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034. It is set out in the European Commission's proposal COM/2025/545 final, which establishes a common expenditure tracking and

performance framework across all Union programmes and activities. It introduces harmonised rules for monitoring, reporting, and evaluating results to ensure that EU spending is transparent, accountable, and focused on achieving agreed objectives.

Sources

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a budget expenditure tracking and performance framework and other horizontal rules for the Union programmes and activities
COM/2025/545 final

Annex I Interventions fields and indicators

Existing gender-disaggregated indicators or specifications

Intervention Fields and number (number as reflected in the new EU Performance Framework)	**Output (O) and/or Result (R) indicators**
Policy area: Agriculture & Fisheries Promote generational renewal of farmers (1) Targeted support to farmers' income (2)	Number of new young farmers and other new entrants in agriculture supported – by gender **(R)** Other beneficiaries – by target group (women, smaller farms, farms in specific areas, other group of farms) **(R)**
Policy area: Fisheries Compensation for external events (42) Investments in blue economy (47) Attractive fishery & processing sectors (51) Coastal community transition (52)	Number of jobs sustained or created – by gender **(R)** Number of people trained – by gender **(R)** Number of people up to 40 years old employed in the sector – by gender **(R)** Number of people trained/reskilled – by gender **(R)**
Policy area: Food & Feed Improve animal health (60)	Number of farms/SMEs supported – by gender **(O)** Number of smallholders in third countries reached with EU supported interventions aimed to increase their sustainable production, access to markets and/or security of land – by gender **(O)**
Policy area: Business Support Innovation and advanced support services for SMEs (63); Enterprise services (65); Decarbonisation (energy-intensive) (70); Decarbonisation (other industries) (71); Bioeconomy investments (72); Emerging priorities (77); Battery manufacturing (78); Circular economy tech (80); Clean technologies (81); Clean transport tech (82); Renewable energy tech (85)	Number of jobs sustained or created in enterprises supported – by gender **(R)**
Policy area: Culture, Tourism & Media Arts & creative activities (87) Media literacy & disinformation (90) Heritage & tourism (93) Tourism financial support (94) Sustainable tourism (95)	Number of artists and cultural professionals supported disaggregated by EU/non-EU – by gender **(O)** Number of people accessing European cultural and creative works – by country of origin of the works (their own/others) and by gender **(R)** Number of people reached by disinformation countermeasures and media literacy measures – by gender **(R)** Number of jobs sustained or created in supported entities – by gender **(R)**

Policy area: Education & Skills Early childhood education and care (excluding infrastructure) Primary, Secondary, Tertiary education (excluding infrastructures) Initial vocational education (excluding infrastructures) Improving access of people with disabilities to education Improving access of marginalised communities such as the Roma to education (111–117) Teacher training (119) Learning mobility (120) Education infrastructure (121-122) Skills & adult learning: Basic skills (incl. literacy, mathematics, science, and citizenship, excl. digital and green skills); Advanced digital skills; Basic digital skills; Green skills; Financial literacy skills; Up-skilling and re-skilling for marginalised communities such as the Roma; Up-skilling and re-skilling for persons with disabilities; Adult learning (127-134) Youth & volunteering: Non-formal and informal education and learning (excluding infrastructures) & Volunteering (136-137)	Number of participants in education or training; to training – by gender **(R)** Number of participants – by gender, by age, by labour market status, by socio-economic background, and by education level **(O)** Number of staff – by gender and age **(O)** Number of teachers trained – by gender and age **(O)** Number of learners – by gender, by age, by socio-economic background and by sectors of skills (including STEM) **(O)** Number of participants – by gender, by labour market status, by age, by education level and by skill sectors (including STEM) **(O)** Number of annual users – by gender **(R)** Number of participants gaining a qualification or self-reported skills improvement – by gender **(R)** Number of participants who have reached at least a basic level of digital skills according to the ESTAT's DSI definition – by gender **(R)** Number of students benefitting – by gender **(R)** Number of adult learners benefitting from curricula developed and programmes implemented – by gender **(R)** Number of adult learners benefitting from equipment purchased – by gender **(R)**
Policy area: Energy Other social infrastructures (including pre-school and care centres) – Light renovation (219)	Number of annual users of modernised facilities – by types: pre-schools, care facilities, other – by gender **(R)**
Policy area: Environment & Climate Insurance towards climate adverse events (273) Mixed grey and nature-based resilience measures (274) Nature-based climate-resilience measures (275) Prevention measures to mitigate risk of forest fire (276); of drought (277); of flooding (278) Digital technology and services for climate action – adaptation (279) Provision of water supply for human consumption (301)	Number of people insured – by gender **(O)** Number of people covered by prevention measures – by gender **(O)** Number of people benefitting from adaptation measure – by gender **(R)** Number of inhabitants receiving water supply – by gender **(R)**
Policy area: Research and innovation Investment in fixed assets, including research infrastructure, directly linked to R&I (340) Funding for gender and intersectional research (361) Social sciences, civil society, democracy and culture (386)	Number of supported researchers – by gender, career stage and country of origin **(O)** Number of projects and EU contribution to projects integrating the gender dimension **(O)** Share of researchers with increased individual impact in their field-by gender **(R)**
Policy area: Rights, equality and justice Women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions (418) Ending violence against women & girls (419) Promote citizens' engagement and participation (421) Support to fundamental rights, rule of law, equality, anti-discrimination measures, digital rights and data protection (422) Support for inclusive gender equality policies (427) Capacity building of justice actors, judicial training, transparency and accountability (428)	Number of organisations supported **(O)** Numbers of actions **(O)**; Number of grants **(O)** Number of entities reached (by civil society & other entities) **(O)** Number of measures to support services for victims of gender violence (e.g., number of shelter places, of rape crisis centre and of counselling centres) **(O)** Number of people reached by activities – by gender, and disaggregated for people with disabilities **(R)** Number of justice professionals trained – by gender **(R)**

Policy area: Social Improving access to employment (438) Modernising and strengthening labour market institutions (439) Promoting women's participation and gender equality in the labour market (440) Specific support to youth employment (443) Improving access of marginalised communities such as the Roma to employment (444) Improving access of people with disabilities to employment (445) Adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change (446) Self-employment and business start-ups (447) Health and safety at work (448) Household food security programmes (451) Performance of health systems (excluding infrastructure and digitalisation) (453) Gender equality, non-discrimination, equal opportunities and representation (466) Social inclusion of young people (476) Measures for the social inclusion and access to quality services for people with disabilities (478) Long-term care, including the delivery of family and community-based care services (excluding infrastructure) (481) Measures for the social integration including access to services for people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (482) Support for social economy and social enterprises (484) Other social infrastructures (including pre-school and care centres) – Development and construction of new zero-emission or nearly zero emission buildings (486); Development and construction of other types of buildings (487)	Number of participants – by gender, by labour market status, by age and by level of education **(O)** Number of staff trained by gender **(O)** Number of labour inspectorates staff trained – by gender and by age **(O)** Number of workers/managers trained in occupational health and safety – by gender and by age **(O)** Number of health staff trained – by gender and by age **(O)** Number of laws adopted, consultations held, strategies finalised, services developed, events organised, new policies implemented in third countries, improved alignment with EU standards **(O)** Number of participants – by status after participating (gaining a qualification, engaged in job searching, in education or training, in employment) and by gender **(R)** Number of people benefitting – by gender and by age **(R)** Number of jobs sustained or created in supported entities – by gender **(R)** Number of annual users of new facilities – by types: pre-schools, care facilities, others – by gender **(R)**

Source: own elaboration

Table 2. Overview of gender-related indicators in complementary monitoring frameworks mapped

Monitoring System	Source / Link	Existing gender-disaggregated indicators
EU Agri-Food Chain Observatory (AFCO) and Market observatories	https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/agri-food-supply-chain/afco_en https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/data-and-analysis/markets_en	Publicly available data indicate the number of producers.
Agri Sustainability Compass	https://agridata.ec.europa.eu/extensions/compass/compass.html	Indicator: Share of farms managed by women % female managers in agriculture % female managers in overall economy
'Women in Digital' Scoreboard	https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/women-digital-scoreboard-2024	Dimension 1 Individuals - frequency of internet use Online data code:isoc_ci_ifp_fu *1.1 Internet users* *1.2 People who have never used the internet* *1.3 Online banking* *1.4 Doing an online course* *1.5 Online consultations or voting* *1.6 e-Government users* Dimension 2 Individuals' level of digital skills (from 2021 onwards) Online data code:isoc_sk_dskl_i21 *2.1 At least basic digital skills* *2.2 Above basic digital skills* *2.3 At least basic digital content creation skills* Dimension 3 Graduates in tertiary education, in science, math., computing, engineering, manufacturing, construction, by sex - per 1000 of population aged 20-29 Online data code:educ_uoe_grad04 *3.1 STEM graduates*

		3.2 ICT specialists *3.3 ICT graduates* *3.4 Unadjusted gender pay gap*
Data-Modelling platform of resource economics (DATAM) - Socioeconomic indicators for the Life Sciences sectors	https://data.jrc.ec.europa.eu/collection/datam https://datam.jrc.ec.europa.eu/datam/mashup/LIFE_SCIENCES_SECTORS/index.html	Publicly available data indicate the number of persons employed.
Gender Equality Index 2024	https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2024 https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/country	**6 Core domains (6) and Additional domains (2)** *Core: Work, Money, Knowledge, Time, Power and Health* *Additional: Violence against women* and *Intersecting inequalities* **31 Indicators** **Domain: Work** **Participation** 1. Full-time equivalent employment rate (% population aged 15–89) 2. Duration of working life (years, population aged 15+) **Segregation and quality of work** 3. Employed people in education, human health and social work activities (% employed aged 15–89) 4. Ability to take one or two hours off during working hours to take care of personal or family matters (% workers aged 15+) 5. Career Prospects Index (points, 0–100, population aged 15+) **Domain: Money**

		Financial resources 6. Mean monthly earnings (PPS, working population aged 16+) 7. Mean equivalised net income (PPS, population aged 16+) **Economic situation** 8. At-risk-of-poverty rate (% population aged 16+) 9. Income distribution S20/80 (population aged 16+) **Domain: Knowledge** **Attainment and participation** 10. Graduates of tertiary education (% population aged 15–89) 11. People participating in formal or non-formal education and training (% population aged 15–74) **Segregation** 12. Tertiary students in education, health and welfare, humanities and arts (% population aged 15+) **Domain: Time** **Care activities** 13. People caring for and educating their children or grandchildren, elderly or people with disabilities, every day (% population aged 18–74) 14. People doing cooking and/or housework every day (% population aged 18–74) **Social activities** 15. Workers doing sporting, cultural or leisure activities outside their home at least daily or several times a week (% workers aged 16–74) 16. Workers involved in voluntary or charitable activities at least once a month (% workers aged 16–74) **Domain: Power** **Political** 17. Share of ministers (%) 18. Share of members of parliament (%) 19. Share of members of regional assemblies/local municipalities (%)

		Economic 20. Share of members of boards in largest quoted companies, supervisory boards or boards of directors (%) 21. Share of board members of central banks (%) **Social** 22. Share of board members of research funding organisations (%) 23. Share of board members of publicly owned broadcasting organisations (%) 24. Share of members of the highest decision-making body of the national Olympic sport organisations (%) **Domain: Health** **Status** 25. Self-perceived health, good or very good (% population aged 16+) 26. Life expectancy at birth (years) 27. Healthy life years at birth (years) **Behaviour** 28. People who don't smoke and are not involved in harmful drinking (% population aged 15+) 29. People doing physical activities and/or consuming fruits and vegetables (% population aged 15+) **Access** 30. Population with unmet needs for medical examination (% population aged 16+) 31. Population with unmet needs for dental examination (% population aged 16+)
Gender Equality Index 2023 – Thematic focus European Green Deal	https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/thematic-focus/green-deal/country	Public attitudes and behaviours on climate change and mitigation 1. Personal responsibility to try to reduce climate change (%, population aged 15+, 2018) 2. Avoiding animal products (%, population aged 16–74, 2022) 3. Avoiding plastic single-use products (%, population aged 16–74, 2022) 4. Choosing environmentally friendly options in childcare activities (%, population aged 16–74, 2022) 5. Choosing environmentally friendly options in housework activities daily (%, population aged 16–74, 2022) 6. Tertiary graduates in natural sciences and technologies (%, population aged 15+, 2021)

		Energy 1. People unable to keep the home adequately warm (%, population aged 16+, 2021) 2. People with arrears on utility bills (%, population aged 16+, 2021) 3. Employed in the energy sector (%, population aged 15+, 2022) Transport 1. People opting for low carbon-emission modes of transport (%, population aged 16–74, 2022) 2. People using the car as main means of transport during a typical week (%, population aged 16–74, 2022) 3. People using public transportation as main means of transport during a typical week (%, population aged 16–74, 2022) 4. People using walking as main means of transport during a typical week (%, population aged 16–74, 2022) 5. Employed in the transport sector (%, population aged 15+, 2022) Decision-making 1. Senior administrators in national ministries dealing with environment and climate change (%, 2022) 2. Members of parliamentary committees dealing with environment and climate change (%, 2022)
Female Achievement Index (FemAI) / Female Disadvantage Index (FemDI)	https://territorial.ec.europa.eu/publications-stories/regional-gender-equality/?lng=en	FemAI and FemDI each score achievement and disadvantage on a 0-100 scale for seven domains: “Work & Money”, “Knowledge”, “Time”, “Power”, “Health”, “Safety, Security & Trust” and “Quality of Life”. Scores are based on 33 indicators (for FemAI) and 30 indicators (for FemDI) divided across the domains. 1. Work and Money • Full-time and part-time employment rate • Unemployment rate • Employed with tertiary education

		• Mean monthly earnings 2. Knowledge • Graduates of tertiary education • Formal or non-formal education and training • Early leavers from education and training* • Young people neither in employment nor in education and training 3. Time • Regularly participate in a leisure activity • Donated money to a charity • Helped a stranger who needed help • Volunteered time to an organisation 4. Power • Share of ministers in national governments • Share of members in national parliaments • Share of members in regional assemblies • Share of members of regional executives • Share of members of local/municipal councils 5. Health • Self-perceived good or very good health • Health problem that prevents from living a normal life • Life expectancy in absolute value at birth* • Malignant neoplastic and cardiovascular diseases death rate* • No unmet medical needs

		• No unmet dental needs 6. Safety, Security and Trust • Safety at night • Relatives and friends count on for help • Women treated with respect and dignity • Voiced your opinion to a public official 7. Quality of Life • Feel well-rested • Smile or laugh a lot • Experience enjoyment • Life satisfaction • Opportunities to make friends • Satisfied with freedom *Indicators marked with an asterisk (*) are missing in the Female Disadvantage Index (FemDI).
My Region Tool	https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/visualisations/my-region/	• Population on 1 January by age, sex and NUTS 2 region. Online data code:demo_r_d2jan • Life expectancy by age, sex and NUTS 2 region. Online data code:demo_r_mlifexp • Fertility indicators by NUTS 3 region. Online data code:demo_r_find3 • Employment rates by educational attainment level, citizenship and NUTS 2 region. Online data code:lfst_r_lfe2emprtn • Unemployment rates by educational attainment level and NUTS 2 region. Online data code:lfst_r_lfu3rt • Persons in long-term unemployment (12 months or more) by educational attainment level and NUTS 2 region. Online data code:lfst_r_lfu2ltu • Gender employment gap by NUTS 2 region. Online data code:tepsr_lm220 • R&D personnel and researchers by sector of performance, sex and NUTS 2 region. Online data code:rd_p_persreg • Population in private households by educational attainment level and NUTS 2 region. Online data

		code:edat_lfse_04 • Young persons neither in employment nor in education and training by NUTS 2 region (NEET rates). Online data code:edat_lfse_22
Social Scoreboard (EPSR)	https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/dashboard/social-scoreboard/	The indicators used are at the national level NUT 1, Euro area, EU. • Early leavers from education and training by sex. Online data code:sdg_04_10 • Individuals who have basic or above basic overall digital skills by sex. Online data code:tepsr_sp410 • Young persons neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) by sex. Online data code:sdg_08_20 • Gender employment gap. Online data code:tesem060 • Income quintile share ratio (S80/S20) by sex. Online data code:tessi180 • Adult participation in learning by sex. Online data code:sdg_04_60 • Tertiary educational attainment (age group 30-34). Online data code:tesem030 • Gender gap in part-time employment. Online data code:tepsr_lm210 • Gender pay gap in unadjusted form. Online data code:sdg_05_20 • Employment rate by sex. Online data code:tesem010 • Unemployment rate by sex. Online data code:tesem120 • Long-term unemployment rate by sex. Online data code:tesem130 • Activity rate by sex. Online data code:tepsr_wc130 • Youth unemployment rate by sex. Online data code:tesem140 • Labour transitions from temporary to permanent contracts by sex -3-year average. Online data code:tepsr_wc230 • In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate by sex. Online data code:tesov110 • Impact of social transfers (excluding pensions) on poverty reduction by sex. Online data code:tespm050 • Disability employment gap by level of activity limitation and sex. Online data code:tepsr_sp200 • Self-reported unmet need for medical care by sex. Online data code:tespm110 • Aggregate replacement ratio for pensions (excluding other social benefits) by sex. Online data code:tespn070 • Healthy life years at age 65 by sex. Online data code:tepsr_sp320
ECF Financing Toolbox *(upcoming)*	Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on establishing the European Competitiveness	To date, there are still no details on the criteria or indicators to be used, but it is specified that: • The ECF will flexibly mobilise the entire financial toolbox provided by the Union budget (including loans, grants, equity, quasi-equity, blending, procurement and guarantees). • A horizontal, cross-cutting funding toolbox should be set at the service of all policy windows,

	Fund ('ECF'), including the specific programme for defence research and innovation activities, COM/2025/555 final	offering every form of support allowed by Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2059, such as financial instruments, including support provided in the form of equity. • Furthermore, a flexible financial toolbox under the ECF should ensure that SMEs could receive the type of support that best fits their needs along their investment journey. • Article 15.1(g) actions to which specific rules apply, in particular on ownership, exploitation and dissemination, transfer and licensing as well as access rights to results.
EU Observatory on Farmland *(upcoming)*	COM(2025) 75 final Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions, A Vision for Agriculture and Food Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/overview-vision-agriculture-food/vision-agriculture-and-food_en PP 08 25 01 — EU observatory for agricultural land, control and access to farmland; European Parliament legislative resolution of 27 November 2024 on the joint text on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2025, P10TA(2024)0050.	To date, there are still no details on the criteria or indicators to be used, but it is specified that: • The EU Observatory on Farmland is a proposed initiative to enhance transparency and cooperation in domains such as land transactions and transfers of land use rights, price trends and market behaviour, changes in land use, as well as loss of agricultural and natural land. The observatory will also help the Member States take informed decisions on the regulation of their farmland markets

Source: own elaboration

The analysis of European monitoring systems in Table 1 and Table 2 reveals a fragmented yet evolving landscape in terms of gender-sensitive data collection and integration. Although several EU frameworks include gender-disaggregated indicators, coverage remains uneven across sectors and territorial levels (NUTS 1–3). The majority of systems operate at national or regional levels, with few offering rural- or local-level gender data.

The **CAP Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (PMEF) 2023–2027** provides some gender-disaggregated indicators, mainly focusing on generational renewal through sex-based data on farm managers. However, gender analysis remains peripheral to broader CAP performance assessments. Similarly, the **Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN)**, represents significant advances in capturing gender dimensions at the farm level. The FSDN, operational from 2025, could introduce an expanded social dimension, integrating variables on gender balance, working conditions, care responsibilities, and access to social protection. This marks a critical shift toward multidimensional sustainability that explicitly acknowledges women's participation in agriculture and rural labour markets. This framework could become the EU's **most detailed source of farm-level gender data**, enabling a more systemic understanding of women's participation, labour conditions, and socioeconomic resilience in agriculture.

The **Cohesion Performance Framework (2021–2027)** embeds gender in some thematic areas (employment, education, equality) but shows limited coherence and comparability across instruments.

Complementary systems such as the **Gender Equality Index**, **Female Achievement and Disadvantage Indices**, and the **Social Scoreboard** offer robust composite indicators but mostly at NUTS 1 or 2 scales. Tools like **My Region**, **Women in Digital**, and **Agri Sustainability Compass** incorporate valuable gender statistics; yet integration between rural, agricultural, and digital datasets remains weak.

The upcoming **Performance Framework (2028–2034)**, however, envisages a stronger gender lens across multiple policy domains—agriculture, education, research, social inclusion, and justice—through explicit sex-disaggregated result indicators.

The forthcoming **2028–2034 EU Performance Framework** has the potential to mark a turning point in how gender equality is monitored and governed within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Building on deficiencies identified in the 2023–2027 cycle, the new framework introduces several innovations that could significantly strengthen gender-responsive monitoring and accountability.

The new framework embeds gender-relevant monitoring across a broader set of **intervention fields**—from agriculture and fisheries to education, business support, research, culture, and social policy. Our analysis identified **81 intervention fields** that require or allow gender-disaggregated output and result indicators, compared with the extremely limited coverage under the current PMEF.

While output indicators still dominate, the new Performance Framework incorporates **more result indicators** (e.g., qualifications gained, improved skills, jobs sustained by gender) and embeds gender-relevant results particularly in education, labour markets, climate adaptation, and

innovation fields. This supports a move toward monitoring **changes in women's capabilities**, not merely counting female participants.

Although the Framework still lacks true **impact indicators**, its expanded set of gender-disaggregated metrics creates the basis for future development of indicators capturing, for instance: (i) women's leadership and decision-making power; (ii) access to land and finance; (iii) reduction of gender gaps in income and pensions; or (iv) resilience to shocks and climate risks.

Forthcoming observatories (e.g., **EU Observatory on Farmland**, **ECF Financing Toolbox**) could bring new indicators and criteria interesting to keep track at rural level.

2.1.2. Opportunities to strengthen gender-sensitive data practices and systems: a proposal for the EU Rural Observatory

The **Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA)**[3], adopted in 2021, set a strategic vision to 2040 with a **dedicated flagship** on women in rural areas. The **2024 evaluation of LEADER**[4] confirmed its contribution to **female labour participation** and **rural social inclusion** (European Commission, 2024a).

In 2024, the European Commission **report**[5] **on the LTVRA: key achievements and ways forward** described how EU policies contribute to social inclusion, gender equality, climate and environment, digitalisation, education, health, culture, and industry among other policy aspects. The report consolidated key priorities raised by EU institutions and stakeholders, framing critical questions for future rural policy development. These include addressing the challenges of **depopulation and structural transitions**, tailoring **targeted interventions** to diverse rural needs, and enhancing **financial support** through improved synergies across EU, national, and regional funds. Stakeholders also emphasised the need to strengthen **territorial tools** like CLLD/LEADER, improve **monitoring and assessment**, and simplify access to support for beneficiaries. The report calls for better **institutional coordination**, potentially through an EU rural strategy, and urges support for national and regional rural action plans. Finally, it stresses the importance of more **policy-relevant rural data**, gathered without adding to administrative burdens (European Commission, 2024b).

Rural regions demonstrate varying degrees of macro-economic performance, depending on the participation rates and productivity levels between genders, different age cohorts and educational levels, with for example highly educated human capital having an important role for income convergence dynamics on different geographical scales (Crespo Cuaresma et al., 2016). The **EU Rural Observatory is a flagship initiative supporting the LTVRA by improving the knowledge base on**

[3] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas - Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040 (COM/2021/345 final) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52021DC0345

[4] European Commission (2024a) Evaluation of the impact of LEADER towards the general objective "balanced territorial development" https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cmef/rural-areas/evaluation-impact-leader-balanced-territorial-development_en

[5] European Commission (2024b) Report on The long-term vision for the EU's rural areas: key achievements and ways forward COM(2024) 450 final https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0463e1b8-ec1f-11ee-8e14-01aa75ed71a1/

rural territories; their diversity, challenges, and opportunities. It compiles and analyses data on demographics, employment, services, and quality of life to inform evidence-based policymaking. Through data integration and territorial insights, the Observatory contributes to balanced, inclusive, and sustainable rural development across the EU.

As part of the effort to strengthen gender-sensitive evidence in rural policy, Table 3 outlines how gender-disaggregated indicators can be aligned and integrated across the Rural Observatory's thematic domains.

Table 3. Integration of gender-disaggregated indicators and datasets across Rural Observatory domains

Rural Observatory's domain	Proposed integration (existing indicators or datasets at NUTS3)	Additional integrations/improvements
Population Dynamics	Population on 1 January by age, sex and NUTS 3 region (demo_r_pjanaggr3); Fertility indicators by NUTS 3 region (demo_r_find3); Assumptions for net migration by age and sex (proj_19ranmig3) Population change - Demographic balance and crude rates at regional level (NUTS 3) Online data code:demo_r_gind3 Average annual population to calculate regional GDP data (thousand persons) by NUTS 3 region Online data code:nama_10r_3popgdp	Add rural–urban comparison of population by sex × DEGURBA; include age-specific dependency ratios by sex and degree of urbanisation
Economy	Business demography and high growth enterprises by NACE Rev. 2 activity and NUTS 3 region Online data code:bd_hgnace_r Business demography by size class and NUTS 3 region Online data code:bd_size_r	Consider sex-disaggregated data on entrepreneurship (Eurostat business demography). Get inspired by EIGE "Economic power" domain and FemAI/FemDI Work & Money scores at regional level Case studies development to better understand rural data on women's roles in value chains, access to finance for women-led enterprises entrepreneurship, leadership positions and access to innovation
Labour Market	Rural employment/unemployment by sex (lfst_r_ergau/lfst_r_urgau); Gender employment gap by degree of urbanisation Online data code:tepsr_lm230	Consider FADN indicators for agricultural sector. Integrate FSDN future variables on gender of farm manager and workers, working hours, wages, part-time employments and care leaves; track female participation in training

	Self-employment by citizenship and sex (lfst_r_e2sganu) Total and active population by sex, age, employment status, residence one year prior to the census and NUTS 3 region Online data code:cens_01ramigr CAP PMEF Impact Indicators: I.23 (Attracting young farmers) including 1. number of new farm managers by sex 2. number of new young farm managers by sex, I.24 (Jobs in rural areas) Result Indicator: R.36 (Generational renewal)	and AKIS activities. Consider information provided for some NUTS2 indicators: Persons in full-time/part-time employment by professional status and NUTS 2 region Online data code:lfst_r_lfe2eftpt Gender employment gap by NUTS 2 region Online data code:tepsr_lm220 Consider upcoming indicators proposed in the Performance Framework (2028-2034) for Promoting women's participation and gender equality in the labour market (intervention field 440) and number of artists and cultural professionals (intervention field 87)
Tourism	Nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments by NUTS 3 region (from 2020 onwards) Online data code:tour_occ_nin3	Consider Employment in accommodation and food services by sex (lfsa_egan22d) (The classification by sectors, even if not disaggregated at the rural level, can still contribute to the Rural Observatory analysis) Consider upcoming indicators in the Performance Framework 2028–2034 for tourism (intervention fields 87, 90, 83, 84 and 95) For indicator Tourism nights spent by sex of traveller (Eurostat tour_occ) (the inclusion of a rural accommodation category would be highly valuable and is a topic that Eurostat should consider incorporating) Consider indicator Cultural employment by NUTS 2 region Online data code:cult_emp_reg (it would be very useful for this indicator to be broken down further to the NUTS3 level)
Education	Consider including complementary indicators in the Rural Observatory that, while only available at the NUTS2 level, are disaggregated by sex; and from Sustainable development indicators by degree of urbanisation (sdg_urb)	Carry out some case studies to understand rural reality for: Tertiary educational attainment (age 30–34) by sex (tesem030); Adult participation in learning by sex (sdg_04_60); STEM graduates by sex (educ_uoe_grad04); Digital skills by sex (sdg_04_70) Consider indicator Share of holdings by training of farm manager and NUTS 2 region

		Online data code:ef_mp_training_sh Consider variables from Gender Equality Index "Knowledge" domain and 'Women in Digital' scoreboard
Infrastructure & Accessibility	Broadband coverage by degree of urbanisation (isoc_bde15b)	Consider Regional ICT statistics (t_isoc_reg) and Regional transport (tran_r) Get inspired by Time use for mobility and care (EIGE "Time" domain) Carry out some case studies for rural/agricultural digital participation and digital skills of individuals (for example like in (isoc_sk_dskl_i21)
Living Conditions & Social Inclusion	Population in private households by education and DEGURBA (edat_lfs_9913) Material and social deprivation rate by degree of urbanisation Online data code:ilc_mdsd09 At-risk-of-poverty rate by degree of urbanisation (ilc_li43) Persons providing informal care or assistance by sex, age, degree of urbanisation, most frequent activity status and frequency (2016) Online data code:ilc_ats18	Get inspiraed by Social Scoreboard indicators by sex (NEET, disability gap, in-work poverty, impact of social transfers); add FemAI/FemDI "Quality of Life" and "Safety & Trust" domains; Carry out some case studies inspired in Income quintile share ratio by sex (tessi180)
Land Use	Farm structure survey indicators by sex of manager (ef_m_farmang, ef_mp_training);	Incorporate gender-disaggregated data on farm/land ownership, tenancy indicators (FADN/FSDN). Include sex-disaggregated data on beneficiaries in the different CAP interventions linked to land use. Consider Share of family farms by NUTS 2 region Online data code:ef_lf_fam_sh Share of holdings by age of farm managers and NUTS 2 region Online data code:ef_m_age_sh Think of case studies to measure gendered adoption of agrarian sustainable practices

Environment	Noise from neighbours or from the street by degree of urbanisation Online data code:ilc_mddw04	Include sex-disaggregated data on beneficiaries in the different CAP interventions linked to the environment Get inspired for Gender Equality Index 2023 (Green Deal module): attitudes and behaviour on climate action by sex; employment in energy/transport sectors by sex Promote the collection of data on gendered exposure to environmental risks, sustainable development indicators and circular economy indicators at least at regional level
Energy & Climate	Cooling and heating degree days by NUTS 3 region - annual data Online data code:nrg_chddr2_a Cooling and heating degree days by NUTS 3 region - monthly data Online data code:nrg_chddr2_m	Case studies needed to shed light on rural population unable to keep home adequately warm by sex; energy poverty and access to renewable jobs Consider data and boost the gender dimension to upcoming bioeconomy investments, energy infrastructures and renovation indicators in the Performance Framework 2028–2034 (intervention fields 72 and 219)
Health	Self-perceived health by sex, age and degree of urbanisation Online data code:hlth_silc_18	Case studies needed to shed light on rura life expectancy and healthy life years by sex. It is suggested to add mental health and care burden indicators by sex. Get inspired by EIGE “Health” domain and FemAI Health scores. Consider data and boost the gender dimension to upcoming indicators in the Performance Framework 2028–2034 for Performance of health systems (intervention field 453)

Source: own elaboration

To reinforce gender-sensitive monitoring within the **EU Rural Observatory**, the following strategic opportunities are proposed:

1. **Mainstream gender across rural indicators**: incorporate sex-disaggregated data in all thematic domains (population dynamics, economy, labour market, tourism, education, infrastructure & accessibility, living conditions and social inclusion, land use, environment, energy & climate, and health). Ensure consistent gender tagging of indicators drawn from the mapping in section 2.3.1. and, in particular, aggregating indicators from FSDN, Gender Equality Index, FemAI/FemDI, and Social Scoreboard to visualise progress toward gender equality in rural territories.
2. **Enhance territorial granularity**: expand gender-sensitive datasets to **NUTS 3 and local rural**

areas, using proxy indicators (e.g., local labour force, informal care provision, rural entrepreneurship) to capture women's realities beyond national averages. For instance Goal 5 – Gender equality (sdg_05).

3. **Integrate intersectional and life-cycle dimensions**: include cross-cutting variables combining gender with age, disability, migration background, and family status to reflect diverse rural experiences.
4. **Foster data interoperability and partnerships**: establish formal cooperation among Eurostat, DG AGRI, EIGE, and national statistical institutes to harmonise definitions, metadata, and data-sharing standards, promoting open-access gender data for rural analysis.
5. **Promote participatory and qualitative data collection**: complement quantitative monitoring with participatory gender audits, rural women's surveys, and case studies on innovation, entrepreneurship, and social inclusion.
6. **Support capacity-building and institutional learning**: provide training for data managers and policymakers on gender-responsive monitoring methodologies and the interpretation of indicators at rural level.

The **new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2028–2034)** offers an important opportunity to integrate **gender-sensitive indicators** into future EU performance frameworks, particularly within agricultural and rural development instruments. However, to ensure meaningful tracking of outcomes, it is essential that **gender relevance reaches NUTS3**. Embedding this higher level of ambition across EU monitoring and evaluation systems will allow the **Rural Observatory** to evolve into a **gender-smart data hub**, ensuring that rural policies are both evidence-based and equality-driven, and that women's contributions to rural transformation are made visible, measurable, and recognised across Europe.

2.1.3. Building the Rural Women Innovation Compass: strategic actions by policymakers

The analytical work carried out throughout the project has culminated in the proposal of the **Rural Women Innovation Compass**—a tool designed to support evidence-based, place-sensitive, and inclusive policymaking (accessible at https://www.grassceiling.eu/policy-toolkit/).

The Compass brings together information across the nine key domains presented in Figure 4 and offers sufficient flexibility to be **adapted by policymakers** to different territorial contexts and policy priorities.

To develop an **adapted version** of this Compass, managing authorities would need to undertake a **comprehensive mapping of existing databases**, particularly when working at sub-national scales (national, regional, or even local levels). This mapping should identify the specific indicators available within each territorial context, following a similar approach to the one applied during this project at national and regional levels.

This process may be further strengthened by conducting a **Data Gap Analysis**, aimed at identifying missing information and determining where additional indicators or suitable proxies could be established to fill these gaps. Through such an exercise, policymakers gain a clearer understanding of the data already available, the gaps that persist, and how these can be complemented with

European-level datasets (e.g., at NUTS 3 level).

Together, these steps ensure that the Compass can be meaningfully contextualised, enabling the creation of **tailor-made dimensions** that address local or regional needs while enhancing the relevance and impact of rural gender-equality interventions.

All the analytical work has culminated in the development of the Rural Women Innovation Compass, which consolidates information across nine key domains listed in Figure 4.

Together, **these nine domains examine and analyse different dimensions that shape the environment for women-led innovation in rural areas.**

They cover demographic and socio-economic conditions, access to knowledge and skills, participation in decision-making, infrastructure availability, policy frameworks, environmental innovation, business activity, social capital, and links with science and research. By exploring these interconnected aspects, the Compass offers a comprehensive understanding of needs, barriers, and opportunities for advancing gender equality and rural innovation.

Figure 4. Domain of the Rural Women Innovation Compass

Source: *https://www.grassceiling.eu/policy-toolkit/*

- **Demography**

This domain examines the population characteristics of rural areas, including age distribution, migration trends and population density. It considers how demographic shifts influence labour availability, generational renewal, and the presence of women in leadership and entrepreneurship roles.

- **Knowledge & Skills**

This domain focuses on strengthening the knowledge base and personal capacities of rural women, recognising these as essential drivers of innovation in their communities. It highlights the importance of access to quality education, digital literacy, and opportunities for lifelong learning—factors that enable women to adapt, innovate, and thrive in changing rural environments.

- **Employment & Business**

This domain explores women's participation in the labour market, including employment quality. It also assesses entrepreneurship, business performance, and access to markets.

- **Socio-ecological Innovation**

This domain captures the extent to which women engage in environmentally sustainable practices and green innovation. It considers the role of women in climate adaptation, agroecology, renewable energy, circular economy initiatives, and nature-based solutions that contribute to resilient rural futures.

- **Governance & Participation**

This domain assesses women's representation and influence in decision-making processes. It considers participation in governance structures, leadership roles and rural organisations.

▪ **Socialisation & Networks** This domain looks at the networks, relationships, and social capital that support women's innovation. It includes community support, peer learning, mentorship, and access to professional and innovation networks, highlighting the role of cooperation and shared experiences.	
▪ **Science** This domain analyses the degree of integration between rural women and research, development, and innovation ecosystems. It focuses on women's involvement in scientific projects, and access to research institutions.	
▪ **Policy** This domain monitors the policy environment affecting rural women, including gender-responsive legislation, funding programmes, and institutional frameworks. It highlights how supportive policies can remove barriers, create incentives, and foster more inclusive innovation systems.	
▪ **Infrastructures & Services** This domain examines access to physical and digital infrastructure—such as broadband, transport, childcare, healthcare, and advisory services—essential for women's participation in economic and social life.	

Figure 5 illustrates the Dimensional Prototype of the Rural Women Innovation Compass, the central conceptual and methodological framework developed under this deliverable. Each dimension corresponds to a set of thematic domains within the EU Rural Observatory and it is **linked to relevant statistical sources identified during the data-mapping stage**.

Figure 5. Rural Women Innovation Compass

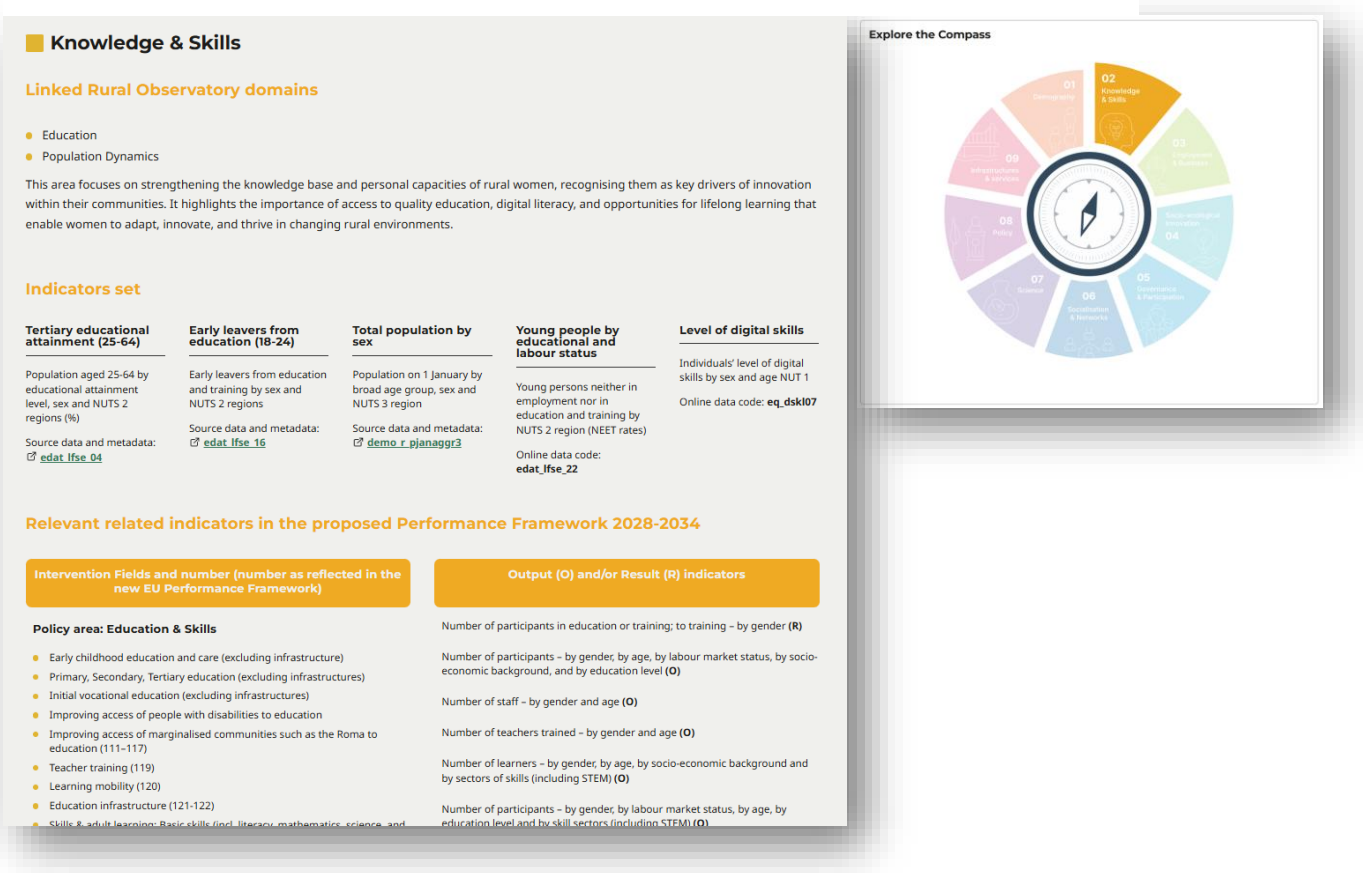
Source: https://www.grassceiling.eu/policy-toolkit/

For each domain, the Compass links to a set of indicators—primarily sourced from **Eurostat**—which provide baseline data to support analysis and policy assessment.

The demonstrator also illustrates how these indicators connect to the proposed **Performance Framework for 2028–2034**[6], ensuring alignment with EU-level output and result indicators for future policy monitoring. In addition, users will find a dedicated section highlighting existing **data gaps and evidence needs**, as well as this **technical note available for download**, offering detailed methodological information and guidance for indicator use and interpretation.

[6] European Commission, 2025. *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a budget expenditure tracking and performance framework and other horizontal rules for the Union programmes and activities* (COM(2025) 545 final. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025PC0545

Figure 6. Illustration of the Knowledge & Skills domain in the Compass



Knowledge & Skills

Linked Rural Observatory domains

- Education
- Population Dynamics

This area focuses on strengthening the knowledge base and personal capacities of rural women, recognising them as key drivers of innovation within their communities. It highlights the importance of access to quality education, digital literacy, and opportunities for lifelong learning that enable women to adapt, innovate, and thrive in changing rural environments.

Indicators set

Tertiary educational attainment (25-64)

Population aged 25-64 by educational attainment level, sex and NUTS 2 regions (%)

Source data and metadata: edat_lfse_04

Early leavers from education (18-24)

Early leavers from education and training by sex and NUTS 2 regions

Source data and metadata: edat_lfse_16

Total population by sex

Population on 1 January by broad age group, sex and NUTS 3 region

Source data and metadata: demo_r_pjanaggr3

Young people by educational and labour status

Young persons neither in employment nor in education and training by NUTS 2 region (NEET rates)

Online data code: edat_lfse_22

Level of digital skills

Individuals' level of digital skills by sex and age NUT 1

Online data code: eq_dskl07

Relevant related indicators in the proposed Performance Framework 2028-2034

Intervention Fields and number (number as reflected in the new EU Performance Framework)	Output (O) and/or Result (R) indicators
Policy area: Education & Skills	
Early childhood education and care (excluding infrastructure)	Number of participants in education or training; to training – by gender **(R)**
Primary, Secondary, Tertiary education (excluding infrastructures)	Number of participants – by gender, by age, by labour market status, by socio-economic background, and by education level **(O)**
Initial vocational education (excluding infrastructures)	Number of staff – by gender and age **(O)**
Improving access of people with disabilities to education	Number of teachers trained – by gender and age **(O)**
Improving access of marginalised communities such as the Roma to education (111–117)	Number of learners – by gender, by age, by socio-economic background and by sectors of skills (including STEM) **(O)**
Teacher training (119)	Number of participants – by gender, by labour market status, by age, by education level and by skill sectors (including STEM) **(O)**
Learning mobility (120)	
Education infrastructure (121-122)	
Skills & adult learning: Basic skills (incl. literacy, mathematics, science, and	

Source: https://www.grassceiling.eu/policy-toolkit/

2.1.4. Step-by-step checklist for policymakers: building the rural women innovation compass

In parallel, **we have developed a Step-by-Step Checklist to build the Rural Women Innovation Compass consisting of seven steps to help managing authorities** reflect on a series of key questions, assess the current state of play, and identify action points to prioritise future activities for the development of the *Compass*.

The Step-by-Step Checklist **serves as a practical guide to assist policymakers and managing authorities in the design, development, and operationalisation of the *Rural Women Innovation Compass*, ensuring a coherent and gender-responsive approach across all stages of policy and data management**.

As shown in Table 4, the checklist structures the process into seven iterative steps and promotes a culture of continuous learning, participatory governance, and data transparency, ensuring that gender equality becomes a measurable and visible component of rural transformation.

Each step includes a rationale, guiding questions, and action points for policymakers:

1. **Define the strategic framing:**

Establish the *Theory of Change* linking data collection, analysis, and visualisation to specific gender equality and innovation outcomes. Align the Compass with the objectives of the next National Regional Partnership Plan (NRPP) for 2028–2034 and its monitoring and evaluation.

2. **Segment and understand users:**

   Identify the target audiences such as EU and national policymakers, managing authorities, researchers, and rural women's organisations, and tailor outputs and communication formats to their needs. This ensures that the Compass delivers usable, actionable insights for decision-making and advocacy.

3. **Build the analytical and indicator framework:**

   Develop a coherent set of indicators and analytical models capable of revealing gendered patterns in innovation, access to resources, and social resilience. In this step, it is necessary to consider the mapping developed for this deliverable/technical note of EU monitoring systems, as well as the Data Analysis Gaps, complemented by other indicators or proxies at national and regional levels. In addition, each corresponding managing authority must take into account the dimensions proposed in this study and their relation to the thematic areas of the Rural Observatory, in order to adapt them to their specific context by adding or adjusting elements according to their needs. Also, combine quantitative and qualitative evidence, if needed, to enhance interpretation and ensure relevance for different territorial contexts.

4. **Develop the data infrastructure:**

   Create a FAIR-compliant (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data system that integrates multiple sources (Eurostat, ARDECO, EIGE, CAP, national observatories) using harmonised metadata standards. Ensure GDPR compliance and open-access protocols for transparency and interoperability.

5. **Establish governance, ethics, and data stewardship frameworks:**

   Define multi-level governance structures involving DG AGRI, DG REGIO, DG RTD, JRC, and national focal points. Adopt ethical data principles—CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics)—to guarantee privacy, informed consent, and fair representation of women and marginalised groups.

6. **Implementation, capacity building, and sustainability:**

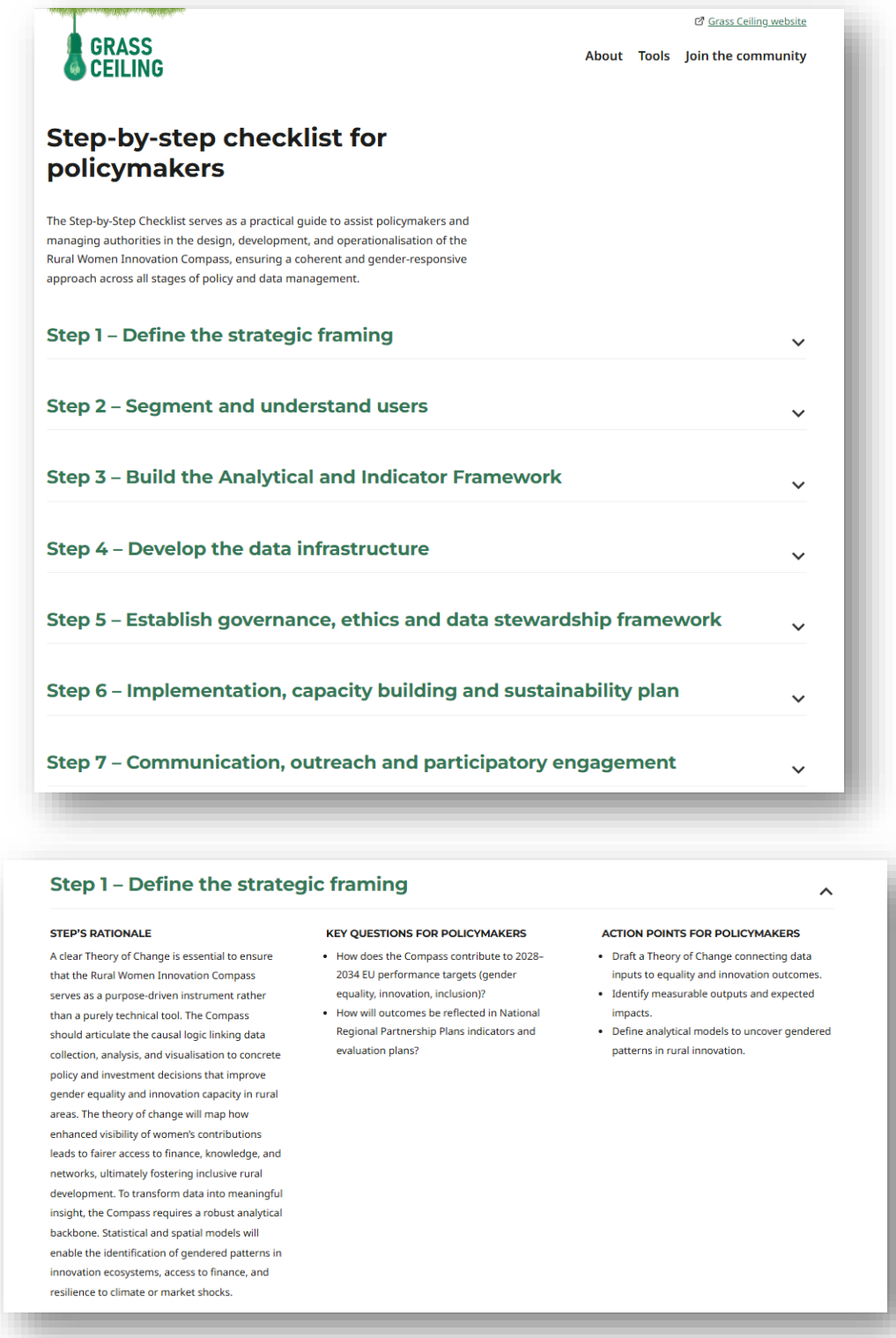
   Pilot the Compass in selected EU regions/rural case studies to test data integration and dashboard usability. Provide targeted training and capacity building for data officers, policymakers, and evaluators to enhance gender-sensitive data literacy. Secure long-term funding.

7. **Communication, outreach, and participatory engagement:**

   Establish participatory feedback mechanisms to involve rural women, communities, and stakeholders in validating findings. Develop multilingual communication materials, data storytelling tools, and an annual Rural Women Data Forum to maintain engagement,

visibility, and policy impact via the upcoming Women in Farming Platform announced in the Vision for Agriculture and Food.

Figure 7. Step-by-Step Guideline for Policymakers dropdown interface



Source: https://www.grassceiling.eu/policy-toolkit/

Table 4. Step-by-step checklist to build the Rural Women Innovation Compass

Step	Step's explanation	Key questions for policymakers	Action points for policymakers
Step 1 – Define the strategic framing	A clear Theory of Change is essential to ensure that the Rural Women Innovation Compass serves as a purpose-driven instrument rather than a purely technical tool. The Compass should articulate the causal logic linking data collection, analysis, and visualisation to concrete policy and investment decisions that improve gender equality and innovation capacity in rural areas. The theory of change will map how enhanced visibility of women's contributions leads to fairer access to finance, knowledge, and networks, ultimately fostering inclusive rural development. To transform data into meaningful insight, the Compass requires a robust analytical backbone. Statistical and spatial models will enable the identification of gendered patterns in innovation ecosystems, access to finance, and resilience to climate or market shocks.	• How does the Compass contribute to 2028–2034 EU performance targets (gender equality, innovation, inclusion)? • How will outcomes be reflected in NRPP indicators and evaluation plans?	• Draft a Theory of Change connecting data inputs to equality and innovation outcomes. • Identify measurable outputs and expected impacts. • Define analytical models to uncover gendered patterns in rural innovation.
Step 2 – Segment and understand users	User segmentation is equally important to tailor outputs to distinct needs: EU and national policymakers (strategic monitoring), local authorities and managing bodies (programme design), researchers (evidence generation), and rural women's organisations (advocacy and empowerment). Defining these user groups and their decision points will guide indicator selection, interface design, and communication formats, ensuring that the Compass delivers usable, timely, and actionable insights for every stakeholder.	• Who are the primary, secondary, and indirect users of the Compass? • Which NRPP stakeholders will use Compass data during planning, implementation, and reporting? What decisions do they take using the data? • How can the Compass support Local Action Groups and women-led enterprises?	• Conduct a user mapping exercise identifying decision cycles and needs. • Map user needs against NRPP performance milestones. • Develop differentiated user profiles and access levels. • Co-design communication and data-visualisation formats per audience.

Step 3 – Build the Analytical and Indicator Framework	The Compass must rely on a robust analytical backbone that transforms raw data into policy-relevant insight. This involves designing indicators, composite indices, and models capable of revealing gendered dynamics in rural innovation ecosystems. Statistical and spatial models can highlight disparities in access to finance, digital skills, or resilience to shocks, while qualitative evidence from rural women enriches interpretation.	• Which Compass indicators align with the 2028–2034 performance framework and NRPPs? • How will data feed into NRPP annual reports and evaluations? Which indicators best represent women-led innovation, inclusion, and resilience? • How can data from different sources be harmonised and compared? • How will qualitative and quantitative insights be combined?	• Define a core indicator catalogue linked to NRPP and CAP result indicators. • Integrate mixed-method approaches and periodic methodological reviews.
Step 4 – Develop the data infrastructure	The effectiveness of the Compass depends on a resilient and interoperable data infrastructure that adheres to FAIR principles—Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable. The system should integrate diverse data sources (Eurostat, CAP, Horizon Europe, EIGE, Copernicus, and national observatories) through harmonised metadata standards. An interoperability workflow should include automated ingestion, anonymisation, validation, and updates, ensuring both data quality and privacy.	• What data systems and sources can be linked or harmonised? • How to guarantee comparability and FAIR compliance across Member States? • What technical standards ensure sustainable interoperability? • What infrastructure investments are required for 2028–2034?	• Establish data-sharing agreements between NRPP Managing Authorities and the Observatory. • Apply FAIR principles and EU interoperability standards (DCAT-AP, SDMX, INSPIRE). • Create an open-access API for performance monitoring. • Ensure GDPR compliance and establish secure, open-access layers.

Step 5 – Establish governance, ethics and data stewardship framework	Building a gender-responsive governance and ethical backbone is fundamental. A multi-level data stewardship model should link the EU Rural Observatory, DG AGRI, DG REGIO, DG RTD, EIGE, JRC, and Eurostat with national focal points. These actors must coordinate data access, quality control, and interoperability in line with GDPR and EU data-space principles. Ethical oversight will ensure privacy, informed consent, and fair representation of women and marginalised groups. Adopting intersectional, feminist, and CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics) principles will safeguard the Compass as a trustworthy and inclusive evidence system.	• Who are the responsible actors for data management and ethics at EU and national levels? • How will ethical standards and intersectional data practices be applied? • How is accountability for data quality and privacy ensured?	• Create a governance board and assign data stewards at all levels. • Define ethical guidelines and consent protocols. • Establish periodic data audits and bias reviews.
Step 6 – Implementation, capacity building and sustainability plan	To move from concept to practice, the data strategy requires a staged implementation plan supported by capacity-building and sustainable resources. Initial pilots in selected Member States should test data integration, indicator feasibility, and dashboard functionality. A training programme for national statisticians, CAP Paying Agencies, and rural observatories should strengthen gender-sensitive data collection and reporting. Long-term sustainability will depend on embedding the Compass within the Rural Observatory's operational budget, complemented by Horizon Europe and CAP technical assistance. Regular evaluations will ensure continuous improvement and demonstrate added value for evidence-based policymaking.	• Which Member States or regions should pilot the system? • Which institutions need training for gender-sensitive monitoring? • How can capacity gaps in data collection and analysis be addressed? • What financial mechanisms ensure continuity and maintenance?	• Conduct pilot projects to test data workflows and usability. • Develop and deliver targeted training modules on gender-sensitive data. • Deliver annual training sessions for NRPP evaluators and data officers. • Secure multi-annual funding and establish performance monitoring cycles.
Step 7 – Communication, outreach and participatory	The success of the Rural Women Innovation Compass depends on active participation and shared ownership by rural women, communities, and policymakers. A participatory engagement strategy should include co-design workshops, regional data	• How can rural women and communities actively shape and validate the data?	• Hold annual NRPP regional consultations. • Develop storytelling dashboards and

engagement	dialogues, and an annual "Rural Women Data Forum" to align priorities and validate findings. Communication efforts will focus on accessible, multilingual storytelling—combining dashboards, case studies, and interactive maps that translate data into real-life narratives. Open-data interfaces and feedback loops will allow users to contribute, interpret, and apply insights locally, ensuring that the Compass remains a living, user-driven resource rather than a static repository.	• How to ensure inclusive, multilingual communication of performance data? • What feedback mechanisms inform policy adaptation?	multilingual communication materials. • Implement digital feedback and user-tracking systems to inform updates.

Source: https://www.grassceiling.eu/policy-toolkit/

03 Insights from the European Policy Forum for Women-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas

During the three years of the project, the **European Policy Forum (EPF) for women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas** acted as a strategic platform to integrate external perspectives, insights, and expertise into the project. It **facilitates the presentation and discussion of project results, particularly those from Work Package 5 (*Co-creation of recommendations and tools for policy and knowledge and innovation systems* that boost women's role in the sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas**).

It has been led by AEIDL (European Association for Innovation in Local Development), in collaboration with project partners engaged in policy development and stakeholder engagement (COPA-COGECA, SETU, Women's Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), European Environmental Bureau (EEB), and the Living Labs).

On the 4th November 2025, the EPF organised a specific online session on Assessing Policy Tools for Inclusive Innovation in Agriculture & Rural Areas. The session aimed to:

- Review the proposed methodology for designing the Rural Women Innovation Compass.
- Review and refine indicators for gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation.
- Identify practical solutions for integrating gender-disaggregated data into existing EU monitoring systems, including the Rural Observatory.
- Gather expert feedback to ensure usability, policy relevance, and potential uptake at EU and national levels.

Figure 8. EPF Group Photo Session on Tools

Participants profile included **25 attendees from 12 countries**, among them 36% representatives from European institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions, etc.), 32% researchers, 8% members of EU-funded projects (Horizon Europe, LIFE, Interreg, etc.), 8% public authorities or policy-makers at local, regional or national levels, 8% NGOs (local, regional, national, European), and 8% from other sectors.

The group of experts met to analyse the adequacy of current EU monitoring systems in capturing gender-sensitive indicators relevant to rural women, and to co-design the conceptual basis for the Rural Women Innovation Compass. Participants were divided into two working groups and discussed five guiding questions.

The following narrative summarises the main insights that emerged during the session.

1. **Question: Are there any other EU Monitoring Systems that have not been considered yet? Identifying them could help access additional gender-sensitive indicators.**

The experts suggested overlooked monitoring systems that could provide valuable data. These included environment-focused agencies such as the European Environmental Agency (EEA Indicator Framework) or the EPA Ireland's environmental open data portal, as well as frameworks linked to gender equality strategies, external gender strategic engagement, and strategic planning mechanisms within ESF and EIB annual performance reviews. Additional reference was made to gender-disability intersections, gender data portals tracking sexual violence, and other thematic reporting tools not yet fully exploited.

Collectively, the contributions validated that relevant information exists, but is fragmented across institutions and thematic areas. A more systematic integration of environmental, social, and economic monitoring tools would improve the availability of gender-responsive rural data.

2. **Question: Based on this, what data gaps do you think exist? In other words, which dimensions cannot currently be measured because there are no indicators available? What are those missing areas?**

Across both working groups, participants agreed that significant gender-disaggregated rural indicators are absent or insufficiently developed, particularly concerning the economic and social roles of rural women. The main gaps identified include:

- Access to finance and collateral, with limited visibility on women's loan approval rates or financial support mechanisms.
- Entrepreneurship conditions, private investment patterns, competitiveness indicators differentiated by age and sex.
- Care and household duties, including childcare, eldercare responsibilities, division of labour at home, and time-use patterns.
- Women's agricultural participation and succession, covering successors, leadership in farms, farm-related debt responsibility, and presence of women in informal/unregistered family businesses.
- Labour market access, employment in women-led farms, and profitability of multifunctional female-managed holdings.
- Support services for families and care, social security access and cross-border cooperation.

- Community-based indicators such as existence of rural women's organisations, innovation capacity and gender-sensitive adaptation of new technologies.

Overall, the experts stressed the need for more qualitative tools to understand lived experiences and motivations, complementing traditional quantitative indicators.

3. **Are there other relevant dimensions or thematic areas that should be included in the Rural Women Innovation Compass?**

Discussion on the Rural Women Innovation Compass design emphasised the need to widen thematic areas to better reflect women's realities. Proposed dimensions included:

- Care economy and labour market insertion: care infrastructure, female employment, time allocation.
- Microfinancing and investment support, including redefinition of innovation beyond tech-centric interpretations.
- Social entrepreneurship, identity and qualitative approaches to understanding what makes women innovators.
- Education and skills, including entrepreneurship training and STEM Access.
- Land rights and resource access, particularly land ownership, use and transfer.
- Well-being and life satisfaction, mental health and social cohesion.
- Support networks and leadership participation, especially for young women.

4. **What barriers and opportunities do you identify in designing such a Compass at the European, national, regional, or local level?**

Experts highlighted structural barriers such as lack of gender-disaggregated data in certain Member States, limited institutional recognition of women's rural contribution, and administrative complexity. A key challenge identified was the readiness to positively recognise women's different approaches to innovation and to include their informal and family-based work in official statistics.

Conversely, important opportunities emerged: younger generations of rural women represent a strong potential for future-proof agriculture, and commitment at policy level can drive cultural change. Strengthening recognition, communication, and participation channels were seen as essential to increase impact.

5. **To what extent do these design prototypes help Managing Authorities develop their own roadmap?**

Both groups agreed that the prototype Compass could become a practical roadmap tool for Managing Authorities, enabling them to:

- Acknowledge both presence and absence of women in rural development strategies.
- Identify areas requiring intervention and bridge existing policy gaps.
- Move beyond a compliance-based "checkbox approach" toward active support mechanisms.
- Strengthen alignment of funding instruments with gender-inclusive rural development goals.

Participants stressed the importance of usability: the success of the Compass will depend on whether decision makers adopt it not only as a reference, but as an operational tool guiding policy decisions, monitoring and programme design.

The workshop highlighted a shared understanding that although EU monitoring systems contain valuable resources, gender-sensitive rural indicators remain scattered and incomplete. The Rural Women Innovation Compass offers an opportunity to unify these dimensions and introduce a comprehensive set of indicators focused on women in rural areas.

Experts emphasised that meaningful progress requires expanding data collection, integrating qualitative evidence, and supporting public authorities with accessible, actionable tools. With these elements, the Compass could become a powerful mechanism to make rural women visible as drivers of innovation and sustainability across Europe.

The materials from this session are available below for your reference and further use. These resources include both the agenda and the presentations delivered during the session:

- Agenda - outlining the structure, topics, and speakers of the session.
- Presentation Gender proofing for agriculture and policy benchmarking in practice – providing an overview of the methodological approach, key findings, and use during the project.
- Presentation Design and development framework for a Rural Women Innovation Compass – detailing the conceptual framework, design process, and intended applications of the tool.

Figure 9. EPF activities Session on Tools materials

04 Final remarks

The development of the GRASS CEILING Policy Toolkit marks a significant step forward in reinforcing gender-responsive policymaking in agriculture and rural development across the EU. Building on extensive evidence, data mapping, and policy dialogue, this technical note demonstrates that while relevant frameworks and monitoring systems increasingly incorporate gender dimensions, **critical gaps persist—particularly at rural and territorial levels**. Current monitoring mechanisms remain fragmented, uneven in their inclusion of sex-disaggregated indicators, and often limited to national scales, restricting the visibility of women's contributions, constraints, and innovation potential in rural areas.

The **Rural Women Innovation Compass**, supported by a structured data strategy, offers a practical response to these challenges. By consolidating more than 100 indicators across 18 domains and aligning them with existing monitoring infrastructures, the Compass establishes a **coherent foundation for gender-aware evidence generation**, enabling policymakers to better assess disparities, identify opportunities and track progress over time. Its step-by-step approach ensures usability across diverse policy contexts and supports managing authorities in integrating gender considerations throughout the policy cycle—from design and implementation to evaluation and adjustment.

The insights gathered through the European Policy Forum further validate the relevance of this toolkit. They highlight a strong demand among practitioners and institutions for accessible methodologies, user-friendly monitoring tools and shared learning spaces. Ensuring continuity through the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas will therefore be essential to maintain knowledge exchange beyond the project lifetime and sustain a community of practice around women-led innovation in rural transitions.

Looking ahead, the **forthcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034)**, the evolution of the EU Rural Observatory, and the implementation of the future Performance Framework offer **timely windows of opportunity to mainstream gender equality within rural policy architectures**. Strengthening cooperation between Eurostat, DG AGRI, DG REGIO, EIGE and national statistical bodies will be key to securing higher territorial granularity and expanding robust gender-disaggregated monitoring. Continued investment in capacity-building, participatory approaches and intersectional data will also be critical to ensure that women's experiences and leadership are fully reflected in future policy design.

In conclusion, Deliverables 5.1 and 5.2 together provide both **the strategic vision and the operational instruments needed** to advance gender equality in European rural areas. By embedding gender-sensitive data frameworks, actionable tools and collaborative governance structures, this

work lays the groundwork for **inclusive, evidence-based policymaking that recognises and leverages the transformative role of rural women in Europe's green and social transitions**.

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