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GRASS CEILING

D6.5

European Policy Forum exploitation plan

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CAP: Common Agricultural Policy
CC-BY: Creative Commons Attribution
CoR: Committee of the Regions
D: deliverable
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: European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DG RTD: European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
DoA: Description of Action
DOI: Digital Object Identifier
EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EBAF: European Board for Agriculture and Food
ECA: European Court of Auditors
EESC: European Economic and Social Committee
EGS: European Gender Strategy
ELIF: European Local Innovation Forum
EPF: European Policy Forum
EU: European Union
FEMM: European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
FSDN: Farm Sustainability Data Network
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
KER: Key Exploitable Result
KIP: Key Impact Pathways
KPI: Key Performance Indicators
JRC: Joint Research Centre
LL: Living Lab
LTVRA: Long-term Vision for Rural Areas
MOOC: Massive Open Online Course
NGO: non-governmental organisation
NRPPs: National Regional Partnership Plans
RPCG: Rural Pact Community Group
RSA: Regional Studies Association
WP: Work Package

Executive summary

Deliverable 6.5 presents the Exploitation Plan of the European Policy Forum for Women-Led Innovation in farming and rural areas, the strategic policy interface established within the GRASS CEILING project to drive institutional awareness, knowledge transfer, and early uptake of project results on gender-responsive innovation in agriculture and rural development.

Throughout the project, the Forum has acted as a key science–policy interface, engaging policymakers, researchers, women innovators, EU institutions and civil society actors, and ensuring that the project's findings and tools have been tested, validated, and shared widely across governance levels. This deliverable outlines how the results, methods, and community built through the Forum will continue to generate value after the project ends.

The Forum emerged as a central channel for early policy uptake, strategically accompanying the development of GRASS CEILING's main policy outputs, including the comprehensive set of recommendations for inclusive transition policies and the policy toolkit designed to guide gender-responsive policymaking. Through a sequence of carefully organised events, webinars, dialogues, expert interviews, workshops, and consultation activities, the Forum created opportunities for stakeholders from more than 26 countries to interact with the project's evidence, co-shape its policy proposals, and provide feedback based on institutional realities. These exchanges ensured that both the recommendations and the toolkit respond to actual policy needs and are aligned with upcoming European policy milestones, such as the post-2027 CAP, the Gender Equality Strategy beyond 2025, the Vision for Agriculture and Food 2040, and the forthcoming Multiannual Financial Framework.

The **exploitation strategy builds on three Key Exploitable Results** (KERs) that were identified as the most mature and impactful outcomes of the Forum's work. The first **(KER 1) is the set of policy recommendations** compiled in Deliverable 5.1, which offers a forward-looking and evidence-based roadmap for advancing gender equality in rural areas and which have been strengthened through a wide participatory process. The second **(KER 2) is the Policy Toolkit**, consisting of a demonstrator prototype with three instruments—the gender-proofing template, the benchmarking tool with a training dimension, and the data strategy behind the Rural Women Innovation Compass—which has undergone extensive review by Forum members, EU experts, researchers, and managing authorities. The third **(KER 3) is the Forum's own community**, which continues beyond the project through its integration into the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, providing a permanent, EU-level space for cooperation, visibility, and the continued mobilisation of actors committed to gender-inclusive rural innovation.

This deliverable sets out an exploitation pathway that aims to ensure sustained use, visibility, and policy relevance of these three results. The strategy rests on maintaining an open-access repository of all Forum resources, strengthening outreach toward early adopters, and establishing synergies with existing and emerging EU policy instruments. The participatory foundation laid during the project, including the training activities of **the GRASS CEILING Online Academy** and the interactions with institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European

Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, and national managing authorities, provides a strong basis for long-term uptake. This exploitation plan highlights the activities coordinated **with other sister projects, such as FLIARA or SWIFT**, both during the implementation of the project and those planned in connection with results exploitation and joint initiatives. The exploitation plan also foresees that the tools and recommendations developed by GRASS CEILING may be progressively mainstreamed across agricultural and rural programmes, supported by improved gender-disaggregated data collection, new monitoring approaches, and more consistent use of gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting mechanisms.

The **Forum's exploitation strategy contributes directly to GRASS CEILING's Key Impact Pathways** by strengthening institutional capacity for gender-responsive policymaking, improving access to knowledge and tools for policymakers and practitioners, enhancing the visibility of women-led socio-ecological innovation, and supporting cultural and institutional change toward more inclusive rural governance. By connecting these outputs with long-term platforms such as the Rural Pact and with broader EU monitoring and evaluation frameworks, the Exploitation Plan ensures that the project's legacy remains active, visible, and usable in the years ahead.

Overall, **this report presents a coherent and sustainable roadmap for the post-project consolidation of the Forum's achievements, which will be supported by the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, the GRASS CEILING Online Academy and the AEIDL's European Local Innovation Forum (ELIF).**

It positions the European Policy Forum not as a temporary project activity but as a lasting contribution to the European rural policy landscape, designed to foster continued cooperation, promote evidence-based policymaking, and support the structural transformation required to achieve gender equality and resilient, innovative rural territories across Europe.

01 Introduction

GRASS CEILING (*Gender Equality in Rural and Agricultural Innovation SystemS*) is a Horizon Europe project (2023-2025) **coordinated by the South East Technological University** (SETU), bringing together **25 partner organisations across Europe**. It is a multi-actor initiative that has fostered women-led socio-ecological innovations in farming, the rural economy, and rural communities.

The project has engaged **72 women farmers and innovators operating across nine Living Labs** in nine case study countries, fostering experimentation, learning, and collaboration at the local level.

Within the project, the **European Policy Forum for Women-Led Innovation in farming and rural areas** (hereafter "the Forum" or "EPF") has played **a key role in driving policy change and knowledge transfer** during and beyond the project's lifetime.

The EPF corresponds to **Task 6.4** of the GRASS Ceiling project — ***"Setting up and coordinating the European Policy Forum for women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas for social learning and showcasing women-led innovation."*** This task runs from Month 12 (December 2023) to Month 36 (December 2025) **and is 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).

The **Forum** acts 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*)**, which is also led by AEIDL.

The Forum has facilitated dialogue, awareness-raising, and early exploitation of project results through co-creation activities, including a series of multi-actor workshops and policy webinars that connected policymakers, researchers, innovators, and civil society organisations. By aligning project insights with institutional priorities and mobilising commitment among policymakers and practitioners, **the EPF has contributed decisively to translating GRASS CEILING's evidence and innovations into actionable, policy-relevant outcomes that foster more inclusive, gender-equal, and resilient rural transitions across Europe**.

This document outlines the Exploitation Plan of the European Policy Forum, which defines the strategy for ensuring the long-term use, visibility, and impact of the Forum's results after the completion of the GRASS CEILING project. It provides an overview of the Forum's objectives, activities, and key outcomes, and details how these will continue to generate value beyond the project's lifetime. **Following this introduction in the first section, the document is structured as**

follows: Section 2 describes the methodology used to identify and prioritise exploitable results; Section 3 presents the European Policy Forum, its objectives, activities, and stakeholder engagement process; Section 4 introduces the EPF Exploitation Plan, outlining its alignment with the overall GRASS CEILING exploitation strategy, the identified Key Exploitable Results (KERs), and their corresponding sustainability and exploitation pathways and sustainability measures, including the continuation of the Forum through the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas; Section 5 addresses the risk analysis and mitigation measures to ensure continuity and uptake of results.

Overall, **this Exploitation Plan provides a strategic roadmap for sustaining the Forum's policy relevance, stakeholder engagement, and contribution to gender equality in rural innovation beyond the project's duration**. It builds on the dissemination activities undertaken during the second half of the project (early Exploitation phases) and outlines the approach for the post-project utilization and exploitation of its results.

The European Policy Forum: bridging research and policy

By presenting project findings, co-creating solutions with stakeholders, and facilitating discussions among experts and practitioners, the Forum has played a key role in supporting the development of the project's policy outcomes. The Forum's work has evolved through a structured and participatory process, from stakeholder mapping and engagement to direct one-to-one interactions, personalised invitations to activities, and active involvement in working groups during each session.

This collaborative approach has enabled the dissemination and early exploitation of results and will support the transition toward a sustainable community through the Rural Pact Community Group on Women and the continued exploitation of results beyond the project's lifetime.

The Forum supported other Work Packages, **notably those conducting foresight and trend analysis**, ensuring that its policy insights and gender-sensitive perspectives were systematically integrated into research findings and outputs, thereby reinforcing the coherence and impact of GRASS CEILING's overall policy framework.

In particular, Deliverable 5.1[1] **–** ***Report with Policy Recommendations on Inclusive Transition Policies for Farming and Rural Areas*** – has greatly benefited from the Forum's activities. Through the European Policy Forum, external actors, especially Managing Authorities and representatives from EU, and national institutions, were actively engaged across several sessions. These participatory exchanges enabled the integration of diverse perspectives into the co-creation process, ensuring that the recommendations reflected real policy needs and practical opportunities for implementation. The Forum thus served as a bridge between research and policy, testing and refining preliminary proposals through expert feedback, multi-stakeholder dialogue, and validation workshops. Its role was essential in shaping the final **policy roadmap integrated in this deliverable, which is composed of 77 actions distributed across seven focus areas and three implementation**

[1] 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

milestones (2025, 2030, and 2035).

In addition, **the Forum has played a fundamental role in the development of the Policy Toolkit** to develop and monitor inclusive agricultural and rural development policies (Deliverable 5.2). The Toolkit is structured around three interrelated instruments: (i) a gender proofing template, (ii) a benchmarking tool with a training component, and (iii) a data strategy to build the **Rural Women Innovation Compass**, each designed to guide policymakers in assessing and enhancing the inclusiveness of rural and agricultural policies. It takes the form of a Demonstrator Prototype integrated into the project website, accompanied by a technical note and supporting materials that facilitate its practical application and future exploitation. Through an interactive session, the Forum facilitated expert dialogue and stakeholder feedback that informed the Toolkit's design and refinement, particularly regarding the integration of gender-sensitive data and the operationalisation of the Rural Women Innovation Compass. This participatory process ensured that the Toolkit responds to real policy needs, aligns with EU monitoring frameworks, and supports evidence-based, gender-responsive policymaking across Member States.

The Forum has also **contributed to several EU consultations** (see Section 3.2.2), ensuring that GRASS CEILING policy insights are reflected in ongoing European policy-making processes.

In addition, the Forum gathered key perspectives from leading experts in agriculture, rural development and gender equality through a series of five **in-depth interviews**. These interviews highlighted the importance of women-led socio-ecological innovation and identified concrete opportunities to better align local and EU-level policies with the needs and leadership of women in rural areas. Beyond these activities, the Forum has taken part in a range of external events, further enhancing the visibility and dissemination of its results among key policy and stakeholder networks.

Finally, the Forum also **collaborates closely with the GRASS CEILING Online Academy**, contributing to a dedicated MOOC module on Policy for Gender Equality in Rural Areas. This module introduces participants to the European legislative and policy framework that shapes gender equality — providing an overview of its evolution from past milestones to current strategies and future perspectives. It also presents the key policy outputs developed through the Forum, including the Report with Policy Recommendations (Deliverable 5.1) and the Policy Toolkit (Deliverable 5.2), offering practical guidance on how these tools can be used to support inclusive, gender-responsive policymaking in agriculture and rural development.

Through this collaboration, the Forum ensures that its findings and resources continue to inform and build capacity among policymakers, researchers, and practitioners beyond the lifetime of the project.

02 Methodology

This **Deliverable 6.5 – European Policy Forum Exploitation Plan has been developed through a step-by-step, evidence-based approach to ensure that its results can be effectively used, transferred, and sustained beyond the lifetime of the GRASS CEILING project**. While the overall project exploitation activities are coordinated by CIHEAM Zaragoza (leader of Work Package 6), the exploitation of the Forum's outputs is led by AEIDL, as the task leader and coordinator of the European Policy Forum (EPF).

The methodology followed a **progressive process** built around four key phases:

1. **Identification and review of exploitable outputs and activities**

   An internal review of Forum outputs and related policy deliverables (notably from WP5) was carried out to identify which results had potential for future use. This included assessing outputs based on their maturity, relevance, and potential for replication.

   In this step, the work plan of the European Policy Forum, initially developed with the support of Milestone 8 (Month 3) and updated on an annual basis, was also taken into account to ensure coherence between the Forum's activities and its exploitation strategy.

2. **Definition of Key Exploitable Results (KERs)**

   Each potential result was screened against three criteria:

   - **Relevance** for policy transformation and social impact;
   - **Transferability** and reusability across EU rural contexts;
   - **Potential uptake** by defined stakeholder groups and early adopters. At Month 11, a preliminary exploitation plan (Milestone 10) was drafted, identifying initial Forum KERs, mapping potential exploitation routes, and listing early objectives and activities.

3. **Prioritisation and validation of KERs**

   By **Month 31 (M31)**, AEIDL refined and prioritised the list of KERs, drawing on lessons from Horizon Europe exploitation practices and insights from the **Horizon Results Booster service**. Three priority KERs were validated based on their relevance, maturity, and sustainability potential:

   - **KER 1:** Report with Policy Recommendations on Inclusive Transition Policies for Farming and Rural Areas (*Deliverable 5.1*)
   - **KER 2:** Policy Toolkit (*Deliverable 5.2 – Web-based demonstrator prototype*)
   - **KER 3:** European Policy Forum Community (continuation mechanism)

4. **Design of the exploitation strategy and sustainability actions**

   The final phase focused on defining a **practical exploitation roadmap**, including:

   - Mapping early adopters and users;
   - Identifying suitable exploitation channels and long-term sustainability mechanisms;
   - Analysing the added value and expected impact of each KER;
   - Planning follow-up actions for post-project use.

Sustainability measures were developed through the **Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas** and the **GRASS CEILING Online Academy**, which will ensure continuity of engagement, visibility, and access to the Forum's tools and resources beyond the project's lifetime.

Finally, potential **risks affecting exploitation and continuity** were analysed, and targeted **mitigation measures** were defined (see Section 5) to safeguard the uptake and long-term use of the Forum's outputs.

03 The European Policy Forum

3.1. Objectives and role within GRASS CEILING

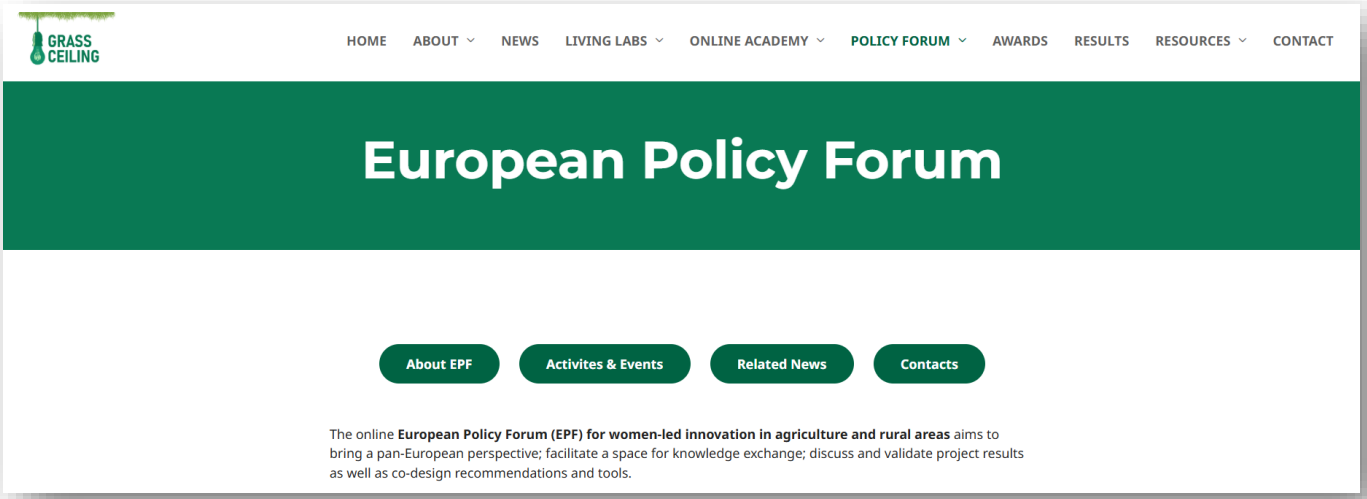
The **European Policy Forum for Women-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas (EPF)** was established under **Task 6.4** as a **European Science–Policy–Society interface** within the GRASS CEILING project. It has acted as a **dynamic platform for collaboration, policy influence, and knowledge co-creation**, connecting a diverse range of stakeholders across Europe.

The Forum has played a key role in:

- **Bridging research and policy** by translating project findings into actionable, policy-relevant messages, tools, and recommendations.
- **Creating a structured dialogue space** for exchange among women innovators, practitioners, policymakers, and organisations working in rural development.
- **Supporting the exploitation of project results**, particularly those related to gender-responsive policy innovation and inclusive rural governance.

Within the project website, the European Policing Forum has a dedicated section, available at the following link: https://www.grassceiling.eu/about-policy-forum/

Figure 1. The European Policy Forum page on the GRASS CEILING website



The Forum was designed to:

- **Provide an inclusive engagement space** connecting GRASS CEILING stakeholders — including women farmers, entrepreneurs, Living Labs, researchers, and innovation brokers — with a wider community of experts, policymakers, and organisations at different governance levels working to advance women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas.
- **Facilitate knowledge exchange and peer learning**, acting as a direct channel for knowledge transfer, awareness-raising, and capacity-building.
- **Maximise the use of the GRASS CEILING Online Training Academy** and support the co-design and validation of policy tools and recommendations developed under **Work Package 5**, particularly the **Policy Toolkit** and the **Rural Women Innovation Compass**.
- **Ensure the translation of results into practice and policymaking**, contributing to the achievement of EU gender equality objectives and the **Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA)**.

Beyond its role within the project, the Forum has also laid the **foundation for post-project sustainability** by transferring its activities and community into the **Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas** (https://ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/groups/community-group-women-rural-areas_en). This transition ensures that the Forum's mission, knowledge base, and stakeholder network will continue to generate policy impact and support women-led innovation beyond the lifetime of GRASS CEILING.

Details on members' profile and the campaign supporting the continuation of the Forum is provided in *Section 3.3.2*.

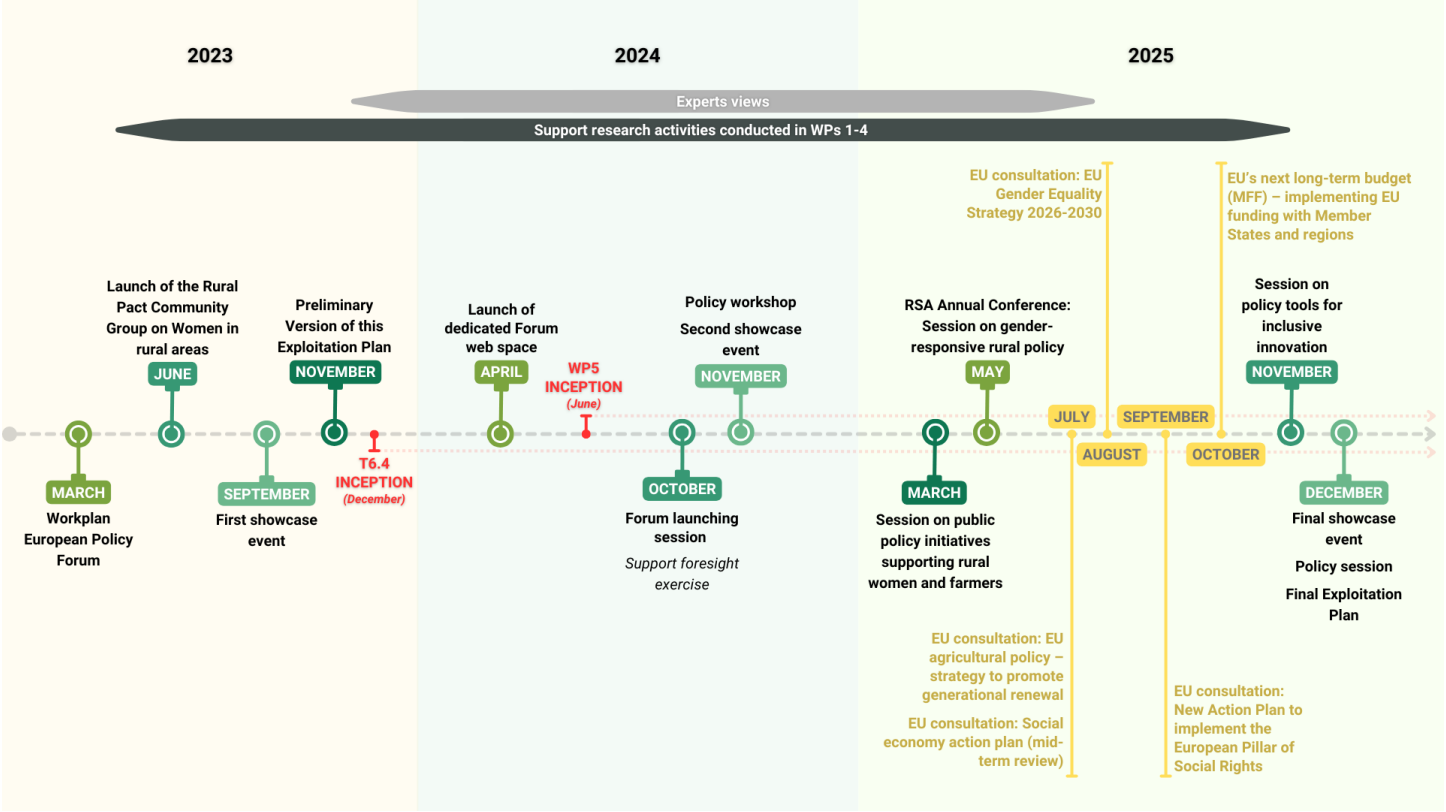
3.2. Core activities and timeline for continuous communication, dissemination and early policy uptake

The European Policy Forum was implemented throughout the three years of the GRASS CEILING project as a structured process of policy dialogue, co-creation, stakeholder mobilisation, with an

emphasis on communication, dissemination and early exploitation of project results. Its activities unfolded progressively over the project's duration, starting with the European Policy Forum Work Plan in March 2023, followed by the launch event, a series of policy workshops, and the organisation of annual Showcase Events. These moments served as key opportunities to share emerging findings, build relationships with key stakeholders, and start preparing the ground for policy uptake before the end of the project.

In parallel, the Forum supported the launch of the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas and the creation of a membership system through the project website, enhancing stakeholder engagement, networking, and policy learning.

Figure 2. Timeline of the overview of the Forum activities



3.2.1. European Policy Forum activities and exploitation impact

Forum online meetings and policy webinars (M14–M28)

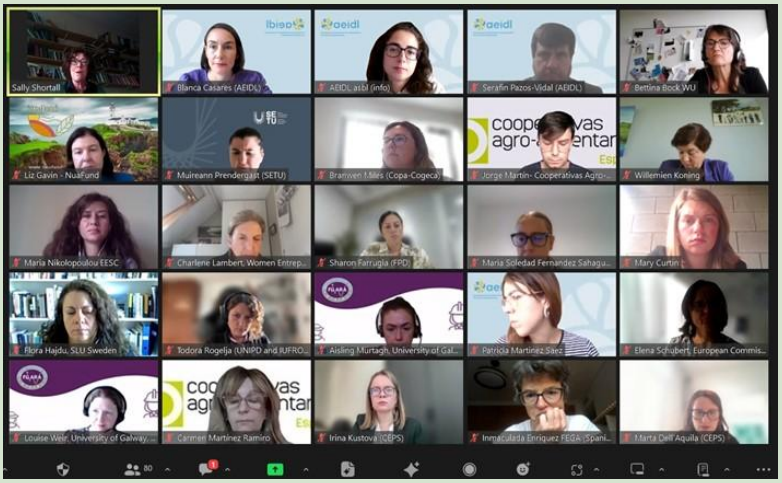
AEIDL organised a sequence of online and in-person Forum sessions to collaboratively discuss, design and review the Forum outputs. Below, there is an overview of all sessions held under the Forum, including their objectives, participant profiles and the materials produced, which can also be found on the dedicated Forum webpage.

Launch Session of the European Policy Forum (7 October 2024)
Objectives: ▪ Introduce the GRASS CEILING project and current findings to key external actors. ▪ Present the project methodological basis for the development of the policy recommendations and tools.

- Raise awareness of the European Policy Forum for women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas, its planned activities and possibilities to be engaged.
- Enhance the exchange, learn and interact with key stakeholders regarding policy strategies for gender equality.
- Establish contact points with key stakeholders facilitating their engagement.

Participants profile: 80 attendees from 21 countries:

- 33% Researcher
- 31% Public authority or policy-maker (local, regional, national)
- 8% NGO (local, regional, national, European)



Materials:

- Presentations
- Recordings
- News item

Exploitation impact:

The Launch Session laid the foundation for the exploitation of GRASS CEILING results by establishing an active network of policymakers, researchers, and civil society actors across 21 countries. It enabled early awareness and engagement with the project's policy framework and tools, fostering strategic connections that supported subsequent co-creation, assessment, and policy uptake activities throughout the project lifecycle.

Policy Session during GRASS CEILING Consortium Meeting (26-27 November 2024)

Objectives:

- Identify and prioritise the most relevant policy recommendations emerging from GRASS CEILING.
- Assess feasibility and potential impact of each recommendation in real policy contexts.
- Discuss key challenges and constraints that could affect implementation.
- Strengthen alignment of recommendations with current and future EU policy frameworks for rural and agricultural transitions.

Participants profile:

The session was integrated into a consortium meeting, with the participation of all project partners and the presentation of case studies corresponding to each Living Lab. Therefore, the group consisted of about 30 participants who worked in teams of six.

Materials:

- Presentation

Exploitation impact:

The Policy Session held during the GRASS CEILING Consortium Meeting (2024) served as a key step in refining the project's policy outputs. By engaging all partners and analysing Living Lab case studies, the session ensured that the proposed policy recommendations were feasible, evidence-based, and aligned

with EU policy frameworks. This collaborative exercise strengthened the internal coherence of the exploitation activities and enhanced the relevance and applicability of the policy recommendations for future uptake by policymakers and managing authorities.

Session on public policy initiatives supporting rural women and farmers (24 March 2025)

Objectives:

- Showcase good practices of public support for women in agriculture and rural areas identified through the project, with a particular focus on the CAP, cohesion policy, and green and digital transition programmes.
- Analyse the factors that enable successful uptake and impact of these practices.
- Explore how a more systemic and coordinated approach to their design, implementation and monitoring could be integrated into the post-2027 programming period.

Participants profile: >110 attendees from 26 countries:

- 35% Public authority or policy-maker (local, regional, national)
- 23% Researcher
- 10% Other
- 9% Socio-ecological leaders and innovators
- 9% NGO (local, regional, national, European)

Materials:

- Highlights report
- Presentations
- Recordings
- News item

Exploitation impact: The session on public policy initiatives supporting rural women and farmers significantly advanced the early exploitation of GRASS CEILING results by connecting more than 110 stakeholders from 26 countries in a structured policy dialogue. By showcasing concrete good practices and analysing their enabling factors, the session provided practical evidence for the refinement of the project's policy recommendations. The exchange of experiences among policymakers, researchers, and innovators strengthened the transferability of successful measures and informed the design of future EU and national programmes for the post-2027 period, thus enhancing the policy relevance and uptake potential of the project outcomes.

Regional Studies Association (RSA) Annual Conference – Exploring Gender Equality in policy: regional

and rural perspectives (9 May 2025)

Objectives:

- Examine current progress and gaps in gender mainstreaming in rural and agricultural policy.
- Highlight key challenges faced by women in rural areas, including access to resources, services and representation.
- Discuss how public support schemes and policy frameworks (post-2027) can better address women's needs and foster women-led innovation.
- Explore opportunities to improve monitoring systems, gender-disaggregated data, and the transfer and scaling of good practices.
- Promote dialogue among policymakers, researchers and practitioners to co-develop actionable proposals for more inclusive rural policies.

Participants profile:

Around fifteen participants with academic profiles took part in this event, within the framework of the Regional Studies Association Annual Conference 2025. Among them were the different panelists representing leading European institutions, including the Joint Research Centre (European Commission), ISEG – University of Lisbon, the University of Valladolid, the Jagiellonian University, the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu, and the University of Porto. The session also counted on the high-level participation of former Commissioner Elisa Ferreira.

Materials:

- Highlights report
- Presentations
- News item

Exploitation impact: The GRASS CEILING session at the Regional Studies Association Annual Conference strengthened the scientific early exploitation of the project by positioning its findings within an international research and policy forum. The exchange with academic experts and EU representatives, including the Joint Research Centre and former Commissioner Elisa Ferreira, enhanced the visibility and credibility of GRASS CEILING's gender analysis and policy proposals.

Session on policy tools for inclusive innovation (4 November 2025)

Objectives:

- 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.

Participants profile: 25 attendees from 12 countries:

- 36% European institutions (EC, EP, EESC, CoR, etc.)
- 32% Researcher
- 8% EU-funded projects (Horizon Europe, LIFE, Interreg, etc.)
- 8% public authority/policy-maker (local, regional, national)
- 8% NGO (local, regional, national, European)
- 8% Other

Materials:

- Agenda
- Presentation Gender proofing and policy benchmarking in practice
- Presentation Design and development framework for a Rural Women Innovation Compass

Exploitation impact: The session on policy tools for inclusive innovation (4 November 2025) played a crucial role in advancing the exploitation of GRASS CEILING's Policy Toolkit by validating its methodological framework and indicators with experts from EU institutions, research organisations, and policy networks. The feedback gathered during the session strengthened the technical robustness, usability, and policy relevance of the Rural Women Innovation Compass, ensuring its alignment with existing EU monitoring systems such as the Rural Observatory. This participatory review enhanced the Toolkit's potential for institutional uptake and integration into future EU and national frameworks for gender-responsive policy design and evaluation.

Policy Session at the Final Showcase Event (4 December 2024)

Objectives:

The policy session, led by AEIDL, in the final conference of the project in Brussels on 4 December 2025 aims to create a strategic space for reflection and dialogue on the future of gender-responsive and inclusive innovation in rural areas, building on the core findings and policy tools developed by the GRASS CEILING project. Framed within the evolving policy context of the EU's Vision for Agriculture and Food 2040 and the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034, the session will bring together EU policy-makers, academic experts, and other stakeholders.

The specific objectives are to:

- Present the GRASS CEILING policy recommendations and tools developed to support structural change toward gender equity and inclusive innovation in rural areas, with a particular focus on entrepreneurship, leadership, and access to resources.
- Facilitate an open dialogue with high-level policy experts to assess:
    - The institutional readiness to integrate gender-responsive approaches in rural and agricultural policy;
    - The policy entry points and funding pathways to mainstream and implement the GRASS CEILING outcomes in the next programming period (2028–2034), ensuring continuity, impact, and policy uptake;
- Discuss how these policy outcomes align with and can inform the design and implementation of upcoming funding instruments under the next MFF.
- Foster cross-sector collaboration and multi-level governance approaches, enabling a coordinated response to systemic gender gaps in rural innovation ecosystems.

Round table about **"Inclusive pathways for farming and rural futures: EU policy solutions for the**

transitions." Expert panellists:

- Sally Shortall - Newcastle University – Grass Ceiling coordinator
- Elena Schubert - European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)
- Maria Nikolopoulou - European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)
- Faustine Bas-Defossez - European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
- Maria Walsh - Member of the European Parliament (MEP)
- Blanca Casares - European Association for Innovation in Local Development (AEIDL)

Roundtable about **"Inclusive policy tools: integrating gender responsiveness into EU innovation and monitoring frameworks."** Expert panellists:

- Lewis Dijkstra - European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC) – Territorial development Unit
- Maura Farrell - University of Galway - FLIARA Project coordinator
- Sari Rautio – Committee of the Regions (CoR)
- Giulia Bizzo European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) – Bioeconomy & Food Systems
- Blanca Casares - European Association for Innovation in Local Development (AEIDL)

Materials:

Agenda

News article

Online Academy MOOC

Exploitation impact: The participation of high-level external experts in the two round tables of the Policy Session at the Final Conference, including representatives from the European Parliament, the European Commission (DG AGRI and JRC), the European Economic and Social Committee, civil society organisations, and academia, significantly enhances the exploitation potential of the project outcomes.

Their involvement ensures that the policy recommendations and tools developed within the project are discussed and reviewed among key EU policy and stakeholder networks. This exchange fosters policy relevance, increases the visibility of the project's evidence-based results, and strengthens their potential uptake in future EU strategies and frameworks related to rural development, gender equality, and innovation. By engaging these influential actors in dialogue, the project creates concrete opportunities for the integration and scaling-up of its outputs beyond its lifetime.

Annual Showcase Events

Coinciding with the annual GRASS CEILING consortium meetings, three Showcase Events were hosted by COPA-COGECA in September 2023, November 2024 and December 2025. These events gathered rural stakeholders, innovators, researchers, policy actors and civil society organisations, and served both as public-facing dissemination moments and internal project reflection spaces.

The Showcase Events were also strategically structured to maximise the exploitation potential of GRASS CEILING outcomes. Each event facilitated not only the dissemination of key project results, including policy recommendations, toolkits, and successful innovation models, but also fostered active engagement with policymakers, practitioners, and multipliers. This enabled the project' KERs to be validated by end-users and influential stakeholders, supporting their future adaptation and integration within Regional and EU policies. The events provided a dynamic platform for feedback, collaborative learning, and partnership-building, strengthening the uptake and sustainability of project outputs. As a result, they served as both a catalyst for immediate action and as a foundation for the long-term legacy of GRASS CEILING's achievements in rural gender innovation. The showcase events:

- Highlighted innovations developed by women entrepreneurs from the nine Living Labs.
- Promoted peer learning across regions and sectors.
- Raised awareness of gender inequality in rural innovation systems.
- Provided opportunities to present intermediate project findings.

During these events, women representatives from each of the nine Living Labs shared their experiences, insights and personal journeys of innovation. Their testimonies highlighted both challenges and opportunities for women-led innovation in rural territories, illustrating the transformative impact of participation in GRASS CEILING.

The final Showcase Event (December 2025) also served as the **Final Conference of GRASS CEILING**. It presented the final policy recommendations based on the evidence generated across nine countries, showcased policy tools, and demonstrated some socio-ecological innovations led by women across Europe.

All related materials (news items, videos, posters) from the Showcase Events are available on the dedicated Forum webpage.

Figure 3. The Showcase Event subsection on the GRASS CEILING website

3.2.2. Additional activities

Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas (M12–M36)

The creation of the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, launched by AEIDL and COPA-COGECA in June 2023, has made it possible to map key stakeholders and reach a wider audience. This group has become an important space to connect people, share experiences and support continued work after the project.

More information about the objectives, governance and role of the Community Group is provided in *Section 3.3.3*.

Support to research activities and co-design processes (M1–M36)

The **European Policy Forum (EPF)** played a pivotal role in connecting GRASS CEILING's research, innovation, and policy dimensions, acting as an interface between the analytical work (WP1–WP4) and the policy design and exploitation stages (WP5 and WP6). Through its activities, the Forum ensured that research findings were **translated into actionable, policy-relevant insights** and that feedback from policymakers and practitioners informed the co-creation and validation of project outputs.

In the **early stages of the project**, the Forum contributed to the **analytical Work Packages (WP1–WP4)** by providing policy-oriented input on gender analysis, foresight, trend identification, and benchmarking. It ensured that the research teams integrated an **institutional and policy relevance perspective** into their methodologies and analyses. Specifically:

- **WP1** generated a comprehensive data landscape on rural women and women farmers across Europe, highlighting structural gender gaps in employment, land ownership, and innovation. These findings informed the Forum's evidence base and shaped early policy discussions.
- **WP2** examined gender norms and institutional barriers within Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), providing the Forum with insights on the systemic changes needed for inclusive innovation ecosystems.
- **WP3** captured the territorial and experiential evidence emerging from the nine **Living Labs**, translating local socio-ecological innovations into policy-relevant narratives that the Forum integrated into its discussions and recommendations.
- **WP4** provided a comparative analysis and gender benchmarking of national and EU rural and agricultural policies, which the Forum used to identify policy gaps and best practices to be addressed through EU-level advocacy.

Building on this foundation, the Forum became a key **co-creation space for WP5**, which focused on developing **policy recommendations (D5.1)** and the **Policy Toolkit (D5.2)**. Insights from the Forum — gathered through thematic workshops, interviews, and expert dialogues — directly informed the design, testing, and validation of these deliverables. The Forum facilitated **two-way knowledge flows**:

- Upward, by **bringing research evidence and Living Lab insights to EU and national policymakers**, ensuring that territorial diversity and women's lived experiences were represented in policy outputs; and

- Downward, by **translating policy feedback into research and tool refinement**, ensuring that the recommendations and instruments responded to actual governance and implementation needs.

This iterative and participatory process created a **knowledge loop** between the research and policy dimensions of GRASS CEILING.

Synergies and collaboration with EU initiatives (M6–M36)

The Forum actively collaborated with EU-funded initiatives and networks to amplify the uptake of GRASS CEILING results, strengthen knowledge exchange and avoid duplication of efforts. These collaborations played a key role not only in disseminating findings, but also in laying the groundwork for early exploitation, by positioning GRASS CEILING results within ongoing EU policy debates, strengthening relationships with key policy actors, and opening pathways for post-project uptake.

Key collaboration actions are included in the table below.

Table 1. Main collaboration actions delivered by the Forum

Initiative / Network	Type of collaboration	Activity
EESC (European Economic and Social Committee)	Policy dialogue	Participation in the thematic debate on gender equality and youth in rural areas organised by the Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment Section (NAT) (22 November 2023)
Committee of the Regions	Public outreach & visibility	Interview with the CoR in the video series Women in Rural Areas (13 January 2025)
European Parliament	Expert exchange	Interview with Christine Singer (Member of the European Parliament)
United Nations Women Brussels	Expert exchange	Interview with Florence Raes (UN Women Brussels)
FLIARA (Horizon Europe)	Expert exchange	Interview with Maura Farrell (FLIARA Horizon Europe project Coordinator)
	Policy dialogue	Expert panel contribution at the FLIARA Final Conference (Brussels, 17 October 2025)
EU4Advice (AKIS and short supply chain advisory capacity building)	Knowledge co-production	Participation in the EU4Advice Gender Study Focus Group (23 June 2025)
SERIGO Community of Practice	Cross-project exchange	Participation in SERIGO CoP launch event (November 2024)
SWIFT & FLIARA (Horizon Europe projects)	Co-creation & knowledge exchange	Participation in the joint session Integrating a Feminist Perspective in Research Projects (12 December 2024)
Rural Pact Support Office	Policy dialogue	Online participation in the Rural Pact Conference 'From vision to action: Empowering rural areas for the future' (17 September 2025)
CEJA (European Council of Young Farmers)	Policy consultation	Expert participation in CEJA's Consultation on Equal Opportunities (27 October 2025)
ELIF Expert Voice	Public outreach and visibility	ELIF Interview published in the International Rural Women's Day (15 October 2025)

CORDIS	Public outreach communication	Article "Promoting gender equality in rural areas" focused on the European Policy Forum session held in March 2025, which highlighted the role that EU funds play in supporting women in farming and rural communities (16 April 2025)
AEIDL newsletters	Public outreach communication	News features promoting the latest milestone of the project developed by AEIDL – Visit Newsletter repository

These collaborations enhanced dissemination, increased visibility, and supported the exploitation of GRASS CEILING results at the European level.

Contributions to EU consultations

In line with its exploitation strategy and focus on **early uptake and policy influence**, the European Policy Forum has actively contributed to several **European Union policy consultation processes**, ensuring that the perspectives and evidence gathered through GRASS CEILING are reflected in the design of forthcoming policy frameworks. These actions represent a core dimension of the Forum's **early exploitation of results**, as they directly channel research-based insights and stakeholder feedback into real policy debates at the European level.

Through its coordinated engagement in public consultations, the Forum has positioned itself as a **knowledge broker and evidence provider**, enabling early transfer and use of GRASS CEILING outputs, particularly the *Policy Recommendations (KER 1)* and the *Policy Toolkit (KER 2)*, within ongoing EU decision-making cycles. This approach has enhanced both the visibility and policy relevance of the project's results, while demonstrating their practical applicability for future programming periods, notably the post-2027 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034.

The Forum's contributions have provided concrete recommendations to strengthen **gender-responsive rural governance**, improve access to resources and services for women innovators, and integrate gender equality as a cross-cutting dimension in EU rural, social, and economic policies.

The following consultations received written input from the European Policy Forum, led by AEIDL and validated by the GRASS CEILING consortium:

- **Report on the Future of the Common Agricultural Policy (2025/2052(INI))** — Written contribution to MEP Crespo Díaz's report (April 2025), emphasising the integration of gender equality and women-led innovation as key enablers of sustainable agricultural transitions and inclusive rural development.
- EU agricultural policy – strategy to promote generational renewal (July 2025) — Input highlighting the need for gender-sensitive measures in farm succession, access to finance and land, and intergenerational learning.
- Social Economy Action Plan (mid-term review) (July 2025) — Contribution focused on recognising and supporting women-led social enterprises in rural areas as drivers of inclusive and green innovation.
- EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030 (August 2025) — Recommendations calling for the explicit integration of rural women's innovation and leadership within the new strategy, including stronger linkages with the CAP, the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA), and

cohesion policy instruments.

- **Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights** (September 2025, Contribution ID: 91d9c65a-c4cd-45ca-b304-6cac6a9c619f) — Input underlining the social and territorial dimension of gender equality in rural areas, advocating for targeted measures to reduce the care gap, improve working conditions, and enhance social inclusion for women entrepreneurs and workers in rural economies. In this case, instead of a standard 4,000-character public consultation, it was a questionnaire with both open and closed questions, for which the responses are not made public.
- EU's next long-term budget (MFF) – implementing EU funding with Member States and regions (October 2025) — Strategic recommendations to embed gender-responsive budgeting and monitoring mechanisms within the post-2028 MFF, ensuring that EU funds more effectively support women's innovation and participation in rural transitions.

Some of these consultations are initiatives included in the European Commission's **2026 Annual Work Programme**[2]. Therefore, after the completion of the project, continuous monitoring of these legislative and policy development processes will be maintained to ensure that the project's results can inform and contribute to the ongoing evolution of these policy frameworks.

Rural Women Innovators (RUWI) Award

The Rural Women Innovators (RUWI) Award, part of the GRASS CEILING project and managed by AEIDL, celebrated and empowered women driving socio-ecological innovation in rural areas. Its goal was to increase the number and visibility of women-led innovations in farming, rural economies, and communities, while fostering sustainability, inclusion, and well-being.

Figure 4. The main visual of the RUWI Award

[2] European Commission (2025) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Commission work programme 2026 COM/2025/870 final

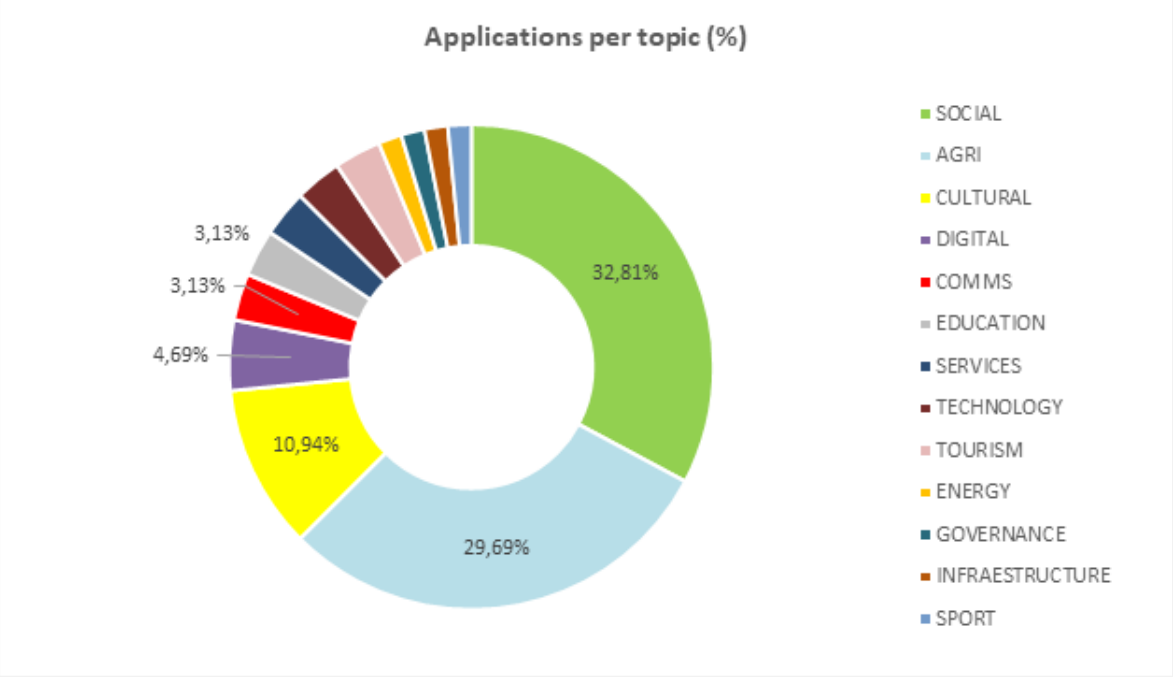
The award aimed to:

- Provide visibility and recognition for women's achievements in rural areas.
- Inspire more women to lead and innovate within their communities.
- Promote broader change by showcasing best practices that can be replicated and scaled across Europe.

The call for applications ran from 1–31 October 2025 and received 64 submissions from 28 countries, including third countries such as India, Sierra Leone, Malawi, and Uganda.

Regarding thematic distribution, most applications focused on the agricultural sector (23,44%), followed by projects with a strong component related to training and capacity building (15,63%), social services (14,06%), and cultural activities (7,81%).

Figure 5. The thematic distribution of the 64 applications received



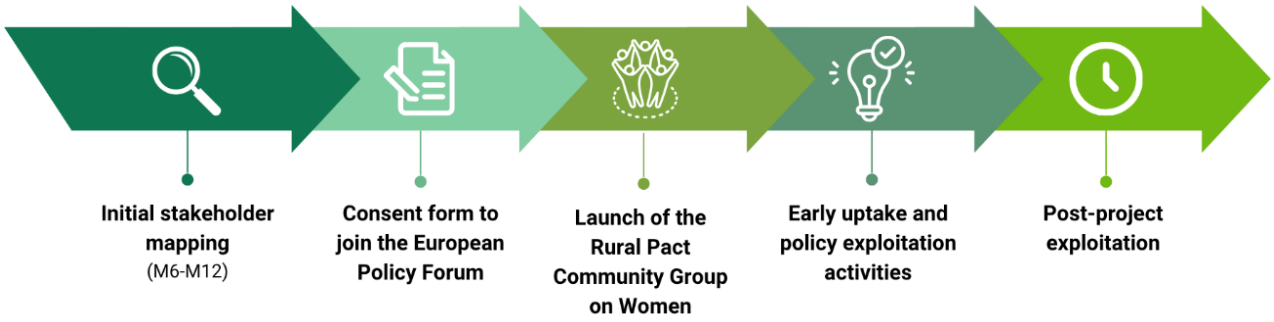
Applications were reviewed based on six core criteria: empowerment and gender equality, social impact, environmental and climate contribution, economic impact and value creation, innovation and creativity, and sustainability, scalability, and replicability.

The highest-scoring application, and winner of the RUWI Award, was Grenoucerie SL, a SME micro-enterprise based in Zamora, Spain, dedicated to the intensive farming of the Iberian frog. Led by Paula Echenique and Fabián Simón, this pioneering venture, practically unique worldwide, stands out not only for its scientific and technological breakthroughs but also for its commitment to revitalizing rural areas. Its symbolises a powerful countertrend to ongoing depopulation, demonstrating how innovation can thrive in even the most remote communities.

3.3. Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement has been a central component of the European Policy Forum's strategy to ensure inclusiveness, policy relevance, and long-term impact. This process has evolved through several key stages, from the initial identification and mapping of relevant actors to the establishment of collaborative spaces for dialogue and co-creation. As illustrated in Figure 4, the engagement pathway moves from early stakeholder mapping and the collection of consent to join the European Policy Forum, through the launch of the Rural Pact Community Group on Women, to the implementation of early uptake and policy exploitation activities. These coordinated steps have laid the foundation for sustained collaboration and the post-project exploitation of results.

Figure 6. From stakeholder engagement to early uptake and post-project exploitation



3.3.1. Stakeholder mapping

Since the beginning of the project and in preparation for the launch session, a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise was initiated to support the policy work and the development of the European Policy Forum. This mapping focuses on identifying representatives from institutions and individuals of relevance to gender equality in rural areas and the primary sector. The process includes European institutions and policymakers, technical experts and managing authorities from the ministries of the 27 EU Member States (notably those involved in CAP Networks, AKIS and Monitoring Committees), as well as academic profiles identified through scientific publications and participation as panelists in dedicated sessions on gender and rural development.

In addition, coordinators and partners of current and past Horizon projects, as well as other relevant stakeholders from civil society and professional organisations, have been included. The categories used for this stakeholder mapping cover:

- European institutions (EC, EP, EESC, CoR, etc)
- Public authority/policy-maker (local, regional, national)
- Researcher
- Advisor/Innovation broker/intermediary
- Socio-ecological leaders and innovators
- Farmers, fisherwomen, producer & producers associations
- Business and rural entrepreneurs
- EU-funded projects (Horizon Europe, LIFE, Interreg, etc.)

- NGO (local, regional, national, European)
- Civil Society Organisation (local, regional, national, European)
- Other

During the first reporting period, the progress of this policy stakeholder mapping was already presented with more than 200 individual professional contacts of people engaged in women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas. The mapping has enabled the project to issue ad hoc invitations to events organised under the European Policy Forum, to identify relevant contacts for interviews and surveys, and to promote participation in the "Join the European Policy Forum" campaign through the online Consent Form integrated on the project's website and the Rural Pact Community Group. The stakeholder mapping has now identified nearly 250 contacts, further enriched through the registration data collected from policy project events and related activities.

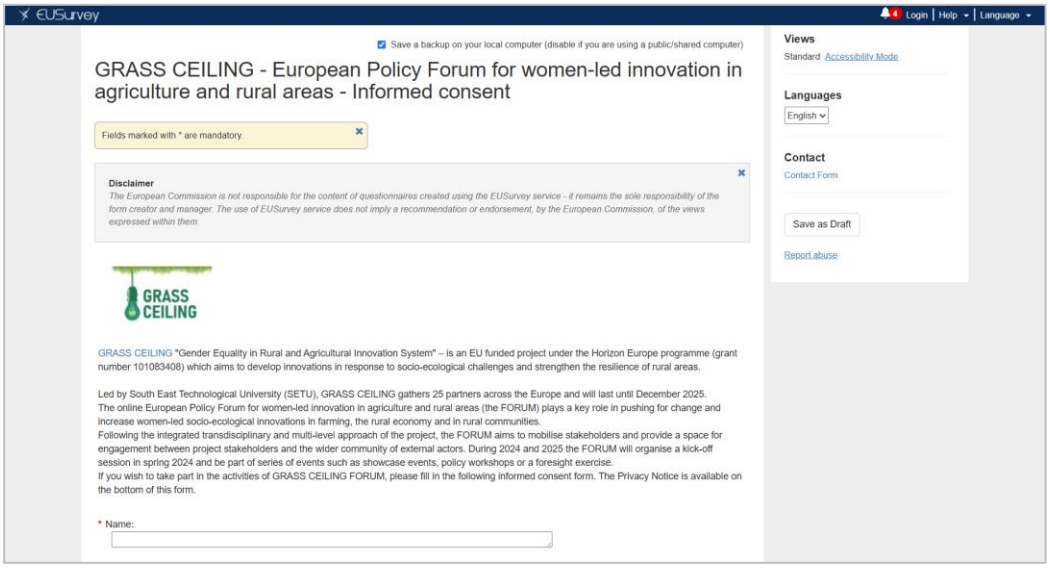
It is important to note that all individuals included in the mapping have been informed of the initiative and have had the opportunity to opt out. The contact details included were collected exclusively from publicly available sources, such as institutional websites and professional public profiles.

3.3.2. European Policy Forum members

The Forum brought together a diverse community of members who contributed expertise, shared experiences and co-developed policy messages. Membership was voluntary and open to organisations and individuals interested in advancing women-led innovation in rural and agricultural systems.

The Forum used a dedicated **consent form and registration process** to ensure transparency and compliance with GDPR requirements. Interested stakeholders could join by completing the form available via the EU Survey platform: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/GRASSCEILING_Forum

Figure 7. A screenshot of the consent form to join the European Policy Forum



Members included representatives from **EU institutions, national and regional authorities, research organisations, advisory services, rural networks, women's associations, NGOs, and**

innovators from the nine Living Labs. This diversity ensured that the Forum reflected multiple perspectives and that its policy discussions were grounded in both evidence and practice.

Members contributed through:

- Participation in Forum workshops, webinars and policy dialogues.
- Validation of policy outputs and recommendations.
- Sharing national perspectives and case studies.
- Acting as multipliers within their organisations and networks.

This membership system was designed to enable direct, bilateral communication with individuals interested in the Forum, when necessary. This was the main reason for establishing it, in parallel with the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, which provides a complementary channel for group-based interaction, community exchange, and collective communication.

By M36[3], the Forum had mobilised 61 members from across 21 Europe countries, representing a wide range of rural innovation actors and policy stakeholders. To illustrate this diversity, Figure 3 shows the distribution of EPF members by country, while Figure 4 presents the breakdown by stakeholder typology.

Figure 8. EPF members by country

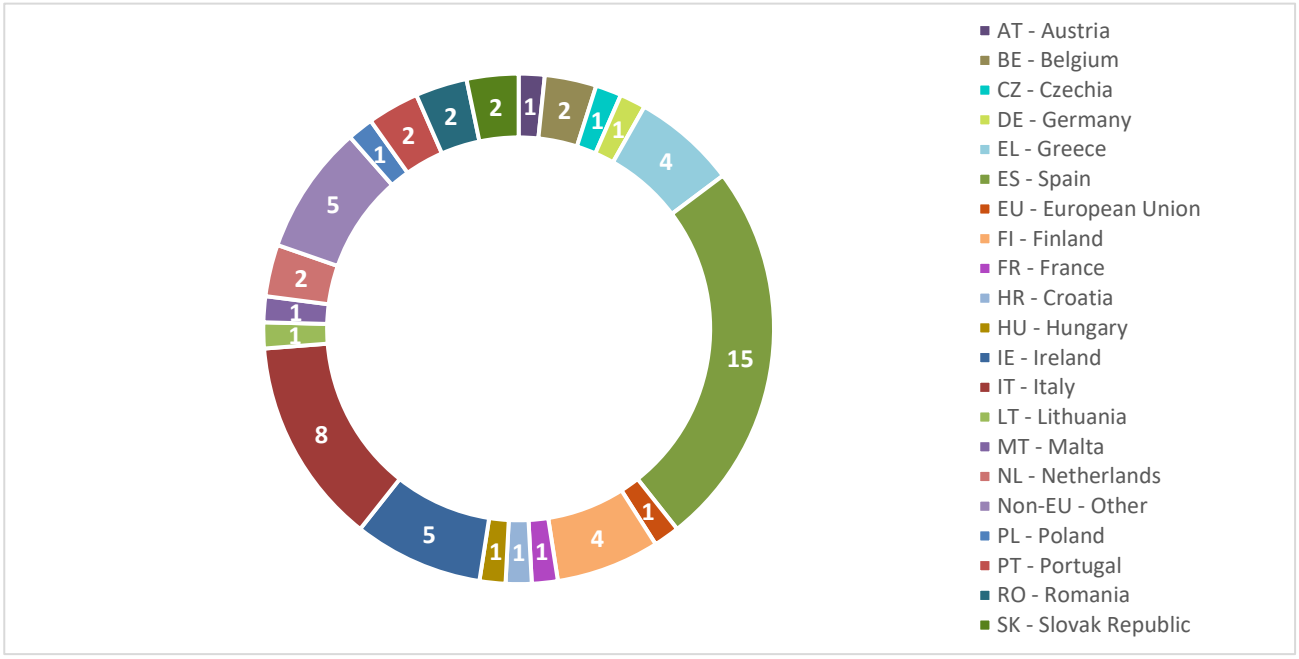
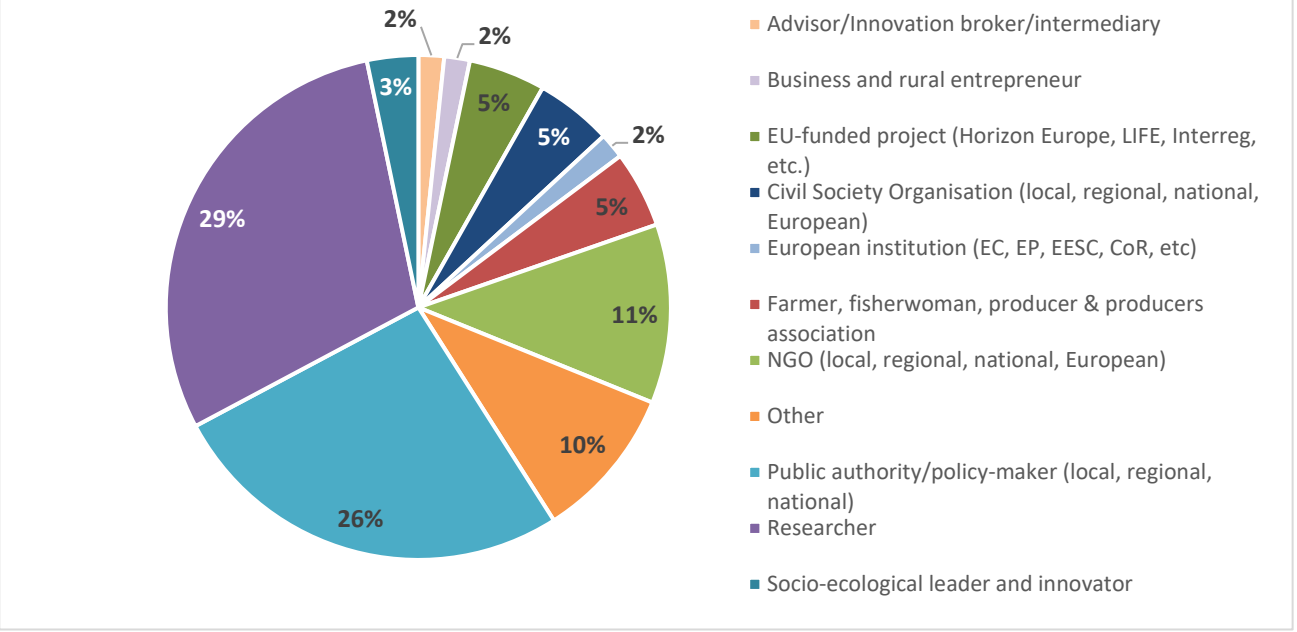


Figure 9. EPF members by typology of stakeholders

[3] The data was consulted on 9 December 2025.



In addition, on 26 November, a dedicated campaign was launched by email to support the continuation of the European Policy Forum community within the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas (KER3). The email was sent to all 61 members of the Forum. This campaign also included a feedback form to collect reflections on the European Policy Forum and its activities.

To further support KER3, a **social media campaign** will take place from early 2026, promoted through AEIDL's social media channels, to strengthen visibility, engagement and continuity beyond the project's lifetime.

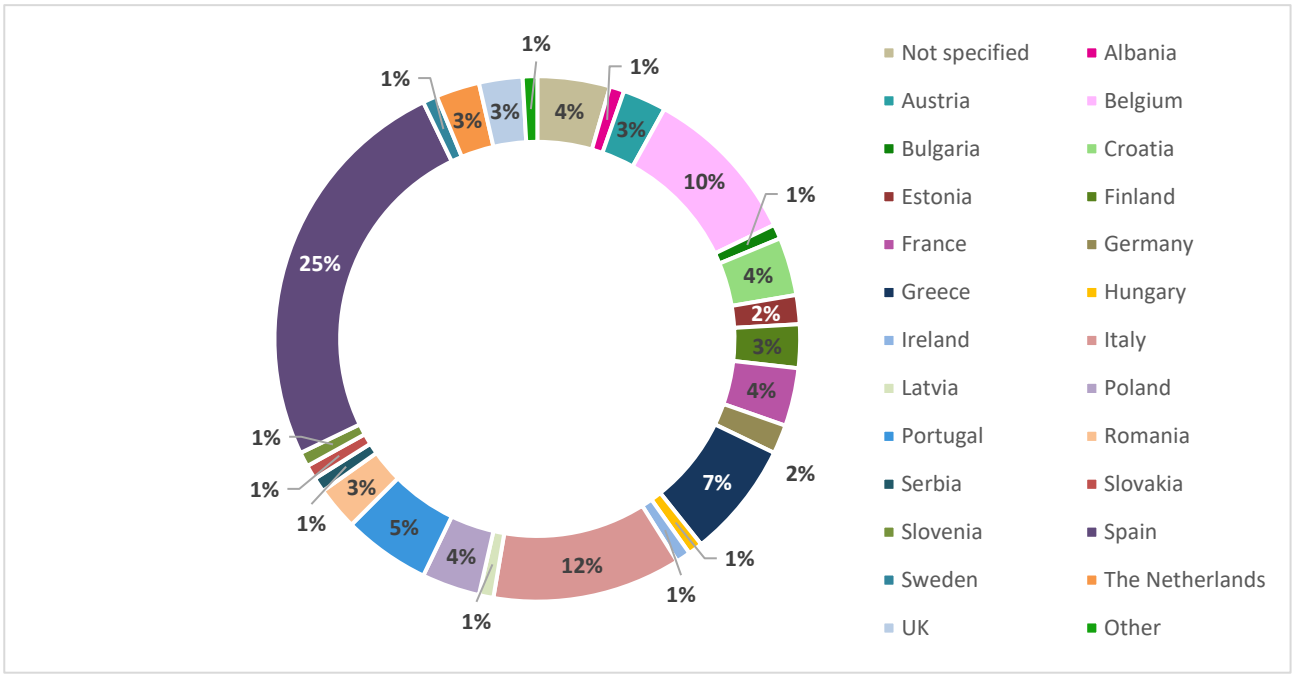
3.3.3. Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas

The Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas was created to provide a space for discussion, collaboration and visibility on issues affecting women across rural Europe. The Community Group builds directly on the work of the European Policy Forum, ensuring that the knowledge, relationships and momentum developed within GRASS CEILING continue beyond the lifetime of the project.

By M36[4], this Community Group had mobilised 131 members from across 25 countries, including women innovators, farmer organisations, rural development networks, researchers, advisory services, local authorities and civil society actors.

[4] The data was consulted on 9 December 2025.

Figure 10. Members of the Rural Pact Community Group on women in rural areas by country



To guarantee the continuity of the Forum after the end of the project, its community, dialogue activities and thematic focus were transferred into the Rural Pact Community Group, which is co-coordinated by AEIDL and COPA-COGECA. The Group now functions as the permanent home for the Forum and supports:

- Ongoing stakeholder engagement and collaboration on women-led rural innovation.
- Policy advocacy on women in rural areas.
- Exchange of good practices, experiences and innovation stories.
- Uptake and exploitation of Forum outputs.
- Strengthened visibility and recognition of women innovators across Europe.

Figure 11. The RPCG on Women in rural areas

This Community Group is recognised under the EU Rural Pact and ensures that the Forum continues to influence policy, practice and capacity-building efforts well beyond the end of GRASS CEILING.

Governance mechanisms will be established between the administrators, and AEIDL will assume responsibility for continuing to facilitate and animate the group after the end of the project. AEIDL will also adapt its coordination to any technical improvements or updates introduced in the Rural Pact platform during the next programming period.

The 26 discussions hosted within the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas reflect the diversity and dynamism of the ongoing dialogue fostered by the GRASS CEILING initiative. The

exchanges cover a broad spectrum of themes that converge around gender equality, innovation, and rural sustainability. Central topics include women-led innovation and entrepreneurship, access to finance, health and care in rural areas, digitalisation and the use of new technologies such as drones, and the empowerment of women through education and capacity-building. Several discussions explore gender mainstreaming in EU policies, particularly within the Common Agricultural Policy and the forthcoming EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030. Others highlight synergies with European research and cooperation initiatives, such as FLIARA, WE GREEN, and CIHEAM Zaragoza's Mediterranean symposium, showcasing how women's leadership drives social and ecological transformation. The group also serves as a hub for promoting key events — including the GRASS CEILING Final Showcase, policy workshops, and EU-level conferences — and for sharing good practices, consultations, and calls for recognition of innovative women in agriculture and rural communities. In addition, the GRASS CEILING MOOC emerges as a complementary resource that reinforces this knowledge exchange, also serving as a potential repository for materials and activities related to these types of online academies.

3.4. Monitoring KPIs

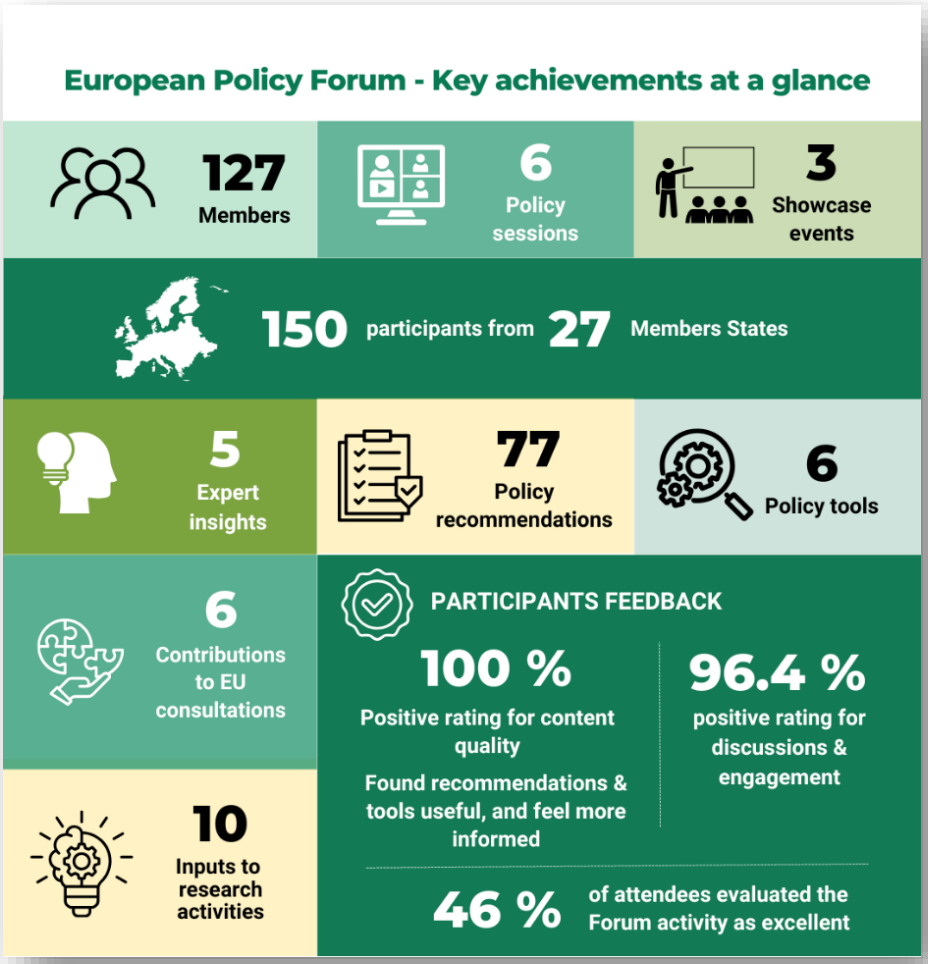
Monitoring and evaluation were an important part of the European Policy Forum to ensure that activities were relevant, effective and useful for stakeholders. A set of key performance indicators (KPIs) was defined to measure progress and assess the impact of Forum activities. These indicators focused on participation, engagement, knowledge exchange, contribution to policy work and support to exploitation.

Table 2. Forum objectives and monitoring indicators

Specific Forum objective	Proposed indicator	Indicative target (M36)	Reached target (M36)
Provide a space for engagement between project stakeholders and the wider community of experts at different levels working on supporting women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas	Number of policy meetings organised Number of participants Number of EU Member States/countries represented Number of contributions to EU consultations Quality of content/participation/ exchanges	At least 6 meetings (3 showcase events and 3 Policy Meetings)	3 showcase events 6 policy sessions
		Minimum 100 participants across events	150
		At least 20 countries	27
		At least 3 feedback provided to EU major consultations	6
		At least 50% of participants rate more than good the quality of the content provided / presentations	100% of respondents rated the quality of the content/presentations as "good" or better, with 50% rating it "very good" and 46.4% rating it "excellent."
		At least 50% of participants rate more	Regarding the quality of the discussions, exchanges and

		than good the quality of the discussions, exchanges and participation	participation, 96.4% of respondents rated it “good” or better (14.3% “good,” 35.7% “very good,” and 46.4% “excellent”), while only 3.6% rated it “not very good.”
Offer a direct channel to facilitate knowledge transfer and peer learning, awareness-raising, and exploitation		At least 50% of participants believe that the project results, findings, recommendations and tools, are useful/implementable	Yes — 100% of the responses received in the feedback indicate that the results, findings, recommendations and tools are useful and applicable in practice, and that participants feel more informed.
Collaboratively discuss and design recommendations and tools on how to boost women-led innovation at European and national level.	Number of recommendations ass essed at Forum level	At least 10 policy recommendations	77
	Number of tools assessed at Forum level	At least 3 tools	6
Contribute to key GRASS CEILING research activities and outside the project	Number of inputs provided to research activities	At least 5 inputs provided to research activities of the projects	5
		At least 2 inputs provided to research activities outside the project	5
Identify the main focus and interest of the members of the Forum and mobilise stakeholders to be part of the Forum.	Number of members	At least 60 members in the Forum or Rural Pact Community Group	127
	Number of interviews with key informants	At least 5 interviews with external key stakeholders	5

Figure 12. European Policy Forum - Key achievements in numbers



To evaluate the success and usability of the project results, three KPIs were established to monitor participant perception and engagement:

1. At least 50% of participants rate more than good the quality of the content provided / presentations.
2. At least 50% of participants rate more than good the quality of the discussions, exchanges and participation.
3. At least 50% of participants believe that the project results, findings, recommendations and tools are useful/implementable.

These KPIs were assessed using responses collected through post-event feedback forms disseminated after the March 2025 and November 2025 EPF events, as well as an additional feedback form circulated during the information campaign in November 2025 informing members about the continuation of activities within the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas.

In total, 31 responses were received across both events and the final consultation round.

In the final consultation round, participants reported several ways in which the project deliverables

and results have been beneficial. The most recurrent highlights include:

- Access to best practices, templates, and indicator sets, which are applicable for practical implementation.
- Possibilities for programming in EU Funds, including gender-responsive approaches, data analysis tools and increased institutional interest across different Member States.
- Contribution to research work and improved understanding of administrative realities and procedural contexts.

Participants also provided views on how the Forum could strategically continue and further exploit the results within the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas. Suggested directions include:

- Development of position papers and facilitation of public debates to strengthen policy dialogue.
- Sharing and exchange of good practices on EU funding measures, including opportunities for women-led innovation.
- Reinforcing academy networking, co-creation of future projects, and organisation of joint conferences and collaborative activities.

These recommendations will inform future dissemination, capacity-building, and engagement actions aiming to sustain the Forum's impact beyond the project timeline, while further aligning with the KPIs on participation quality and user satisfaction.

04 European Policy Forum Exploitation Plan

4.1. Objectives

The overarching objective of this Exploitation Plan is to ensure the **long-term use, visibility, and sustainability** of the results generated through the European Policy Forum (EPF), both during the final phase of GRASS CEILING and beyond the project's completion. The plan aims to secure the Forum's legacy as a **permanent interface between research, policy, and practice**, enabling continued collaboration, policy influence, and knowledge transfer on women-led innovation in rural and agricultural systems.

As a primarily **online and network-based platform**, the EPF's exploitation strategy focuses not only on the use of tangible outputs (e.g., policy tools, recommendations, training materials), but also on sustaining the **intangible assets** created through the Forum — such as its community of practice, visibility, partnerships, and collective expertise. The Forum's long-term value lies in its capacity to mobilise stakeholders, inform policy processes, and strengthen gender-sensitive innovation ecosystems across Europe. The specific objectives of this Exploitation Plan are to:

1. **Consolidate and describe** the *Key Exploitable Results (KERs)* generated through the European Policy Forum on women-led innovation — including the policy recommendations, the toolkit, and the Forum's continuation mechanism — defining their ownership, exploitation routes, and potential for replication and scale-up.
2. **Clarify and formalise partner commitments** in the continued use and promotion of Forum-related outputs, ensuring coordinated exploitation actions and alignment with the overall GRASS CEILING Exploitation Strategy.
3. **Identify target users, early adopters and multiplier networks** for each exploitable result, ensuring that uptake mechanisms are tailored to the needs of policymakers, practitioners, and rural innovators.
4. **Define practical exploitation pathways** describing how each KER will be applied or transferred by stakeholders in real-world policy and practice contexts, including through the GRASS CEILING Online Academy, the Rural Pact Community Group, and future EU projects.
5. **Foster the Forum's institutional legacy** by ensuring that its resources, community, and policy dialogue are maintained beyond the project's duration through integration into the *Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas* and through open access repositories.
6. **Strengthen long-term policy impact** by ensuring that the Forum's recommendations, tools, and collaborative model continue to inform EU and national policy processes, contributing to inclusive governance, capacity building, and the empowerment of women in rural areas.
7. **Complement and enhance** the overall GRASS CEILING Exploitation Plan by ensuring that the Forum's outcomes remain visible, accessible, and actionable, thus maximising the project's contribution to Horizon Europe's *Key Impact Pathways* for social and policy transformation.

In summary, this Exploitation Plan not only defines how the results of the European Policy Forum will be used, but also how its **legacy as a European knowledge and policy platform** will endure. By securing continuity through the Rural Pact Community Group, open-access tools, and active networks, the Forum ensures that the evidence, methodologies, and collaborations fostered under GRASS CEILING continue to generate **lasting impact on gender equality, innovation, and sustainable rural development** across Europe.

4.2. Contribution to the project Key Impact Pathways

Communication, dissemination and exploitation activities are an integral part of Horizon Europe projects to maximise the impacts of EU research & innovation initiatives.

The exploitation activities directly contribute to the project's overarching impact pathway as established in Section 2.1 of the Grant Agreement. Through targeted actions and the strategic use of GRASS CEILING's Key Exploitable Results (KERs), the project will strengthen the recognition and uptake of women's socio-ecological innovations in farming and rural areas. By engaging policymakers, innovation support services, and rural actors, these activities will operationalise the project's ambition to empower women as agents of change in rural transitions, enhance gender-responsive governance, and foster sustainable, eco-friendly farming systems. The exploitation strategy ensures that the project's results—policy recommendations, the Policy Toolkit, and the European Policy Forum—are not only disseminated but actively integrated into policy frameworks

and practice. In doing so, it supports the development of inclusive governance structures and contributes to achieving the EU's long-term objectives for carbon neutrality and sustainable rural development by 2050.

Horizon Europe identifies three types of impact tracked through Key Impact Pathways (KIP). The following table summarises the main contribution of the Forum' results to each KIP:

Table 3. Forum' results and contribution to the Key Impact Pathways

Key Impact Pathways		Main Forum's results contribution	Achievements in M36
Scientific impact	1. Creating high-quality new knowledge	X	Analysis of gender norms and women's roles in rural innovation.
	2. Strengthening human capital in R&I	X	Capacity-building through the Online Training Academy, promoting gender-sensitive research and innovation skills.
	3. Fostering diffusion of knowledge and Open Science	X	Open-access policy toolkit and Rural Women Innovation Compass are freely available online.
Societal impact	4. Addressing EU policy priorities & global challenges through R&I	X	Policy recommendations and a policy toolkit.
	5. Delivering benefits & impact via R&I missions		
	6. Strengthening the uptake of R&I in society		
Economic/ Technological Impact	7. Generating innovation-based growth	X	Living Labs demonstrated scalable women-led socio-ecological innovations with replication potential in rural regions.
	8. Creating more and better jobs		
	9. Leveraging investments in R&I		

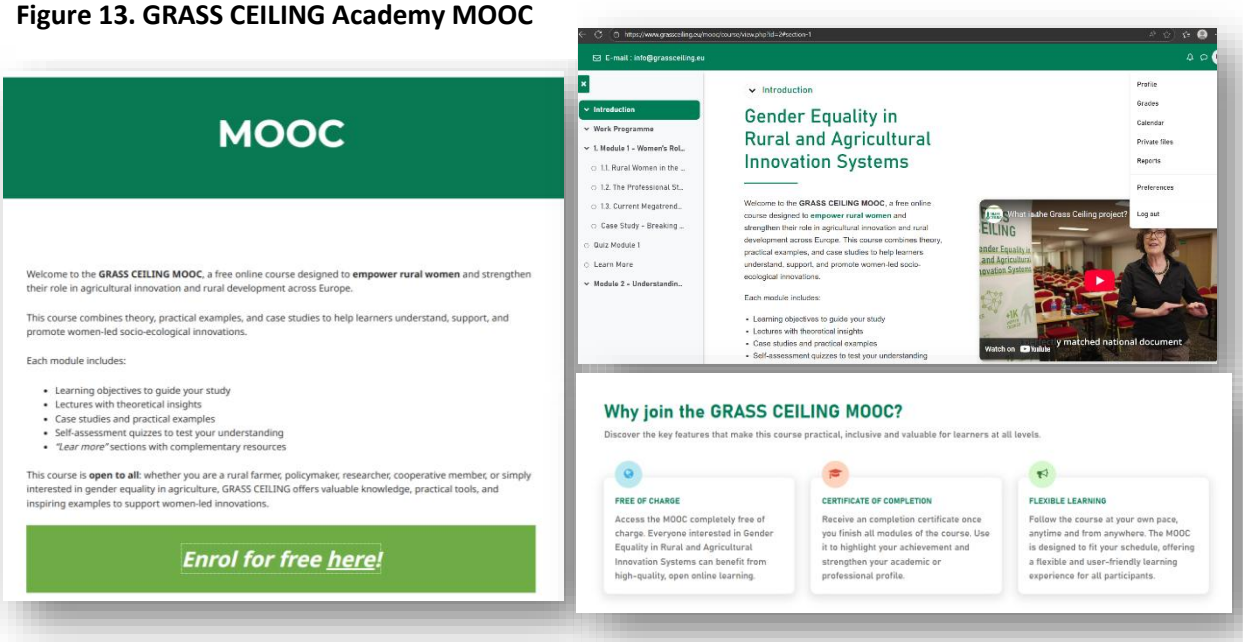
4.3. Alignment with GRASS CEILING's Exploitation Plan

The exploitation plan of the EPF is aligned with the overall GRASS CEILING Exploitation Strategy, led by CIHEAM Zaragoza under Work Package 6. While the general plan explains how all project results will be used in the long term, this document presents a focused exploitation pathway for the Forum and its Key Exploitable Results (KERs) with specific mechanisms for policy uptake, stakeholder mobilisation and long-term sustainability.

- Supporting the wider project strategy in several ways: Ensuring long-term access to project resources. The GRASS CEILING website will remain online for five years after the end of the project. All Forum outputs, including presentations, recordings, and reports, will stay available to the public: https://www.grassceiling.eu/about-policy-forum/

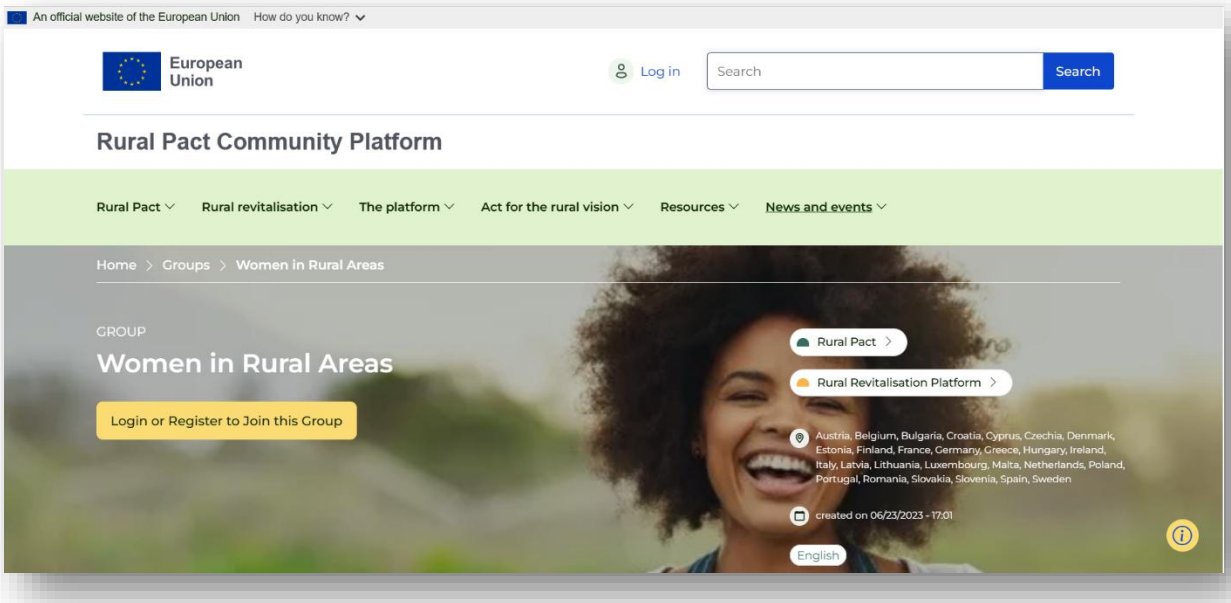
- Continuing knowledge transfer and capacity-building. The Online Academy (MOOC) will also stay active after the project, with the aim of reaching up to 10,000 learners: https://www.grassceiling.eu/online-academy/training-activities/mooc/

Figure 13. GRASS CEILING Academy MOOC



- Maintaining the community beyond the funding period. The European Policy Forum members will be transferred to the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, enabling ongoing uptake and application of results: https://ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/groups/community-group-women-rural-areas_en#tab_id=overview

Figure 14. Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas



Strengthening external partnerships for further exploitation. In the final project year, collaboration was reinforced with the Empowering Women in Agrifood (EWA) initiative. As part of this cooperation, EWA has agreed to promote the GRASS CEILING MOOC among its participants and

maintain contact with Forum members interested in ongoing collaboration.

4.3.1. Exploitation commitments of the Consortium

As Horizon Europe beneficiaries, GRASS CEILING partners via the Forum commit to:

- Use and sustain the results for at least 4 years after the end of the action through direct or indirect by another entity (through transfer or licensing) exploitation pathways.
- Protect the results adequately – if possible and justified – taking into account potential commercial exploitation and any other legitimate interest.
- Ensure results are publicly available and visible on the Horizon Results Platform if not exploited one year after the project ends, enabling adoption by interested users and networks.

4.3.2. Key concepts

To ensure clarity, the following definitions are applied throughout this exploitation plan:

- **Result:** Any tangible or intangible output of the action, such as data, tools, knowledge and information, whether or not they can be protected, which are generated in the action and any attached rights, including intellectual property rights.
- **Exploitation:** The use of results for commercial purposes, further research, education, or in public policymaking.
- **Exploitation domain:** The area where results will be applied —commercial/industrial, academic, societal and policy.
- **Key Exploitable Result (KER):** An identified main interesting result (as defined above) which has been selected and prioritised due to its high potential to be "exploited" – meaning to make use and derive benefits- downstream the value chain of a product, process or solution, or act as an important input to policy, further research or education.
- **Potential users:** Individual actors or organisations that could benefit from the KERs and integrate them into their commercial, policy, academic or societal activities, as relevant to their scopes.
- **Added value:** The tangible benefit derived from the application of a KER, such as improved policymaking, increased inclusion, new knowledge, replication of best practices or capacity building.

4.4. Key Exploitable Results (KERs)

Over the lifetime of the GRASS CEILING project, three **Key Exploitable Results (KERs)** linked to the **European Policy Forum** were identified and described. These results represent the most impactful and scalable policy outputs of the Forum, with a high potential to support long-term policy transformation and advance gender equality in rural innovation systems.

For this final exploitation plan, **three priority KERs have been selected**, based on their maturity, relevance to current EU policy frameworks, and potential for sustained uptake:

4. **KER 1: D5.1 Report with policy recommendations on inclusive transition policies for farming and rural areas.** *(See full description and process in Table 5)*

5. **KER 2: D5.2 Policy tool kit to develop and monitor inclusive agricultural and rural development policies.** *(See full description and process in Table 6)*
6. **KER 3: Continuation mechanism of the European Policy Forum Community.** *(See full description and process in Table 7)*

These KERs reflect the dual mission of the Forum within the project structure: on one hand, to support policy innovation through the formulation of evidence-based tools and recommendations (WP5), and on the other, to ensure sustainable stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue beyond the project lifetime (WP6).

4.4.1. Exploitation Activities by Key Exploitable Result (KER)

This section summarises the planned exploitation actions aimed at maximising the impact and sustainability of GRASS CEILING's Key Exploitable Results (KERs) within European and national policy frameworks.

Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the planned exploitation activities linked to each Key Exploitable Result (KER), illustrating how GRASS CEILING's outputs will be mobilised to achieve lasting impact in policy, practice, and research. The table systematically maps exploitation actions to their corresponding KERs and outlines the purpose and nature of each exploitation linkage. It highlights the project's integrated approach to policy uptake, capacity building, and institutional engagement—ranging from the incorporation of gender-sensitive recommendations into EU and national policy frameworks (e.g. CAP, Cohesion Policy, and the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food 2040) to the operationalisation of the Policy Toolkit through training and observatories.

Specifically, AEIDL will play a key role in articulating and implementing targeted exploitation actions through its European Local Innovation Forum (ELIF), under the Rural Territorial Development Unit. Building on its established partnerships and member base, AEIDL will use ELIF as a platform to develop and disseminate specific activities that promote the uptake and application of both the policy recommendations and the Policy Toolkit. These actions will support the integration of GRASS CEILING outputs into local and regional development practices, fostering gender-responsive innovation and inclusive rural transitions among its network members and partners.

AEIDL's established communication and networking channels will be instrumental in maximising the exploitation potential and visibility of GRASS CEILING results. As of November 2025, AEIDL reaches a broad and diverse audience through its platforms, including over 2,075 ELIF members and subscribers to the AEIDL Newsletter, 6,900 followers on LinkedIn, 1,200 on Facebook, 1,493 on X (formerly Twitter), and 168 on Bluesky. These channels provide effective pathways for disseminating policy recommendations, Toolkit resources, and updates on exploitation activities, ensuring strong engagement with policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders across the EU rural development and gender equality communities.

Table 4. Exploitation Activities by Key Exploitable Result (KER) and exploitation linkages

No. activity	Exploitation Activity	Linked	Purpose / Description of Exploitation Linkage

		KER(s)	
KER 1 – D5.1 Report with Policy Recommendations on Inclusive Transition Policies			
1	Integration into CAP and Cohesion Policy Processes	KER 1 & 2	Use policy recommendations and Toolkit outputs to inform Partnership Agreements 2028–2034 and National Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) post-2027, embedding gender equality in EU funding instruments.
2	Contribution to the Vision for Agriculture and Food	KER 1	Use policy recommendations and Toolkit to influence the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food 2040, ensuring gender-responsive and inclusive transition frameworks. In particular initiatives such as the upcoming Women in Farming Platform and the annual Food Dialogue with food system's actors.
3	Alignment with the EU Roadmap for Women's Rights	KER 1 & 2	Use GRASS CEILING evidence to support the EU Roadmap for Women's Rights and EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030, highlighting the rural and territorial dimension. As well as their translation into national and regional strategies across different thematic areas.
4	Inform about EPF results to the European Social Economy Action Plan revision	KER 1	Advocate the inclusion of women-led rural entrepreneurship insights in review of the EU Social Economy Action Plan expected to be finalised in early 2026, using GRASS CEILING evidence.
5	Inform about EPF results to the European Commission's 2026 Work Programme initiatives	KER 1 & 2	Use the policy recommendations and Toolkit to inform and provide evidence-based input to the European Commission's 2026 Work Programme initiatives, including: Circular Economy Act (Q3 2026), Revision of national targets and flexibilities in the EU climate policy framework (Q4 2026), European strategy on sustainable tourism (Q2 2026), Strategy for outermost regions (Q1 2026), Quality Jobs Act (Q4 2026), 2030 Roadmap on the future of digital education and skills (Q3 2026), Intergenerational fairness strategy (Q1 2026), Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture (Q3 2026), Enhancing the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities up to 2030 (Q2 2026), as well as related annual plan on evaluations, fitness checks and pending proposals.
6	Policy Intelligence and Capacity Building through the European Local	KER 1 & 2	Produce and disseminate "Gender & Rural Transition" policy briefs via AEIDL/ELIF (European Local Innovation Forum), translating recommendations into actionable messages for EU and national policymakers with the aim

	Innovation Forum (ELIF–AEIDL)		to support the design and implementation of upcoming National Regional Partnership Plans.
7	Structured Dialogue with EU Institutions and Advisory Bodies	KER 1 & 3	Present recommendations and toolkit in hearings with EP AGRI/FEMM Committees, DG AGRI, DG JUST, DG REGIO, and EESC, reinforcing policy uptake and institutional collaboration.
8	Policy uptake through the Rural Observatory and EIP-AGRI Focus Groups	KER 1 & 2	Position GRASS CEILING results within the EU Rural Observatory and EIP-AGRI structures to enhance monitoring and replication.
KER 2 – D5.2 Policy Toolkit to Develop and Monitor Inclusive Agricultural and Rural Development Policies			
9	Policy Intelligence and Capacity Building through the European Local Innovation Forum (ELIF–AEIDL)	KER 2 & 3	Deliver workshop programmes using the Toolkit and Rural Women Innovation Compass to strengthen gender-sensitive policymaking skills. It will support, from the perspective of target setting, monitoring, and evaluation, the design and planning of the implementation of the National and Regional Partnership Plans.
10	Engagement with EU Institutions for the Pilot Use of the Policy Toolkit	KER 2 & 1	Coordinate targeted dissemination and engagement actions with EIGE, DG JUST, DG AGRI, and DG REGIO to align the Policy Toolkit indicators with the EU Gender Equality Index and ensure their consideration into EU upcoming Performance Framework.
11	Collaboration with the EU Rural Observatory to support gender-related case studies and thematic analyses	KER 2	Make the AEIDL's team and its resources available to the EU Rural Observatory to support the conceptualisation and development of case studies or thematic analyses related to gender, as proposed within the Policy Toolkit.
12	Integrate GRASS CEILING tools into new EU-funded projects	KER 2 & 1	Mainstream the Toolkit in Horizon Europe, Interreg, LIFE and other EU projects, promoting gender-responsive governance.
KER 3 – Continuation Mechanism of the European Policy Forum Community (EPF / Rural Pact Community Group)			
13	Policy transfer and advocacy follow-up with Policy Session	KER 1, KER 2 & KER 3	After the Final Conference, AEIDL will coordinate a targeted follow-up with the expert panellists from the Policy Session (European Commission, EP, EESC, EEB, universities) to collect written reflections and concrete

	panellists		uptake opportunities for integrating GRASS CEILING policy recommendations and tools into forthcoming EU frameworks (CAP post-2027, MFF 2028–2034, Vision 2040). These exchanges will feed into the final report and finalization of policy deliverables (D5.2 and D6.5).
14	Institutionalise the European Policy Forum for Women-Led Innovation	KER 3	Maintain the Forum as a permanent policy dialogue mechanism under the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, ensuring continuity.
15	Annual advocacy campaigns on gender equality and rural women through the Rural Pact Community Group	KER 3	Implement annual communication and advocacy actions under the Rural Pact Community Group, marking the International Women's Day (8 March) and the International Day of Rural Women (15 October). These campaigns will showcase the outcomes and good practices emerging from the European Policy Forum and the GRASS CEILING network, promoting continued dialogue, visibility, and policy engagement around women's leadership and innovation in rural areas.
16	Submission of evidence-based inputs to EU consultations	KER 1 & 2	Continue providing written contributions to EC public consultations and stakeholder forums using project data and policy tools.
17	Create cross-project collaboration task forces (FLIARA, SWIFT, SERIGO, RUSTIK, EU4Advice)	KER 1 & 3	Maintain collaboration with related projects (FLIARA, SWIFT, SERIGO, RUSTIK, EU4Advice) to develop future joint policy briefs, fostering coherence, knowledge exchange, and mutual learning across initiatives. The invitation campaign to continue engagement through the Rural Pact Community Group will also be extended to the teams of these projects, encouraging them to share the invitation with their followers, newsletter subscribers, and consortium members, thereby broadening participation and reinforcing the sustainability of the GRASS CEILING community beyond the project's lifetime.
18	Engagement with the Women in Farming Platform and Annual Food Dialogues through the Rural Pact Community Group	KER 1, 2 & 3	Actively engage with the future Women in Farming Platform and the annual Food Dialogues promoted under the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food 2040, using the Rural Pact Community Group as a channel for coordination and policy dialogue. This action will ensure that GRASS CEILING's policy recommendations and Toolkit insights are represented in discussions on sustainable food systems, rural innovation, and gender equality. Through participation in these fora, the project will contribute to

			shaping inclusive policy narratives and reinforcing women's leadership and visibility in the future of European agriculture and food systems.
19	Presentations of Forum results at national and European events	KER 1, 2 & 3	Continue to promote the outcomes and policy messages of the European Policy Forum (EPF) through participation in national and European conferences, workshops, and policy events. These presentations will maintain visibility for GRASS CEILING's results, strengthen links with EU stakeholders, and support the integration of gender perspectives into ongoing rural development and innovation discussions.
20	Scientific and non-scientific publications on women-led rural innovation	KER 1, 2 & 3	Publish scientific and non-scientific outputs to ensure long-term knowledge dissemination and policy impact. This includes open-access articles, policy briefs, blogs, and interviews targeting journals such as Sociologia Ruralis, Journal of Rural Studies, Gender, Place and Culture, Agriculture and Human Values, and Journal of Innovation Economics & Management.
21	Collaboration with media partners and rural networks	KER 3	Work with media partners and rural innovation networks to promote women-led innovation stories and amplify GRASS CEILING messages to wider audiences. Dissemination will leverage AEIDL's communication channels and external media to enhance visibility, foster replication of good practices, and strengthen public awareness of gender-responsive innovation in rural areas.

4.4.2. Full description of each Key Exploitable Result (KER)

The following section provides a comprehensive overview of the three Key Exploitable Results (KERs) identified through the European Policy Forum. It details how each result will be further utilised, transferred, and sustained beyond the project's lifetime, ensuring the long-term policy, social, and institutional impact of GRASS CEILING. Each KER builds on the project's multi-actor, evidence-based approach and represents a key component of its exploitation and sustainability strategy.

This section highlights the specific contribution, ownership, and added value of each KER, the partners responsible for exploitation, and the target users and early adopters expected to benefit from their application. It also outlines the main exploitation routes, from policy integration and capacity-building to networking and continued stakeholder engagement, aimed at ensuring that the project's outcomes remain accessible, relevant, and operational beyond its completion.

Moreover, the section demonstrates how these results are embedded within broader European and national policy frameworks, contributing directly to the EU's Gender Equality Strategy, the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas, and the post-2027 CAP and Cohesion Policy cycles.

Tables 5, 6 and 7 present a structured roadmap for each KER, summarising their description, added value, lead responsible partner(s), target users, exploitation routes, and both ongoing and planned activities beyond the project's funding period.

Table 5. Exploitation roadmap for KER 1: Policy Recommendations

KER 1: Policy Recommendations (D5.1)	
Description of the KER	A comprehensive set of policy recommendations and a roadmap comprising 77 actions distributed across seven focus areas and three implementation milestones (2025, 2030, 2035). The recommendations aim to integrate gender equality and women-led innovation into EU, national, and regional agricultural and rural development policies. They provide actionable guidance on improving access to land and finance, supporting women-led business models, strengthening advisory systems, and ensuring gender-sensitive governance in rural transitions.
Owner(s) of results	AEIDL
Problem / need addressed	Gender equality remains insufficiently mainstreamed in agricultural and rural policies across the EU. Women innovators face persistent barriers to land access, finance, training, data visibility, and participation in decision-making. Policymakers need structured, evidence-based guidance to embed gender perspectives and women's leadership into the design, monitoring, and evaluation of rural policies.
Added value for users	– Aligns with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA), and the CAP post-2027 policy debate, in particular to design National Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs). – Offers a policy roadmap directly usable by EU, national, and regional authorities. – Facilitates the integration of gender equality into policy cycles through practical and evidence-based measures. – Enables Managing Authorities, advisory services, and rural networks to adapt interventions to women innovators' needs, improving policy coherence and inclusiveness.
Exploitation Route	Societal and policy exploitation by using the recommendations to inform EU, national and regional policy processes. Uptake will be supported through targeted policy dialogues, and contribution to consultations. Knowledge transfer, through integration in capacity-building activities (the GRASS CEILING Online Academy).
Exploitation pathways activities *(detailed actions in Table 4)*	**- Integration into CAP and Cohesion Policy processes (Action 1)** to inform Partnership Agreements 2028–2034 and NRPPs post-2027. **- Contribution to the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food 2040 (Action 2)** and engagement with the **Women in Farming Platform and Food Dialogues (Action 17)** to embed gender equality in future food and farming strategies. **- Alignment with the EU Roadmap for Women's Rights (Action 3)** and input to the **European Social Economy Action Plan revision (Action 4)** to strengthen the rural gender dimension in EU frameworks. **- Evidence-based contributions to the European Commission's 2026 Work Programme (Action 5)** and to relevant **EU consultations (Action 16)**. **- Policy intelligence and capacity building via ELIF–AEIDL (Action 6)** and **structured dialogue with EU institutions (Action 7)** to enhance policymaker engagement. **- Policy uptake through the EU Rural Observatory and EIP-AGRI (Action 8)** for replication and monitoring. **- Engagement with EU institutions for the pilot use of the Toolkit (Action 10)** and **integration of GRASS CEILING tools into new EU-**

		funded projects (Action 12) to operationalise policy recommendations through applied tools and frameworks. **- Cross-project collaboration (Action 17)** with FLIARA, SWIFT, SERIGO, RUSTIK and EU4Advice to develop joint policy briefs and sustain networking. **- Dissemination of Forum results (Actions 19–20)** through events and publications to ensure broad visibility and uptake.
Target Audience		**Early adopters:** DG AGRI, DG REGIO, DG EMPL, DG JUST, European Parliament (AGRI, FEMM Committees), Managing Authorities and CAP Networks; National and Regional Gender Equality Coordinators, national/regional ministries; EIP-AGRI Focus Groups; and networks of women innovators, social economy organisations, and advisory services. **Other users:** NGOs, farmers, fisherwomen, producer organisations, rural entrepreneurs, EU-funded projects.
Expected impact		The exploitation of KER 1 will lead to stronger integration of gender equality and inclusiveness in European and national policy frameworks governing rural and agricultural development. Through the uptake of GRASS CEILING recommendations in processes such as the CAP, Cohesion Policy, the LTVRA, and the EU Vision for Agriculture and Food 2040, the project will contribute to more gender-responsive governance and policymaking. These impacts are expected to enhance the visibility, recognition, and participation of women innovators in rural and agricultural transitions, ultimately improving the social sustainability of EU territorial policies. At the institutional level, KER 1 supports the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030, while contributing to MFF 2028-2034 objectives by embedding inclusive innovation principles into rural transition policies.
Formats and Channels (Dissemination, early Exploitation & Exploitation)	**Already delivered**	– **Deliverable** publication (June 2025) – **EPF workshops** and policy sessions (2023–2025) (see *Section 3.2* for more information). – Contribution to open **EU consultations** (see *Section 3.2* for more information).
	Ongoing	– Integration into the **GRASS CEILING Online Academy (MOOC)** on Policy for Gender Equality in Rural Areas.
	Future	– **Academic dissemination:** Publication of GRASS CEILING results in peer-reviewed journals, policy-oriented papers, and thematic special issues focusing on gender, innovation, and rural development. Continued participation in international conferences and EU policy events (e.g. Regional Studies Association, EU CAP Network, Rural Pact Conference) to enhance visibility, validation, and uptake of results. – **Capacity building and transfer** via CAP Networks and workshops by third parties. – **Digital and knowledge platforms:** Continued presence and engagement through the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, ensuring open access to tools, policy briefs, and recordings. Use of AEIDL's online platforms (e.g. European Local Innovation Forum, ELIF) to host updates, thematic webinars, awards initiatives and learning exchanges. – **Policy advocacy and partnerships:** Targeted follow-up with EU institutions (DG AGRI, DG REGIO, DG JUST, and EIGE) and networks (e.g. COPA-COGECA, EESC, EEB) to promote integration of GRASS CEILING outputs into EU and national policy frameworks post-2027. – **Synergies with ongoing projects:** Collaboration with Horizon Europe and LIFE projects addressing gender equality, innovation, and sustainability in rural areas to sustain cross-project learning and expand the exploitation ecosystem.

	– **Monitoring and legacy:** Regular updates on the uptake and use of GRASS CEILING results through AEIDL's monitoring activities and contributions to the Rural Observatory, ensuring continuity and measurable long-term impact beyond the project's lifetime.
Communication and Dissemination activities to support exploitation	– News items: The world is taking notice: new article highlights GRASS CEILING's impact on women-led rural innovation – Contribution to the Rural Pact Conference 2025 (September 2025) – Panel intervention at the FLIARA Final Conference (October 2025) – Social media campaigns – Presentation of the GRASS CEILING policy recommendations at the project's final Showcase event with key EU institutions representatives.
Timing (beyond the project)	Beyond the formal end of GRASS CEILING (2026 onwards), exploitation activities will continue through coordinated follow-up actions led by AEIDL under the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas and specific activities of its European Local Innovation Forum (ELIF): • **Short term (2026–2027):** Continuous dissemination of the Policy Recommendations and Toolkit through AEIDL communication channels; publication of a targeted policy brief; new initiatives to reward women led-innovation in rural areas, and participation in at least three EU-level policy fora (e.g. Rural Pact Conference 2026, Women in Farming Platform, Food Dialogues). • **Medium term (2028–2030):** Dissemination of GRASS CEILING outputs for the design of National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) and monitoring of gender-sensitive indicators within the new Performance frameworks (MFF 2028–2034). Annual advocacy campaigns through the Rural Pact Community Group will ensure continuity and visibility. • **Long term (2031 and beyond):** Use of the Policy Recommendations as evidence input for future EU strategic reviews (e.g. Vision for Agriculture and Food 2040 implementation, LTVRA updates). AEIDL and partners will maintain engagement with DG AGRI, DG REGIO, DG JUST and EIGE to ensure that gender-responsive governance remains a standing component of EU rural innovation policies.

Table 6. Exploitation roadmap for KER 2: Policy Tools

KER 2: Policy Tools (D5.2)	
Description of the KER	A web-based interactive dashboard hosting a set of tools to support the integration of gender equality into rural and agricultural policy design, monitoring and evaluation. The dashboard includes: (1) Gender-Proofing Template; (2) Gender Benchmarking Framework; (3) Training Webinar for policymakers and Managing Authorities; (4) Data Strategy and Integration for building a Rural Women Innovation Compass; (5) Step-by-step checklist for policymakers; (6) Roadmap to advance gender equality in rural areas (linked to KER 1); and (7) Key Information for Participating in EU Consultations
Owner(s) of results	AEIDL & SETU
Problems / needs addressed	Policymakers, Managing Authorities and rural networks often lack operational tools to assess the inclusiveness of rural policies and monitor gender equality performance in policy implementation. Existing guidance is often conceptual, rather than practical. The dashboard addresses this gap by providing ready-to-use, step-by-step tools that can be directly applied.
Added value for users	– Easy access and exploration through an online demonstrator prototype integrated on the project's website. – Immediate applicability in ongoing policy cycles and monitoring frameworks. – Supports gender-responsive rural proofing. – Aligns with EU strategies (Gender Equality Strategy, LTVRA, CAP Strategic Plans, upcoming National Regional Partnership Plans, upcoming Performance Framework 2028-2034).
Exploitation Route	Societal exploitation, through the practical use of the dashboard and its tools. Knowledge transfer, by using the tools in training programmes and policy workshops.
Exploitation pathways activities *(detailed actions in Table 4)*	**- Integration into CAP and Cohesion Policy processes (Action 1)** to support the design and monitoring of Partnership Agreements 2028–2034 and National/Regional Partnership Plans post-2027, using Toolkit indicators. **- Alignment with the EU Roadmap for Women's Rights and Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030 (Action 3)** to mainstream the Toolkit within EU and national equality frameworks. **- Contribution to the European Commission's 2026 Work Programme (Action 5)** by providing evidence-based input and gender-sensitive indicators relevant to upcoming initiatives. **- Policy Intelligence and Capacity Building through ELIF–AEIDL (Action 9)** to deliver workshops and mentoring sessions, enhancing policymakers skills in applying the Toolkit and Compass for inclusive governance. **- Engagement with EU Institutions (Action 10)** to support dissemination and preliminary feedback on the Toolkit, exploring potential alignment with relevant EU gender equality indicators in the **EU Gender Equality Index** and upcoming **Performance Frameworks**. **- Collaboration with the EU Rural Observatory (Action 11)** to support the conceptualisation of **gender-related case studies and thematic analyses** derived from Toolkit guidance. **- Consideration of GRASS CEILING tools into new EU-funded projects (Action 12)**—Horizon Europe, Interreg, LIFE—to mainstream

		gender-responsive governance approaches. **- Policy uptake through the EU Rural Observatory and EIP-AGRI Focus Groups (Action 8)** to promote replication and inclusion of Toolkit methodologies in rural monitoring systems. **- Engagement with the Women in Farming Platform and Food Dialogues (Action 18)** to showcase Toolkit results within the Vision 2040 process and support inclusive food-system governance. - **Written contributions to EU consultations (Action 16)** to ensure the Toolkit informs legislative and strategic policy processes. **- Dissemination of Toolkit results through events and publications (Actions 19–20)** to increase visibility, peer learning, and uptake among policymakers, researchers, and practitioners.
Target Audience		**Early adopters:** Ministries of Agriculture/Rural Development, CAP Managing Authorities. **Other users:** regional authorities, local governments, researchers, advisory services.
Expected impact		The Policy Toolkit will enable policymakers and practitioners to translate gender equality commitments into measurable actions, strengthening evidence-based governance and accountability across the rural policy cycle. Its use by DG AGRI, DG REGIO, DG JUST, EIGE, and national Managing Authorities will standardise monitoring practices through gender-sensitive indicators, a Performance Framework for the 2028–2034 programming period with a strengthened territorial and gender perspective, and enhance policymaking capacities through training and applied learning. The expected impact is a more inclusive and transparent policy environment, with increased capacity to assess progress on gender equality in rural and agricultural sectors. KER 2 will contribute to the mainstreaming of gender across the post-2027 CAP and Cohesion Policy, improving social innovation and policy coherence in rural development.
Formats and Channels (Dissemination, early Exploitation & Exploitation)	**Already delivered**	– **EPF session on Reviewing Policy Tools for Inclusive Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas (4 November 2025**, see *Section 3.2* for more information).
	Ongoing	– **Integration into the GRASS CEILING Online Academy (MOOC) on Policy for Gender Equality in Rural Areas.** – **Policy Toolkit - GRASS Ceiling** – **Demonstrator prototype:** https://www.ruralgendertoolkit.eu/
	Future	– **Online demonstrator prototype:** The Policy Toolkit will remain accessible as an interactive demonstrator prototype integrated on the GRASS CEILING website by as a separate page hosted by AEIDL, ensuring continued visibility and usability for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. – **Academic dissemination:** Publication of GRASS CEILING results in peer-reviewed journals, policy-oriented papers, and thematic special issues focusing on gender, innovation, and rural development. – **Policy engagement:** Continuous presentation and discussion of the Toolkit in European and national policy events (e.g. Rural Pact Conference, EU CAP Network workshops, European Evaluation Society conferences) to promote institutional uptake and feedback. – **Training and knowledge transfer:** Use of the Toolkit in capacity-building activities and webinars delivered by AEIDL targeting managing authorities and innovation support services through the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, ensuring open access to tools, policy briefs, and recordings. Use of AEIDL's online platforms (e.g. European Local Innovation Forum, ELIF) to

	host updates, thematic webinars, and learning exchanges. – **Cross-project collaboration:** Alignment with other Horizon Europe initiatives and Rural Pact actions to expand its use and adaptation in diverse territorial and policy contexts. – **Monitoring and update:** Collection of user feedback and periodic updates to maintain the Toolkit's technical relevance and policy coherence beyond the lifetime of the project.
Communication and Dissemination activities to support exploitation	– News item – Targeted social media campaign – EPF session on Validating Policy Tools (see *Section 3.2* for more details) – Presentation of the GRASS CEILING Policy Tools at the Final Showcase Event with EU institutions and policy stakeholders.
Timing (beyond the project)	Beyond the end of GRASS CEILING (2026 onwards), the Policy Toolkit will continue to be exploited and expanded through a coordinated process led by AEIDL. • **Short term (2026–2027):** AEIDL will host the Toolkit Demonstrator Prototype on a website specifically designed for this purpose, which will be embedded into the project's main website before the end of 2025. This page will allow users to explore the Toolkit, although no modifications to the information will be possible. The website will remain available for a period of seven years under the management of AEIDL. Targeted training sessions and webinars will be organised through the Rural Pact Community Group and European Local Innovation Forum (ELIF) to promote its use by managing authorities and policymakers. • **Medium term (2028–2030):** The Toolkit will be promoted for integration into Member State monitoring and evaluation systems within the post-2027 CAP and Cohesion Policy programming period. AEIDL will pursue collaborations with DG AGRI, DG JUST, DG REGIO and EIGE to know and consider the Toolkit's proposal. • **Long term (2031 and beyond):** The Toolkit will remain accessible through AEIDL's online repository and the Rural Pact platform. Its concepts and methodologies will inform future EU policy monitoring tools and capacity-building programmes, contributing to the institutionalisation of gender-responsive policymaking in rural and agricultural contexts.

Table 7. Exploitation roadmap for KER 3: EPF Community (continuation mechanism)

KER 3: Continuation mechanism of the EPF Community	
Description of the KER	A sustainability strategy ensuring continuity of the European Policy Forum after the end of GRASS CEILING. This includes the transition of Forum members and activities into the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, which now serves as the permanent platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange and policy influence. See more details in *Section 3.3.3*.
Owner(s) of results	AEIDL
Problem / need addressed	Without a formal sustainability strategy, the Forum community risked discontinuation at project end. There is a need for a stable space where stakeholders can continue to collaborate, exchange knowledge and advance women-led rural innovation agendas.
Added value for users	– Provides a long-term European collaboration platform to continue EPF activities. – Maintains policy dialogue and dissemination of the toolkit and recommendations. – Enables new partnerships and project opportunities (Horizon Europe, CAP networks, LEADER groups, etc.).
Exploitation Route	Societal and policy exploitation via the Rural Pact Community Group and continued knowledge transfer through ongoing exchange of practices and dissemination and uptake of policy tools and recommendations.
Exploitation pathways activities *(detailed actions in Table 4)*	**-Policy transfer and advocacy follow-up with Policy Session panellists (Action 13)** **- Institutionalisation of the European Policy Forum (Action 14)** as a permanent **policy dialogue mechanism** under the Rural Pact Community Group, enabling continued co-creation, knowledge exchange, and dissemination of gender-responsive policy insights. **- Policy intelligence and capacity building through the European Local Innovation Forum (ELIF–AEIDL) (Actions 6 & 9)** to translate Forum outcomes and Policy Toolkit results into **policy briefs, workshops, webinars and training sessions**for EU and national policymakers, supporting the design and monitoring of inclusive territorial and rural governance frameworks. **- Structured dialogue with EU Institutions (Action 7)** through hearings and exchanges with the **European Parliament (AGRI/FEMM Committees)**, **DG AGRI**, **DG JUST**, **DG REGIO**, and the **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** to reinforce institutional collaboration and policy uptake. **- Annual Advocacy Campaigns (Action 15)** within the Rural Pact Community Group to mark **International Women's Day (8 March)** and the **International Day of Rural Women (15 October)**, highlighting success stories from women innovators and advancing gender equality in rural transitions. **- Cross-project collaboration (Action 17)** with **FLIARA, SWIFT, SERIGO, RUSTIK, and EU4Advice** to develop **joint policy briefs, and coordinated dissemination activities**, extending participation through their networks and promoting continued collaboration within the Rural Pact Community Group. **- Engagement with the future Women in Farming Platform and Food Dialogues (Action 18)** to ensure that Forum and ELIF insights inform

		the **EU Vision for Agriculture and Food 2040**, embedding gender equality in future food and farming strategies. **- Presentations of Forum results at national and European events (Action 19)** to ensure sustained visibility and policy influence. **- Scientific and non-scientific publications (Action 20)** to maintain academic and professional dissemination of Forum outputs through open-access journals, policy briefs, blogs, and interviews. **- Collaboration with media partners and rural networks (Action 21)** to communicate GRASS CEILING stories of women-led innovation and promote continued engagement through AEIDL's outreach channels, including the ELIF Newsletter, LinkedIn, X (Twitter), Facebook, and Bluesky.
Target Audience		**Early adopters:** EPF members, Rural Pact Support Office. **Other users:** EU networks, NGOs, farmers, fisherwomen, producer organisations, rural entrepreneurs, regional/national ministries, EU-funded projects, researchers.
Expected impact		KER 3 will ensure the long-term sustainability and visibility of GRASS CEILING's results through the continuation of the European Policy Forum within the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas. This will foster an enduring multi-actor dialogue on gender, innovation, and rural policy, ensuring that women's voices and evidence-based insights continue to inform EU policy agendas. The ongoing activities (such as annual advocacy campaigns, cross-project collaboration, and policy consultations) will generate continuous knowledge exchange and mutual learning across EU-funded initiatives. In the longer term, KER 3 is expected to strengthen the institutional embedding of gender equality in rural governance, contributing to more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable rural communities across Europe.
Formats and Channels (Dissemination, early Exploitation & Exploitation)	**Deliver**	– Launch of the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas (June 2023) – Announcement during the first EPF session (October 2023) and referenced throughout all subsequent Forum sessions (see *Section 3.2*).
	Ongoing	– Online training academy module (MOOC) – An internal communication campaign (email) to transition EPF members into the Community Group (XX) – A follow-up feedback questionnaire to assess members' perceptions of whether the project's results, tools and recommendations, if implemented, could improve the quality of life and support women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas (November 2025).
	Future	– **Ongoing community dialogue:** Continuation of regular discussions within the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, building on the 24 discussions by the end of the project. These exchanges will sustain interaction among policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, ensuring the long-term visibility and relevance of GRASS CEILING outcomes. – **Cross-project collaboration:** Organisation of joint online sessions, thematic exchanges, and policy dialogues with other Horizon Europe, LIFE, and Interreg projects (e.g. FLIARA, SWIFT, RUSTIK, SERIGO) to strengthen synergies, co-produce knowledge, and expand the impact of women-led rural innovation initiatives. – **Policy outreach and advocacy:** Use of the Community Group as a channel for targeted communication with EU institutions and networks to promote the uptake of GRASS CEILING policy recommendations and tools. – **Capacity building and peer learning:** Regular webinars, peer exchanges, and good-practice sessions facilitated by AEIDL and its ELIF to enhance knowledge sharing and stakeholder empowerment.

	– **Digital continuity:** Maintenance of the online group as an open-access forum hosted within the Rural Pact platform and AEIDL's European Local Innovation Forum (ELIF), ensuring accessibility, sustainability, and future scalability.
Communication and Dissemination activities to support exploitation	– News item – Targeted social media campaign – References in all Forum sessions – Presentations at external EU-level events
Timing (beyond the project)	Beyond the end of GRASS CEILING (2026 onwards), the continuation of the European Policy Forum will be ensured through its integration into the **Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas**, co-coordinated by AEIDL and COPA-COGECA. • **Short term (2026–2027):** AEIDL will maintain the facilitation and animation of the Rural Pact Community Group, ensuring that all Forum members transition smoothly to the new platform. Regular online discussions and one thematic webinars per year will be organised to sustain engagement and dialogue. The group will continue to promote policy advocacy on women-led innovation and serve as a dissemination hub for GRASS CEILING outcomes. • **Medium term (2028–2030):** The Community Group will evolve into a recognised European network on women-led rural innovation, supporting collaboration with EU institutions and initiatives. AEIDL will coordinate joint initiatives and thematic campaigns aligned with major policy milestones (e.g. CAP post-2027 implementation, EU Gender Equality Strategy articulation). • **Long term (2031 and beyond):** The Community Group will act as a permanent knowledge and advocacy hub supported by activities of the AEIDL's European Local Innovation Forum (ELIF). It will foster cross-project cooperation, promote new research-policy synergies, and continue contributing to EU and national dialogues on inclusive and gender-responsive rural innovation.

4.5. Sustainability and long-term impact

The sustainability strategy of the Forum ensures that its mission, outputs and stakeholder network continue to generate value beyond the lifetime of the GRASS CEILING project. Sustainability is embedded in the exploitation of the Forum's Key Exploitable Results, with a focus on policy influence, community building, and long-term transfer of tools and knowledge to European rural development actors.

To secure continuity, the Forum's activities and community are being integrated into the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, which provides a permanent EU-level platform for collaboration, policy dialogue and knowledge sharing. This mechanism guarantees that EPF outputs will remain active, accessible and used by policymakers, researchers, rural organisations and women innovators after the end of the project.

The sustainability approach builds on three pillars:

1. Open access to tools and results.
2. Strategic dissemination and continued outreach.
3. Alignment with EU policy frameworks and future research initiatives.

4.5.1. Repository and open access to EPF resources

To ensure long-term availability and reuse of results, all key Forum outputs will remain accessible through a combination of open and institutional repositories:

- Project website and document repository: provides access to policy outputs, reports and Forum materials: https://www.grassceiling.eu/
- GRASS CEILING Online Training Academy: hosts training recordings, tools, templates and learning modules: https://www.grassceiling.eu/online-academy/
- Suggestion: Project YouTube channel – link to video related with the Forum:
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LuQnYOMm0g&list=PL0QJzad_N_KOCqdSl6EGus48tYyXJrdXP
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5M8rI5SbY48&list=PL0QJzad_N_KNivkcdahkYDfL4HRaC45vf
- Zenodo: all project outputs produced by AEIDL are uploaded to Zenodo, ensuring DOI-referenced open access https://zenodo.org/communities/eu/
- Horizon Results Platform: increases visibility to policy actors and potential adopters beyond the consortium.
- Rural Pact Community Platform: hosts Forum outputs for continued exchange and use by stakeholders. In particular relevant the Group on Women in Rural Areas.

All outputs are made available under Creative Commons licence (CC-BY) to guarantee open and ethical reuse by policymakers, researchers and civil society.

4.5.2. Strategic dissemination and outreach for impact

Ensuring the long-term visibility and policy relevance of the European Policy Forum (EPF) requires a proactive dissemination strategy that extends beyond open access to foster continued engagement and uptake of results. Dissemination and outreach efforts are therefore designed not only to publicise outputs, but to position the Forum as a reference point for evidence-based policymaking on gender equality and innovation in rural areas. Detailed information on the dissemination and early exploitation activities carried out, their contribution to the exploitation process, and the planned exploitation actions for each of the three Key Exploitable Results (KERs) can be found in Sections 3.2.1 (European Policy Forum activities) and 4.4.1 (Exploitation Activities by Key Exploitable Result) of this document.

The EPF's dissemination strategy will maintain momentum beyond the lifetime of GRASS CEILING through coordinated actions by AEIDL and project partners. These include:

- Targeted representation at European and national events to promote GRASS CEILING policy outcomes and tools, ensuring that Forum outputs inform ongoing policy debates on rural and agricultural innovation.
- Publications and media outputs in both scientific and practitioner-oriented outlets, such as open-access articles, policy briefs, blogs, and interviews. These will consolidate the Forum's visibility and ensure the accessibility of its evidence base for policymakers, researchers, and rural networks.
- Collaboration with media partners and rural networks to amplify the dissemination of women-led innovation stories and promote replication of inclusive practices.
- Engagement through the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, which provides a dynamic space for peer learning, advocacy, and continued exploitation of results.

These actions collectively reinforce the Forum's legacy as a trusted European knowledge and policy platform. By integrating communication, networking, and targeted advocacy, the dissemination strategy will ensure sustained awareness and uptake of the Forum's Key Exploitable Results (KERs) — notably the *Policy Recommendations*, *Policy Toolkit*, and *EPF Community Mechanism* — supporting their continued use across governance levels and policy domains.

4.5.3. Coordination with research and policy initiatives

To maximise long-term impact, the EPF is aligned with ongoing European policy processes and research initiatives. This ensures that the Forum's results remain relevant, used and visible in the years after the project.

The Forum will continue contributing to:

- The Rural Observatory and the Joint Research Centre (JRC), through the Rural Women Innovation Compass and gender-sensitive data needs.
- The Rural Pact, via the Community Group on Women in Rural Areas as a structured policy dialogue and capacity building mechanism.
- Horizon Europe sister projects (FLIARA and SWIFT), to expand transferability and avoid duplication.

- European Parliament committees (AGRI and FEMM), by sharing policy evidence and recommendations.
- Future Horizon Europe, LIFE or Interreg initiatives, where EPF tools and insights can be further reused and developed by partners.

The Online Training Academy (MOOC), including the modules on policy recommendations, tools, and the European Policy Forum, will also be listed on the Horizon Results Platform.

4.6. IPR management and access rights

The results generated by the Forum are policy-oriented and societal, rather than commercial products. In line with the Grant Agreement, no exclusive intellectual property rights will be created, and all Forum outputs are intended to remain open access.

Ownership, access rights and reuse are managed as follows:

- **Ownership of results:** Each KER is owned by the partner(s) who generated it, as defined in the Consortium Agreement. Joint ownership applies where results were co-produced.
- **Access rights within the consortium:** All partners retain the right to use Forum results free of charge, both during and after the project, for research, policy engagement, training and communication purposes.
- **Licensing and reuse:** EPF outputs, specifically D5.1 and D5.2, are made publicly available under Creative Commons licence (CC-BY), enabling reuse, adaptation and transfer while ensuring proper attribution.
- **Open access:** Long-term accessibility of Forum outputs are ensured through the open-access measures described in *Section 4.5.1*.
- **Protection of results:** Since the KERs are non-commercial and are intended for policy uptake, no patenting is applicable. Instead, results are protected through copyright attribution.
- **Data protection:** All Forum activities follow GDPR rules. No personal data is disclosed in published outputs.
- **Horizon Results Platform:** In line with Horizon Europe obligations, Forum KERs will also be published on the Horizon Results Platform to ensure wide visibility and opportunities for transfer and reuse beyond the consortium. Forum KERs will also be published on the Horizon Results Platform to ensure wide visibility; in line with Horizon Europe obligations, any result not being actively exploited one year after the project ends will in any case be listed there.

05 Risk analysis, mitigation and contingency measures

The exploitation of the European Policy Forum's Key Exploitable Results (KERs) involves several potential risks that could influence their long-term uptake, visibility, and sustainability. To ensure resilience and continuity, these risks have been systematically identified, categorised, and addressed through targeted mitigation and contingency measures. The analysis considers:

- Internal risks, related to coordination, stakeholder engagement, and institutional capacity; and
- External risks, linked to evolving policy priorities, funding frameworks, and broader socio-political or economic factors that could affect the uptake of the Forum's results.

These risks included in Table 8 have been assessed in relation to the Forum's three main exploitation dimensions:

1. **Policy integration** (uptake of recommendations and tools),
2. **Stakeholder engagement and community continuity**, and
3. **Long-term resource and knowledge management**.

The following table summarises the key risks, corresponding mitigation measures, and contingency actions designed to ensure that the Forum's outputs remain relevant and impactful beyond the project's lifetime—particularly through the **European Local Innovation Forum (ELIF)**, the **Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas**, and the **GRASS CEILING Online Academy**.

By identifying these risks early and planning how to manage them, partners can make sure that the results of the Forum will continue to be used after the project ends. Each risk has a clear action, which helps to keep the work practical and realistic. Overall, by linking the European Policy Forum's outcomes with ELIF and the Rural Pact mechanisms, the consortium ensures continuity, visibility, and adaptability of results. This approach safeguards against post-project decline and embeds gender-responsive rural innovation within Europe's broader policy ecosystem for the coming years.

Table 8. Summary of key risks, mitigation and contingency measures

Risk	Description	Mitigation measure	Contigency measure
Limited uptake of policy recommendations and roadmap (KER 1)	Policy recommendations may not be considered into national or EU policy frameworks if gender equality in rural areas remains a low political priority.	Target "early adopter" Member States and Managing Authorities already engaged through the Forum and Rural Pact Community Group. Provision of capacity building via the Online Training Academy (MOOC).	Develop a light policy update mechanism via ELIF to monitor policy evolution and organise at least annual online workshops.
Toolkit not used by policymakers (KER 2)	Target "early adopter" Member States and Managing Authorities may lack the capacity or guidance to integrate the Toolkit into policy design and monitoring processes.		Provide a "Toolkit Support session" coordinated by AEIDL Rural Territorial Development Unit to provide ad hoc guidance and maintain user engagement after the project through the ELIF.
Forum activity declines after	The EPF network may lose	Transfer the community to the Rural Pact	Establish yearly joint ELIF–EPF/Rural Pact Community

project	momentum without a formal coordination mechanism.	Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, with ELIF acting as a long-term coordination partner.	Group event to sustain visibility and new partnerships. AEIDL will periodically promote the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas through its communication channels, and consequently through the ELIF platform as well. New editions of *Rural Women-Led Innovation awards*, like those organised by AEIDL under the project (RUWI), could take place in the coming years.
Fragmentation with other EU initiatives	Overlap or competition with other projects focused on rural women may reduce impact.	Strengthen collaboration with other projects and participate in joint actions.	Use ELIF's to host cross-project sessions and monitor collaboration progress. Partners, members, and followers of the sister projects, and similar initiatives, will be invited to join the Rural Pact Community Group.
Low stakeholder awareness & knowledge loss	End-users may not know how to access EPF outputs post-project.	Ensure open access via the Training Academy, project website, Zenodo, Horizon Results Platform and Rural Pact platform. Disseminate outputs through Rural Pact Group, CAP Network channels and partners' networks.	The AEIDL website, which integrates both current and past projects, will continue to host GRASS CEILING as a completed project, while ensuring that all materials produced—particularly those from the European Policy Forum—remain accessible. Additionally, any future activities or news related to GRASS CEILING will be highlighted and echoed through the ELIF portal, ensuring ongoing visibility and engagement with the project's legacy.
Insufficient Funding for Continuation	Lack of dedicated financial resources may hinder the continuation of EPF-related activities.	Identify funding opportunities under Horizon Europe, Interreg, and LIFE programmes to support follow-up actions and ensure continuity. AEIDL's Rural Territorial Development Unit will	The AEIDL Rural Territorial Development Unit, in coordination with ELIF, will actively pursue new projects and partnerships aimed at further developing and expanding the work initiated by GRASS CEILING. This will include building upon the existing

		take responsibility for maintaining and facilitating the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas, guaranteeing the Forum's animation and stakeholder engagement in the post-project phase.	gender-responsive evidence base generated by the project to reinforce its integration into policy development, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks at both EU and national levels.

06 References

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