



Women, Disability, and Inclusion – Scientific Excellence in Bulgaria
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Deliverable 3.2

Final report on activities carried out for enhancing excellent scientific research in MILIEU

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Deliverable abstract

D3.2 provides a comprehensive and detailed report on MILIEU activities performed for enhancing scientific excellence and innovation in research capacities in the fields related to inclusion, disability, and women studies within the three partners of the MILIEU consortium, and in particular, within IPS-BAS, with important snowball effects in other academic and research organisations that have been reached through the diverse project actions. The current deliverable is based on the guidelines of the D2.2 *Strategic plan for enhancing scientific excellence* and D3.1 *Visibility and empowerment guidelines* which draft the key strategic goals and the specific actions to be implemented to reach the pre-established goals, as well as their estimated timing.

This deliverable covers the action taken within WP3 Strengthening the research profile at IPS, in the quest of enhanced scientific excellence. It details the activities carried out within the framework of the MILIEU strategic plan, organised by the following types of action: training courses, qualitative sessions, visibility through networking events and activities, conferences and workshops, joint research project proposals, RRI in project practice, and last but not least, visits and secondments.

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Glossary of abbreviations

AB	Advisory Board
D	Deliverable
ESR	Early Stage Researcher
EU	European Union
IPS-BAS	Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
RRI:	Responsible Research and Innovation
SB	Scientific Board
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
T	Task
UCM	Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Complutense University of Madrid)
UNIGE	Università di Genova (Genova University)
WP	Work Package



Table of contents

1. Introduction	6
2. Reaching objectives of scientific excellence	6
3. Activities performed to enhance excellent research in MILIEU	7
3.1. Training courses	7
3.2. Qualitative sessions	12
3.3. Visibility and networking events and activities	14
3.5. Joint research project proposals	24
3.6. RRI in project practice	25
3.7. Visits and secondment	26
3.8. Introducing research lines and academic CV	27
4. Timing of activities	29
5. Conclusions	31
Annexes	32
A.1. Event planning template	32

1. Introduction

Capitalising on the results arising from the previous D2.2 *Strategic plan for enhancing scientific excellence* and D3.1 *Visibility and empowerment guidelines*, the current deliverable D3.2 details the activities carried out for boosting excellence in research as well as innovation capacities within the consortium members and, in particular, within IPS-BAS. Nevertheless, additional new activities have been included in the MILIEU action plan and then performed on the run, according to arising needs and benefiting from opportunities along the project.

D3.2 stems from the needs identified in D2.1 Report on needs and good practice recognition. It summarises the outcomes of WP3, aimed at strengthening the research profile of IPS-BAS, specifically tasks T3.1 Enhancement of excellence in women, disability and inclusion studies, T3.2 Visibility and networking, T3.3 Qualitative sessions, and T3.4 Joined research project proposals. The related Milestone 5 Two joint project proposals submitted for evaluation have been reached, as described in the report.

With the overall goal of enhancing scientific excellence and innovation capacity in the areas of women's studies, disability, and inclusion, the scientific strategy focuses on training activities, international and networking events, conferences, as well as visits, staff exchanges, and academic publications. It also includes arrangements for formulating new joint research project proposals in the aforementioned and other related topics of interest, actions for implementing educational and research lines in the themes at the core of MILIEU, and for introducing institutional changes.

Organised by types of action, D3.2 provides a brief narrative of all the activities that have been carried out within the project, including dates of celebration, following the roadmap offered in the strategic plan. Many of the activities covered in the current report are aligned and present synergy effects with actions undertaken in WP4 Expertise development for ESR and WP5 Expertise development in research management and fundraising.

2. Reaching objectives of scientific excellence

Under the overall objective of the MILIEU project - to unlock, foster, and sustain excellent research through intensive research exchange and enhancement in the fields of women, disability, and inclusion, to drive excellence, and to enhance the research reputation of IPS-BAS in the widening country of Bulgaria - WP3 is specifically dedicated to raising the research profile of the organisation (Special Objective 2). The activities described in the current deliverable are based on international networking, cross-fertilization, capacity building, and science training, as well as academic exchanges, shared events, and dissemination activities. The medium term objective and corporate vision of IPS-BAS is to earn a position among the leading academic institutions of the region in the research

domains of MILIEU, as well as gain more visibility at EU-level, opening doors to improved funding and international collaboration opportunities. The MILIEU project has been intensively working towards this end, as can be seen in the strategic plans and activity reports of the project. Partner collaboration will continue after the end of the project, contributing to the sustainability of the initiatives started and carried out within MILIEU. Intangible assets, such as academic visibility, reputation, and scientific excellence, are long-term assets that need to be constructed with continuous efforts, but one project can act as a cornerstone, as we believe has been the case with the MILIEU project.

3. Activities performed to enhance excellent research in MILIEU

3.1. Training courses

Organising and delivering training courses for the development of scientific and transversal knowledge and skills related to MILIEU core topics and for the enhancement of the scientific excellence of IPS-BAS research and academic staff was one of the most relevant action lines within WP3. Though the target audience of MILIEU training courses was IPS-BAS staff, researchers, and ESR, other academic institutions in Bulgaria and partner organisations also benefited from them. Participants were invited far beyond the partnership by intensive communication on the projects' website and social media, as well as in the partner organisations' communication channels.

During the project period, the following seminars/webinars and trainings related to WP3 (many more were held within WP4 as well) took place:

- **Seminar “Sex/gender and intersectionality in Horizon proposals” (online, December 15, 2022).** This course, held by Rita Bencivenga from UNIGE, was a short training course for scholars in all scientific fields, intended for both ESR and experienced researchers. The aim of the course was to integrate and understand the sex/gender dimension in proposals funded by Horizon Europe and suggest valuable resources to learn how to implement it in the project proposals. The training had 42 participants, 85% of whom were female.
- **Marie Curie postdoctoral fellowship program: webinar (online, December 9, 2022).** This webinar, held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS-BAS, was an informative session presenting the Marie Curie postdoctoral fellowship 2023. Based on winning projects and the experience of colleagues who had won a grant under the program, the webinar presented useful tips and practical guidance for the interested participants. The training had 7 participants, 85% of whom were female.

- **Seminar “Academic Blogs and Networking” (online, February 22, 2023).** This seminar was held by Natalia Abuín Vences from UCM. The seminar gave basic rules to create and manage academic blogs in order to build a strong personal brand and build research and academic networks that enable scientists, researchers, academics, teachers and students to collaborate and share information and tools through a series of network interconnections.
- **Seminar “Interdisciplinary research for philosophers and other non-scientists: A personal view on 4E cognitive science” (online, March 22, 2023).** It was held by Carlos Vara Sánchez from UCM. The seminar centred on a burgeoning interdisciplinary framework and methodology that facilitated collaboration among philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists, enabling the synthesis of their theories and findings into holistic proposals. This approach, known as '4E cognition,' was coined by Shaun Gallagher in 2007. The term was introduced to encapsulate existing contributions emphasising the embodied, enactive, embedded, and extended aspects of specific cognitive processes.
- **Seminar “Funding for research projects, scholarships, and research visits: Sources and tips” (online, April 4, 2023).** This seminar was given by Rita Bencivenga, Shaban Darakchi and Cristina Perez Fernandez. The seminar covered diverse funding opportunities for research projects, stays, and conferences, providing essential advice for applications and fostering cooperation between national and transnational research teams. The primary goal was to inform participants about various funding opportunities and their target groups. The seminar discussed Bulgarian funding sources and outlined measures under international programs such as HORIZON, COST, Marie Curie, ERC, and others.
- **Seminar: Useful Resources for Researchers in Gender Studies (online, May 4, 2023).** The seminar was held by Lucia Gloria Vázquez Rodríguez. The seminar aimed to present a comprehensive list of databases, institutions, available funding schemes, and the most relevant publications in the field of Gender Studies for scholars who might be newcomers to the area. Throughout the seminar, challenges and opportunities faced by gender researchers in their careers were explored; discussions focused on the potential social impact of their work, alliances that could be established with grassroots associations and institutions addressing gender (in)equality across different industries, and the emotional labour involved, emphasising the importance of building communities in a field closely tied to affect and identity.
- **Seminar “Academic journals indexing systems and impact factor: Web of Science and Scopus” (online, October 27, 2023).** It was held by María José Establés Heras. This online workshop explored the most important academic journal indexing systems and their impact factors. Impact factors were discussed as a tool for comparing and evaluating the relative importance of a specific journal within a

scientific field, based on the average number of citations received by the articles published in it during a specific period.

- **Seminar “Gender mainstreaming” (online, November 13, 2023).** It was held by Rita Bencivenga from UNIGE. The webinar delved into the substantial progress achieved through gender mainstreaming in the EU, emphasising its role in advancing gender equality. While acknowledging its positive impact, discussions centred on persistent challenges in implementation. The webinar covered the historical implementation of initiatives in the European Union, highlighting societal progress, challenges faced, and criticisms with new interpretations.

Additionally, a number of long-term courses related to WP3 were held as well:

- **Lecture course “Project planning and drafting – hints and tips” (online, from December 13, 2021 to December 16, 2021).** The course was held by Cinzia Leone from UniGe. This introductory course delved into the essentials of project planning and drafting, offering valuable insights, practical tips, and a guide to dos and don'ts, with a specific emphasis on projects funded by the EC. The content was meticulously designed to cater to both young and senior researchers, acknowledging the diverse needs and experiences across different career stages. Participants could expect to gain a comprehensive understanding of effective project planning strategies, key considerations in drafting proposals, and the nuances unique to EC-funded projects. The course aimed not only to impart practical skills but also to foster a deeper comprehension of the intricacies involved in successful project planning, making it a valuable resource for researchers navigating the complexities of securing funding and executing impactful projects.
- **Intensive lecture course “Methods and Methodology in research” (online, from October 21, 2021 to October 27, 2021).** The course was held by Emilia Chengelova from IPS-BAS. The course was designed both for PhD students and researchers in IFS, with a focus on empirical research in the social sciences. The comprehensive curriculum covered essential aspects of social empirical research (SEI), including its essence, cognitive goals, functions, and tasks. Participants delved into the development of methodologies for SEI, exploring topics such as basic research approaches, formulation of hypotheses, and the system of empirical indicators. The course extensively covered both quantitative and qualitative methods for gathering empirical information, including tools like standardised interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews. Additionally, participants gained practical insights into data analysis using SPSS, covering statistical and mathematical analysis of aggregate information. The course provided a holistic understanding of research methods and equipped participants with valuable skills for empirical research in the social sciences.
- **‘Writing with a Tutor’ course (online, from December 20, 2022 to November 30, 2023).** This course, held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS-BAS, was intended specifically

for ESR but also useful for staff and lasted 9 months. In this course, each participant had the opportunity to write an article for a journal indexed in Scopus or Web of Science on a topic of their choice under the supervision of experienced colleagues in the MILIEU team. Each module of the course included a 1.5-hour session every month and independent work on a specific part of the article. Each participant was assigned an individual mentor(s) from IPS-BAS and other partner institutions who directly monitored the work and reviewed the article. The training had a total of 10 participants, 80% of whom were female.

- **Lecture course ‘Gender and Sexuality Studies’ (online, from January 27, 2023 to December 20, 2023).** The course, held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS-BAS, analysed and discussed the social and cultural aspects of gender and sexuality, systematically presenting fundamental sociological approaches and concepts. It was designed for a diverse audience, including both social scientists and those unfamiliar with the topic. The theoretical knowledge and skills for reflexive comparative analysis acquired during the course enriched the theoretical and methodological framework of social scientists, enhancing their ability to engage thoughtfully in public discussions on the subject. Lectures delivered so far in the course:
 - **“Gender and sexuality as social and sociological problems” (Online, 31st of 31023)** Held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS. It was Lecture 1 from the ‘Gender and Sexuality Studies’ course.
 - **“Gender, Sex, and Socialization” (online, February 27, 2023).** This seminar was held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS, and it was Lecture 2 from the ‘Gender and Sexuality Studies’ Course.
 - **“Femininity and masculinity as sociological problems” (online, March 21, 2023)** It was held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS and corresponded to Lecture 3 from the ‘Gender and Sexuality Studies’ Course.
 - **“Gender and Social Institutions: Education, Religion, and Media” (online, April 26, 2023).** It was held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS, and it corresponded to Lecture 4 from the ‘Gender and Sexuality Studies’ Course.
 - **“Gender and Social Institutions: Politics, Media, and Labour” (online, May 31, 2023).** It was held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS, and it corresponded to Lecture 5 from the ‘Gender and Sexuality Studies’ Course.
 - **“Gender and Social Interactions: Love, Body, and Violence” (online, September 25, 2023).** It was held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS, and it corresponded to Lecture 6 from the ‘Gender and Sexuality Studies’ Course.
 - **“Sexuality as a sociological phenomenon. Part I: Main Concepts” (online, October 20, 2023).** It was held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS, and it was Lecture 7 from the ‘Gender and Sexuality Studies’ Course.

- **“Sexuality as a Sociological Phenomenon: Part II: Sexuality, Interactions, and Institutions” (online, November 22, 2023).** It was held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS, and it was Lecture 8 from the ‘Gender and Sexuality Studies’ Course.
- **“Gender, Sexuality, and Social Movements” (online, December 20, 2023).** It was held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS, and it was Lecture 9 from the ‘Gender and Sexuality Studies’ Course.
- **Lecture course “Social Inclusion and Disability” (online, from January 27, 2023 to December 4, 2023).** The course was moderated and led by Alexandra Traykova from IPS-BAS and featured guest-lectures for some of the topics. The course introduced key concepts, notions, and positions from disability studies, exploring how they view inclusion as a complex, multi-layered phenomenon essential for a functional society. By the end of the course, participants acquired the ability to identify the main obstacles to inclusion, propose measures to address them, and critically reflect on their social origins. Lectures delivered so far in the course:
 - **“Explanatory models and definitions of disability” (online, January 27, 2023).** This webinar was given by Aleksandra Traykova from IPS. It was Lecture Number 1 from the ‘Social Inclusion and Disability’ Course.
 - **“Social exclusion of people with disabilities” (online, February 28, 2023).** This seminar was held by Aleksandra Traykova from IPS, and it corresponded to Lecture 2 from the ‘Social Inclusion and Disability’ Course.
 - **“Targeted employment services and technical aids for people with disabilities” (online, March 15, 2023).** The webinar was held by Rita Bencivenga from UniGe, and it was Lecture 3 from the ‘Social Inclusion and Disability’ Course. Organised and moderated by Aleksandra Traykova from IPS.
 - **“Academic Accounts of Disability and Social Inclusion: The Bulgarian Context” (online, April 27, 2023).** It was held by Aleksandra Traykova from IPS, and it corresponded to Lecture 4 from the ‘Social Inclusion and Disability’ Course.
 - **“Multisensoriality for Accessibility in Architecture. Architecture to be seen, heard and touched” (online, July 05, 2023).** Conducted by Alessandro Meloni and Cristina Cãndito, University of Genoa, as a lecture from the ‘Social Inclusion and Disability’ Course.
 - **“Disability and Violence” (online, September 27, 2023).** It was held by Aleksandra Traykova from IPS as a lecture from the ‘Social Inclusion and Disability’ Course.
 - **“Education in homes for children with mental disabilities in Bulgaria” (online, September 27, 2023).** Held by Georgi Todorov from BAS. Organised and moderated by Aleksandra Traykova from IPS.

- **“Sexuality and people with disabilities: prevailing stereotypes and misconceptions” (online, December 4, 2023).** It was held by Carla Maria Reale from UNIGE, and it was Lecture 8 from the ‘Social Inclusion and Disability’ Course. Organised and moderated by Aleksandra Traykova from IPS.
- **Short course “Legal and ethical issues of EU Programmes” (online, from March 17, 2023 to April 28, 2023).** The course was held by Roberto Cippitani. The lecture series is one of the activities foreseen in the Jean Monnet Chair *5th*Freedom” - Freedom of Research as EU Fifth Freedom (2020-2023)* coordinated by Prof. Cippitani, University of Perugia (Italy). Three lectures/ seminars were held as part of the course:
 - **“Contractual Issues of EU Programmes. The Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement (online, March 17, 2023).** It was held by Roberto Cippitani for UNIGE, and it was Lecture 1 from the "Legal and ethical issues of EU Programmes" course.
 - **Seminar “Ethics principles and rules applicable to the research projects funded by the European Union” (online, April 12, 2023).** It was held by Roberto Cippitani for UNIGE, and it was Lecture 2 from the "Legal and ethical issues of EU Programmes" course.
 - **Seminar “Rights on the results of an EU-funded project” (online, April 28, 2023).** It was held by Roberto Cippitani from UNIGE, and it corresponded to Lecture 3 from the "Legal and ethical issues of EU Programmes" course.
- **Short course “Analysis and Orientation for Accessible Architecture” (online, November 2nd and 9th, 2023).** Held by Alessandro Meloni from UNIGE and moderated by Aleksandra Traykova from IPS. The course was centred on orientation and space accessibility, specifically emphasising the perception of blind individuals. It analysed the process of comprehending architecture and tools for effectively communicating spatial features. The focus was on recognizing the significance of these factors to enhance the experience of every user. The goal was to impart knowledge for developing a flexible workflow applicable to various case studies and contexts.
- **Short course “Enhancement of Accessibility in Cultural Heritage” (online, November 2 and 9, 2023).** Held by Cristina Cándito from UNIGE and moderated by Aleksandra Traykova from IPS. The course focused on enhancing accessibility to Cultural Heritage for users with sensory disabilities or neurodiversity. It emphasised the initial step of assessing knowledge, specifically regarding effective communication with individuals who are blind, deaf, or have autism spectrum disorders.

3.2. Qualitative sessions

Focus groups, brainstorming, and storytelling events, as well as **interviews** centred on research enhancement/improvement/issues were organised during the staff exchanges and the summer schools. The commitment was to organise at least 4 focus groups or brainstorming sessions among the partners and 4 interviews in each country, objectives that have been surpassed during the 3 years of the project.

The yearly short visits of research staff from UCM and UNIGE to IPS-BAS as well as the secondments for research staff from IPS-BAS at partner organisations provided a suitable platform for **collective brainstorming sessions and informal focus groups**, contributing to MILIEU activities planning. Also, brainstorming sessions were used in **thematic project meetings** focused on MILIEU events and activities planning. Informal, small focus groups were used mostly for event evaluation. Altogether, the brainstorming sessions and informal focus groups have served for the following purposes:

- Activities planning in project meetings among partners.
- Exploring ideas for drafting joint project proposals.
- Coming up with contents for shared publications and planning joint conference participations.
- Sharing knowledge, experiences and research plans in the intersection of women, disability and inclusion in order to plan short- and mid-term collaborations not foreseen in the MILIEU planning.
- Evaluating the summer school outcomes among ESR participants.
- Evaluating the design and outcomes of the training activities and staff exchanges.
- Contributing to the MILIEU conceptual framework and deliverables when necessary, for example for gathering information on good practices or policy recommendations.

Storytelling has an extraordinary capacity of narrative and power of engaging the public, sharing vision and insights. Therefore, this communication strategy has been included in many project dissemination and training activities. Apart from the real time storytelling, the MILIEU team has also produced some short videos. Among others, many of the training courses and many of the Milieu conference presentations are being prepared to be available at the project website upon consent from the authors. Storytelling has been contained in the following activities:

- Project stories and beneficiaries & participants' testimonies during MILIEU dissemination events: the 1st during M18 in Spain and the final during M36 in Brussels.
- ESR testimonies of their experiences and learning, made also into short videos.
- Success stories of students with disabilities to empower and encourage ESR with functional diversity. These storytelling sessions have been part of the summer schools or/and some training sessions and also, many of them included in short videos.
- Storytelling events within the summer school and/or the training sessions.

- Workshops and meetings with representatives of NGOs, people with disabilities and gender activists.
- Workshops and courses for researchers to discuss methodological issues and challenges in project drafting and implementation.
- Dissemination of the above activities in social media (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and MILIEU website).

Interviews have been conducted, especially among selected experts and AB members in each participating country, and have contributed to exploring ideas for:

- Designing a joint Doctorate Program on the topics of women studies, disability, and inclusion and giving advice on the PhD mentoring activities.
- Assisting in the design of training courses and teaching lessons.
- Evaluating and monitoring project advances and outcomes, providing expert insights into the deliverables when needed.

3.3. Visibility and networking events and activities

This section includes the account of networking events and activities coordinated by the consortium, aimed at gaining visibility for IPS-BAS and fostering the academic interaction and international activity of the organisation. Also, it describes a series of interdisciplinary events for cross-fertilization that were organised or attended by IPS-BAS and/or other consortium members. Partner organisations opened for IPS-BAS staff and researchers all those events organised in their premises and that could be of relevance for the internationalisation and networking goals. The international visibility of IPS-BAS and public awareness of the MILIEU project within the academy were enhanced by the consortium staff visits and exchanges in Europe and beyond, by the participation in open-science events, as well as through local dissemination activities in Bulgaria.

- **Joint networking workshop Culture and Inclusiveness in the City of Madrid (Madrid, December 3, 2021).** Given the opportunity to join 10 researchers for the consortium meeting in Madrid, some activities have been performed to show how inclusiveness is taken into account in a cultural tour of the city of Madrid. This has motivated reflection of different aspects of adaptation of cultural spaces which were not designed with urban accessibility criteria. Also, the workshop has been useful for discussion on how the respect and integration of cultural diversity facilitates the inclusiveness of traditionally discriminated people (e.g., gypsy people in Spain through flamenco). There was an attendance of 10 people, with a percentage of 60% female.
- **MILIEU Networking Workshop at UCM (Madrid December 4, 2021).** Meetings with diverse research groups on Gender Studies at UCM were organised for MILIEU

consortium members during the stay in Madrid. There was an attendance of 6 people, 4 of them were female.

- **Networking workshop with BAS High Management (Sofia, February 22, 2023).** Key finding and policy proposals from D5.1 and D2.1, as well as key initiatives from D5.1, D2.2 and D4.1 were presented to the high management of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences - the Chairman of BAS, Academician DSc Julian Revalski, the Scientific Secretary of the Man and Society Division, Prof Dr Ergyul Tair. There was an attendance of 3 people, 2 of them were female.
- **Presentation of MILIEU to the Scientific Board of the Centre for Education of BAS (Sofia, February 23, 2022).** The project and key upcoming initiatives - training and courses - and the project itself were presented to the Scientific Board of the Centre for Education of BAS, including the Chair of the SB and Deputy Chairwoman of BAS Prof. DSc Evdokia Pasheva.
- **Workshop on GEPs development and implementation (online, March 28, 2023).** This workshop was held with the collaboration of IPS and UNIGE. A group of researchers from IPS have been invited to join the workshop organised by the EC - DG RTD by means of Ecorys, devoted to GEPs: design, implementation, measurement, in the presence of international partners from three European Universities Alliances. The workshop will give birth to international work groups on the theme in the next future, as proposed by one of the three alliances (Ulysseus). There was an attendance of 20 people, and 80% of them were female.
- **Side event of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to the 66th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (online, March 17, 2023).** MILIEU representatives were invited to participate as audience in this Online event organised by the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in collaboration with the Government of Sweden, targeting representatives from governmental institutions, international womens' organisations and civil society initiatives working on gender equality. Under the title "Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all Women and Girls: Institutional Mechanism at the Centre of Solutions" the event presented the initial findings from the OSCE-wide mapping on the status, activities, achievements, lessons learned and good practices of governmental institutional mechanisms on the advancement of women and of gender equality. There was an attendance of 40 people.

- **Networking and liaison event for sister projects (Genova, January 27, 2023).** It was held by IPS and UNIGE. UniGE initiated a networking and liaison event for several sister projects - MILIEU, GenderEX (H2020 Project, GA 952432) and EDIRE (HEU project, GA 101060145), to which UNIGE is participating as a partner. Topics of the discussions included future plans for joint projects and joint initiatives. There was an attendance of 12 people, 10 of them were female.
- **Presentation of MILIEU and participation of IPS-BAS at the EDIRE project (online, February 16, 2023).** Lyuba Spasova participated in EDIRE project ([EDIRE – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion](#)) online open event on Gender Policies in European Universities, February 16, 2023.
- **Meetings with Beatrice Avolio, head of the Department of postgraduate studies in Business at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (Madrid, May 30 and 31, 2023).** Expert in diversity and gender, founder of the Center for Leadership, Women and Equity, professor Avolio shared interesting ideas about women studies, diversity and female leadership, opening new Latin American perspectives for MILIEU, including shared events and research in the near future.
- **Work Visit at UNIGE– Dipartimento di Informatica, Bioingegneria, Robotica e Ingegneria dei Sistemi – UniGe (Genova, May 9, 2023).** Work visit and networking of the IPS team at UNIGE, meetings with Antonio Sgorbissa and PhD Students.
- **Networking meetings at Italian Institute of Technology - Center for Diversity, inclusion and social impact (Genova, May 11, 2023).** Work visit and networking of IPS team at IIT, meetings with Lina Donnarumma and colleagues, planning also future possible collaborations in the domain of the MILIEU project.
- **Networking meetings at UNIGE - Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione (DISFOR), AG-AboutGender Journal, an international journal edited at UNIGE (Genova, May 12, 2023).** Work visit and networking of IPS team at UNIGE meetings with AG scholars - Emanuela Abbatecola and Isabel Fanlo Cortes.
- **Networking and project dissemination in Latin America (Colombia, June 2023 and Dominican Republic, November 2023).** Patricia Núñez and Juan Pavón have presented project results at different events and universities in Colombia and Dominican Republic, which are potential partners for future projects, some already being prepared for a Marie-Curie action on staff exchange (deadline for submission: feb. 2024). In particular, the universities Sergio Arboleda (Bogotá), and Caldas

(Manizales) in Colombia and the Dominican university PUCMM.

- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM Equality Unit (Madrid, May 30, 2023).** Work Visit and Networking Meeting of IPS team at UCM Equality Unit – University of Complutense, Isabel Tajaurce and Clara Rebato.
- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM Erasmus Department (Madrid, May 31, 2023).** Work Visit and Networking Meeting of IPS team at UCM Erasmus Department, José Antonio San Román and PhD Students.
- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM (Madrid, June 1, 2023).** Work Visit and Networking Meeting of IPS team at UCM, Franceso Zurian and Beatrice Alecchi.
- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM The Feminist Research Centre (Madrid, June 2, 2023).** Work Visit and Networking Meeting of IPS team at UCM The Feminist Research Centre, Yanna Franco.
- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at IPS (Sofia, June 15, 2023).** Work Visit and Networking Meeting of UniGe representatives with IPS managerial team.
- **Networking meetings at Universidad Sergio Arboleda (Bogotá, June 16, 2023).** Work visit and networking of UCM representative to present MILIEU and MSCA Staff Exchange program initiatives
- **Networking meetings at Kadir Has University (Istanbul, September 7, 2023).** Networking meetings of IPS at Kadir Has University make contacts and plan future events. There were 6 people involved, 4 of them female. This event stems from the H2020 “sister” Project GENDEREX (GA 952432) to which UNIGE is participating as a partner and coordinated by Kadir Has.
- **Networking meetings at University of Trento, Feminist scholars (Trento, October 3, 2023).** Work visit and networking at Trento. Meeting of IPS team with Elena Pavan and colleagues. There were 6 people involved, 5 of them female.
- **Networking meetings at UniGe, Franco Amoretti, Director of DISFOR (Genova, October 5, 2023).** Work visit and networking at Genovca with Franci Amoretti, Director of DisFor to have Erasmus agreement and project ideas. There were 6 people involved, 5 of them female.

- **Workshop “I want to be an astronaut” and networking tour at Genova Book Pride (Genova, October 6, 2023).** Workshop organised by UniGe as part of the Genova Book Pride and visited by the IPS team. There was an attendance of 50 people.
- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM (Madrid, October 24, 2023).** Networking meeting, IPS team and Vice Director with José Antonio San Román, Vicedean of International Relations, Faculty of Communication. Also, a meeting with the Vice Director with Ubaldo Cuesta, Vicerector of Communication, Complutense University. There were 5 people involved, 2 of them were female.
- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM (Madrid, October 25, 2023).** Networking meeting, IPS team with Cristóbal Fernández, Communication Manager of the Faculty of Communication. Also, with Dimitrina Jivkova, Vice Dean of Research, Faculty of Communication. There were 5 people involved, 2 of them were female.
- **Networking event at the Museo del Traje (Madrid, October 27, 2023).** Networking event, organised by UCM and participated by the IPS team and many colleagues and collaborators of UCM. There was an attendance of 30 people, 60% of them were female.
- **Final Dissemination Event of MILIEU plus networking in Brussels (Brussels, December 12, 2023).** There was an attendance of 25 people. Milieu core results and beneficiary testimonies were presented to MILIEU close collaborators and related organisations, with the participation of 25 persons in a small scale conference in Brussels, hosted by the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria.

3.4. Conference and workshop organisation and participation

Conference and workshop organisation and participation was one of the core activities for enhancing and acknowledging excellent scientific research in the project and related topics, and fostering IPS-BAS international visibility and activities. Partner organisations UNIGE and UCM also contributed to and benefited from those activities, with effects on their international profile. At the local level, several workshops were celebrated, addressing women studies, equality, diversity and similar topics related to the main topics of MILIEU. Joint conference participation among partners was fostered, entailing proposals for and coordination of thematic sessions or roundtable discussions. IPS-BAS was invited to

participate in the conferences and workshops organised at UNIGE and UCM, whenever relevant topics and themes were identified. Furthermore, the participation of scholars from IPS-BAS in relevant international conferences on MILIEU project themes was encouraged.

The most relevant **conference** participation include the following:

- **Creative Cities international academic conference hosted by UCM (Madrid, December 1, 2021).** The conference explored innovative actions taken by public and private entities, on a national and international level to address global urban challenges. MILIEU partners participated with several presentations: “No Place Like Home: A Gendered Approach to Spatial Dimensions of Violence” by Lyuba Spasova, “Gender and accessibility to public spaces in Sofia” by Shaban Darakchi, “An Alternative Way of Living and Heterotopic Space in Post-Socialist Society. New Housing Projects” by Galina Denkova and “A Gendered Approach to Interpreting the Shadow Economy” by Emilia Chengelova.
- **MILIEU Conference Women, Disability and Inclusion (Sofia/Online, December 15, 2021).** It was the first international conference of the MILIEU project in 2021. It explored the main issues and problems related to women's studies, disability and inclusion. Scholars were invited to submit theoretical or methodological proposals that presented the state of art in the fields and their current research endeavours, for instance: “Non disabled researchers and disability studies” by Rita Benchivenga, “Women trapped in the shadow economy” by Emilia Chengelova, “Which disability?: Reflections on different disabilities in research” by Shaban Darakchi, “Gender Indicators: A Starting Point for Diversity Indicators” by Enrico Di Bella, among others. UNIGE and IPS participated in this conference.
- **National conference "Feminism: mobilisations and contexts" (Sofia/Online, January 28, 2022).** The conference aims to address and reflect on current trends in Europe in Bulgaria of anti-gender movement and feminist mobilisations and resistance. Organisers: Network for Cultural Studies and Bulgarian Fund for Women. There was an attendance of 25 people, 80% of whom were female.
- **Inspiring Women-Global faces: Gendered MediaSpace (Online, March 8, 2022).** The presentation had 140 participants, 113 of whom were female. IAMCR's Gender and Communication Section and the Delhi Metropolitan Education Media School marked International Women's Day with the webinar "Inspiring Women - Global Faces / Gendered Media Space: Shattering the Glass Screen", including a presentation by Patricia Núñez.
- **Communicative Cities Research Network Symposium 2022 (London, March 24-25, 2022).** Co-organized by London School of Economics, Center for Information and Communication Studies, Fudan University, Shanghai, China, ECREA - European Communication Research and Education Association- Urban Communication Center,

Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea Urban Communication Foundation. UCM and IPS delivered a joint research project “Smart urban futures and the digital divide realities: the tale of three European cities”, conducted by Olga Kolotouchkina, Liisa Hanninen and Lyuba Spasova. The symposium was attended by 85 scholars, 60 of whom were female.

- **5th International Conference on Gender Research (Online, Aveiro, Portugal, April 28-29, 2022).** The ICGR 2022 conference aimed to promote new insights and discussion about the current global perspectives, considering the differences in theoretical and subject fields’ approaches across time, countries and economic sectors, with its implications and with the aim to improve and share the scientific knowledge on gender research. MILIEU team members participated with a non-academic paper presenting key aspects of the project, had networking meetings and exchanges with scholars working in the field of gender research.
- **72nd Annual International Communication Association Conference 2022 (Paris, May 25-31, 2022).** The research project “Paralympic Sponsorship: redefining the role of brands in disability narratives” focused on innovative communication strategies of global brands aimed at fostering visibility and fair representation of people with disabilities in public sphere, was presented at the Communication and Sports section of the Conference by Olga Kolotouchkina and Gema Bonaes Daimiel from UCM.
- **IAMCR, Global 2022 Conference (Beijing, China/Online, July 11-15, 2022).** “Communication Research in the Era of Neo-Globalisation: Reorientations, Challenges and Changing Contexts” was the key theme of the conference. The MILIEU team participated in the thematic panel “Women, disabilities and equality in higher education” coordinated by Olga Kolotouchkina, Liisa Hanninen and Lyuba Spasova. The presentations held by the team included: “Digital inclusion and inequalities in urban life: examining the intersection of gender, age, impairment, and vulnerabilities in three European cities” by Olga Kolotouchkina, Liisa Hanninen and Lyuba Spasova, “Good practices of the University of Ruse, Bulgaria in the social inclusion of students with disabilities” by Ani Popova, “Roma women, failing policies and “integrating” actors in Bulgaria” by Shaban Darakchi, and “Women, disabilities and equality in higher education” by Snejanka Malcheva Stoyanova.
- **ECREA 9th European Communication Conference, "Rethink impact" (Aarhus, Denmark, October 19-22, 2022).** The MILIEU team participated in this prestigious conference with a thematic panel "The challenges of constructing an inclusive academy in Southern and Eastern Europe: Women, disabilities and equality in higher education". ESR and experienced researchers from the MILIEU consortium delivered presentations of their ongoing research projects: “Policies for social inclusion of students with special needs in a Bulgarian University” by Ani Popova, “Roma women, integration and political discourse in Bulgaria” by Shaban Darakchi, and “Spotting good practices in the domain of gender, disability and inclusion: Twinning for the East” by Liisa Hanninen, Olga Kolotouchkina and Clara Sánchez-Rebato Valiente.

- **MILIEU Conference "Gender, Disability and Violence" (Sofia, hybrid, October 6-7, 2022).** Recognising the many challenges related to gender, disability and violence studies, MILIEU aimed to contribute to the current academic discourse by organising a conference where these topics were approached from multiple different academic and/or professional perspectives in a semi-formal hybrid environment. The goal of this two-day interdisciplinary event was to bring together researchers from different levels and various academic backgrounds in the social sciences and humanities in order to discuss gender, disability and violence, as well as the areas and ways in which these factors overlap, intersect, or interact. There was an attendance of 75 people, 80% of whom were female.
- **"Gender Equality Plans and Universities of the Future" Round Table (Genova, January 25, 2023).** Organised by UNIGE, MILIEU is a co-organiser along with sister projects (EDIRE and GENDEREX, cf infra). There was an attendance of 100 people, 80% of whom were female.
- **BASEES Annual Conference (Glasgow, March 31- April 2, 2023).** A conference organised by the British Association for South-Eastern and Eastern European Studies. There was an attendance of 500 people, 70% of whom were female.
- **QueerFem International Conference (Greece, April 28-30, 2023).** Organised by Feminist Autonomous Centre for research. There was an attendance of 50 people, 90% of whom were female.
- **ESSHC European Social Science History Conference (Gothenburg, April 12-15, 2023).** A conference by the European Association for Social Studies History Research. There was an attendance of 300 people, 60% of whom female.
- **International Conference of Latin American Researchers (ALAIIC), (Barranquilla, Colombia, May 7, 2023).** Presentation and Workshop "Milieu: Case study and future projects" by Patricia Núñez. The networking workshop counted with the presence of scholars from several Latin American countries.
- **Sustainable Smart Cities and Territories International Conference (Manizales, Colombia - June 21-23, 2023).** The participation of MILIEU has been with the paper "Monitoring System for Detecting Non-inclusive Situations in Smart Cities" focused on a tool that uses machine learning for supporting the design process of smart cities services that are inclusive. This is an interdisciplinary work that shows how the MILIEU team can provide the expertise of social researchers in the definition of the domain under study. The work was presented by Juan Pavón from UCM.

- **29th International Conference of Europeanists (Reykjavik, June 27-30, 2023).** A conference organised by the Council of European Studies (CES). It had an attendance of 500 persons, 50% of whom were female.
- **ATGENDER Conference 2023 (Istanbul, September 4-6, 2023).** A conference organised by ATGENDER network with an attendance of 100 people, 90% of whom were female.
- **Midterm Conference of ESA RN23 Sexuality (Zagreb, September 27-29, 2023).** A conference organised by the Sexuality Network at the European Sociological Association. There was an attendance of 60 people, 80% of whom were female.
- **International academic conference “II Congreso Internacional sobre Pedro Almodóvar”.** (Madrid, October 24-25, 2023). Conference organised by UCM and visited by IPS. There was an attendance of 40 people, 80% of whom were female.
- **MILIEU "Gender, disability and social change" International Conference (Sofia and hybrid, November 24-26, 2023).** Organised by IPS and MILIEU team with an attendance of 50 people, 80% of whom were female.
- **ASEEES – 55th Conference (Philadelphia, November 29 - December 3, 2023).** Organised by ASEEES with an attendance of 500 people, 50% of whom were female.

Furthermore, the project has been involved in the following **workshops**:

- **MILIEU Networking Workshop at UCM (Madrid, December 1, 2021).** Meetings with diverse research groups on Gender Studies at UCM were organised for MILIEU consortium members during their visit to Madrid.
- **Joint workshop “Culture and Inclusiveness in the City of Madrid” (Madrid, MILIEU, December 3, 2021).** Cultural tour of the city of Madrid with a special focus on physical barriers and best practices of inclusive urban landscape. The visit has motivated reflection of different aspects of adaptation of cultural spaces which were not designed with urban accessibility criteria. Also, the workshop has been useful for discussion on how respect and integration of cultural diversity facilitate the inclusiveness of traditionally discriminated people (e.g., gypsy people in Spain through flamenco).

- **Workshop with BAS High Management (Sofia, February 22, 2022).** Workshop with BAS High Management. Key finding and policy proposals from D5.1 and D2.1, as well as key initiatives from D5.1, D2.2 and D4.1 were presented to the high management of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences - the Chairman of BAS, Academician DSc Julian Revalski, the Scientific Secretary of the Man and Society Division, Prof Dr Ergyul Tair. IPS participated in this event.
- **Workshop on GEPs development and implementation (Online, March 28, 2022).** A group of researchers from IPS-BAS and UNIGE were invited to join the workshop organised by the EC-DG RTD by means of Ecorys, devoted to GEPs: design, implementation, measurement, with participation of international partners from three European Universities Alliances.
- **Workshop “Faces and Places of Empowerment and Diversity” (Madrid, July 18, 2022).** This workshop was held by Olga Kolotouchkina and Liisa Hanninen from Complutense University of Madrid. It had 8 participants, 80% of whom were female.
- **Education, research and methodologies for Gender in Media and Communication in the digital age. Post Conference and Workshop prepared by UNESCO and IAMCR, (Madrid, July 21-23, 2022).** Jointly organised by the IAMCR Gender and Communication Section, the IAMCR Task Force for GAMAG, and the UNESCO UniTWIN on Gender Media and ICT, in collaboration with the AGEMI project. The event reflected on the shared concerns and willingness to collaborate, amongst different realities and networks, in making feminist pedagogies, methodologies and educational practices a strategic pillar in the implementation of a “New Gender Deal” in the field of media and communication studies. UCM participated in this event.
- **Workshop “On the dark side” (Sofia, October 6, 2022).** Held by a guest lecturer, Tenebris. A side event of the International conference "Gender, Disability and Violence" with the presence of 10 people, with a 70% of female attendance.
- **Ph.D. Workshop “Gender, Disability (Sofia, October 7, 2022).** This workshop was given by Aleksandra Traykova for the side event of the International conference "Gender, Disability and Violence". It had an attendance of 15 participants, 80% of whom were female.
- **Workshop “Education, research and methodologies for Gender in Media and Communications in the digital age. Post Conference and Workshop prepared by UNESCO and IAMCR” (Madrid, July 21-23, 2022).** This Workshop was held by UCM. Jointly organised by the IAMCR Gender and Communication Section, the IAMCR Task Force for GAMAG, and the UNESCO UniTWIN on Gender Media and ICT, in collaboration with the AGEMI project, will be explored over two days. The event reflects the shared concerns and willingness to collaborate, amongst different realities and networks, in making feminist pedagogies, methodologies and educational practices a strategic pillar in the implementation of a ‘New Gender Deal’

in the field of media and communication studies.

- **Workshop “Mental Health in Academia” (Online-Madrid, February 15, 2023).** This Workshop was given by Clara Sánchez-Rebato Valiente from UCM. It was dedicated to ESR’s but open to everyone. The activity provided tools to overcome these problems with an attendance of 26 people, approximately with a 80% female attendance.
- **Workshop “The anti-gender movement in Bulgaria” (Trento, Italy, October 3, 2023).** This seminar was given by Shaban Darakchi, Lyuba Spasova, Aleksandra Traykova and Carla Maria Reale with an attendance of 35 people.
- **Workshop “EU projects as a tool for enhancing career in academia.” (Madrid, Spain, October 24, 2023).** This Workshop in a Master’s at UCM was given by Liisa Irene Hänninen, Olga Kolotouchkina, Ingrid Ruiz, Lyuba Spasova, Shaban Darakchi and Aleksandra Traykova and had an attendance of 35 people.

3.5. Joint research project proposals

UNIGE team has helped IPS-BAS to define the framework of actions to implement the research activities of IPS-BAS in accordance with the strategic plan, and specifically, UNIGE has assisted IPS-BAS in project proposal drafting, and also, UCM has given some support. To start with, funding possibilities offered in the framework of national and international research funding programmes have been explored and to improve IPS-BAS staff’s proficiency in this field, a related training program was offered, corresponding to WP5. Expected and gained results were the following:

- At least 5 new project proposals within MILIEU duration (on the topic of the project, by extending its domain and by interdisciplinarity), at least 2 projects submitted by M24. IPS-BAS has presented and participated in 8 proposals to the following calls for proposals:
 - March 2024, HORIZON-CSA, call: HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-TALENTS-01. Project coordinator: IPS-BAS. Under preparation.
 - February 2023, MSCA Staff Exchange, call: HORIZON-MSCA-2023-SE-01-01. Project coordinator: IPS-BAS. Under preparation.
 - October 2023, HORIZON-CSA, call: Horizon-Widera-2023-Access-02, proposal acronym BETSI (Better Societal Impact of Science). Project coordinator: IPS-BAS. Currently under evaluation.
 - October 2023, HORIZON-CSA, call: HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-02-02: „Twinning Green Deal“. Project acronym WEANS (Water and climate change in present times). Project coordinator: IPB, Portugal. Currently under evaluation.
 - March 2023, MSCA Staff Exchanges, call HORIZON-MSCA-2021-SE-01-01. Project acronym YOUTH_EU (Youth_EU: Guidance to emancipation and autonomy of youth at risk of social exclusion in dialogue with third countries).

Project coordinator - UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE EDUCACION A DISTANCIA, Spain.

- November 2022, Horizon RIA, call: HORIZON-CL3-2022-DRS-01-04: „Better understanding of citizens’ behavioural and psychological reactions in the event of a disaster or crisis situation“. Project acronym MANDIS (Understanding Human Behaviour to Improve Crisis Management and Disaster Resilience). Project coordinator: IPS-BAS.
- April 2022, HORIZON-CSA, call: HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01. Project Acronym INCLUDE (Inclusion Beyond Balance - Inclusive Gender Equality for Excellence in Research). Project coordinator - IPS-BAS.
- March 2022, HORIZON-CSA, call: HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-TALENTS-01. Project Acronym EQUIDY (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as a Research Booster in Bulgaria). Project coordinator - IPS-BAS.

To accomplish these goals, apart from national opportunities, every pillar of Horizon Europe funding has been screened and considered for joint applications in the fields of MILIEU and beyond:

- a) In the first place, all opportunities arising from the calls published in the section “Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area” of Horizon Europe and its two components - “Widening participation and spreading excellence” and “Reforming and enhancing the European R&I system”;
- b) Opportunities proposed by the Horizon Europe Pillar I “Excellent Science” and by the Horizon Europe Pillar II “Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness” have also been considered as well as EIT, JRC and others, as the research issues fostered by MILIEU project are often transversal elements, required also within those calls;
- c) Other funding opportunities made available by other EU funding programmes, such as Creative Europe (CREA), Erasmus Plus Programme (EPLUS), Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV), European Territorial Cooperation programs (Interreg), Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), Justice Programme (JUST), etc.

3.6. RRI in project practice

Since the foundation of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) roughly ten years ago, this renewed research philosophy and discipline has transformed the way of doing research and innovation, bringing more responsibility, democracy, equality and transparency to the activity. Not a body of science in itself, this transversal discipline is driven by the quest of socially and environmentally desirable goals, giving response to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and doing science with and for the society. Whereas the first practices of RRI were mainly pilots and experiments, the discipline has moved from emerging to consolidated as it is used in a growing number of European and international projects, some of them entirely focused on RRI. In Horizon Europe and especially in societal

challenges, it has become a *sine qua non* condition for European and international funding. Researchers are asked to be more reflective, include civil society in the R&I process, to consider the consequences (positive and negative) their activity might have, and to work with deep ethical and open science principles. RRI had a key role to the discipline in MILIEU project in a twofold way: 1) as a research philosophy for the project and 2) as a discipline that MILIEU fosters and transmits to the academic world. For the first end, RRI dimensions and key elements of diversity, inclusion and gender equity, democratic decision making, anticipation and reflection, as well as open access publishing and science education have been embedded in the project design and structures. Room for improvement might have been detected in the field of civil society participation, especially of nonprofits and foundations working in the field of women, disability and inclusion.

For this second end, RRI basics were included in the projects' training activities, e.g a large hands-on RRI workshop during MILIEU summer school in Madrid, July 2022. Also, diverse aspects related to RRI, such as open access publishing or participatory research methods have been covered by the MILIEU training courses.

3.7. Visits and secondment

With the aim to fertilise intersectoral and interdisciplinary knowledge exchange the following activities were planned for the project period:

- **Short visits of research staff from UCM and UNIGE** at least once a year, with longer duration and intensity especially between M7-M19.
- **Secondment programme for senior research staff from IPS**, sent in mobility towards UNIGE and UCM in order to familiarise consortium members with the respective research methods.

In accordance with the "MILIEU COVID-19 Contingency Action Plan for 2021" these activities were on a waiting list in the beginning of the project, due to the sanitary situation in Europe, and therefor, face to face in-site visit and secondments started later than expected, during Autumn 2021.

During the visits, IPS-BAS and partner organisations staff familiarised themselves with different research methods, academic work systems, opportunities in the field of women, disability and inclusion studies, project proposals for European funding and RRI, among others.

Most of the academic exchanges described below were done with mixed teams of staff/researchers and ESR, also contributing to W4 (Expertise development for ESR) goals.

- **IPS visit to UCM, November 29 - December 4, 2021.** The IPS team visited UCM to attend an international conference and participate in networking events and workshops.

- **UCM visit to UNIGE, May 9-13, 2022.** The UCM team visited UNIGE for ideas exchange and networking. Also, short videos including UCM team members' declarations about the project were made.
- **IPS visit to UCM, July 12-20, 2022.** The IPS team and Doctoral students visited UCM to participate in the Summer school at El escorial. IPS members stayed longer to attend additional work meetings, networking events and a workshop.
- **UCM and UniGe visit to IPS-BAS, October 6-7, 2022.** During the Conference on Gender, Disability and Violence, UCM members participated in several meetings with international participants to prepare future projects and to create networks with early stage researchers.
- **IPS-BAS visit to UCM, May 29 - June 2, 2023.** IPS-BAS researchers had networking meetings with Milieu team in Spain, other members of UCM academic staff and with the Peruvian gender expert Beatrice Avolio. Also they met with a group of ESR from UCM that were to join the summer school in July, in Bulgaria.
- **UniGe visit to IPS-BAS, June 14-16 2023.** Work visit of Cinzia Leone to the IPS-BAS to coordinate future activities.
- **UCM and UniGe visit to IPS-BAS and summer school, July 12-16, 2023.** UCM team members and ESR visited Sofia and met with IPS-BAS staff, to discuss the coordination of the MILIEU Borovets summer school.
- **IPS-BAS visit to UCM, October 23-28, 2023.** During the last week of October, IPS-BAS team, together with the Vice-Provost and Communication Manager of the organisation paid a visit to UCM with the aim of establishing future collaborations and acquiring insights from benchmarking activities. During their stay, meetings with the UCM Vice Counsellor and Vice Dean of Communication were organised, as well as sessions with academic staff. The working week finished with a networking cocktail event with top researchers from UCM.
- **UCM and UniGe visit to IPS-BAS and Conference, November 24-26, 2023.** In the framework of the international MILIEU Conference in Sofia, UCM staff members visited IPS-BAS to discuss research projects and future collaboration.

3.8. Introducing research lines and academic CV

The following activities were carried out in regard to exploring research lines:

- **Reviewing curricula and teaching programmes** within consortium members to introduce new research lines linked to women, disability and inclusion. These subjects have been included in the summer schools and training courses, and will be present in the partners' training and academic teaching programs also once the project is completed, whenever possible. Four of the MILIEU lecture courses are to be

introduced as part of the curricula of the training centre of BAS and become part of the optional programme of future PHD students:

- Course “Methods and Methodology in research”;
 - Course “Social Inclusion and Disability”;
 - Course “Gender and Sexuality Studies”;
 - Course “Writing with a Tutor”.
- Putting in place **research development plans for each MILIEU consortium member**, capitalising on the WP2 activities. Partners have extended their research activity and future research plans, especially at IPS. ***A Strategy for establishing IPS as a leading research institution at EU and national level in the field of social sciences and humanities*** and a ***Plan for activities 2024-2025*** were elaborated and put into action.
 - Introducing **stable research lines related to women studies, disability and inclusion studies** at the academic level in Bulgaria, capitalising on the outcomes of the exchange plans developed in the framework of the research staff visits and staff & ESR secondments.

Most of the above mentioned activities have been merged into joint research project proposals, and detecting and taking advantage of new research exchanges and dissemination opportunities, such as conferences, networking events and joint publications. For instance IPS-BAS and UCM are working on a new research line “Cities and digital exclusion”, already presented in two European conferences and that will continue after the project finishes.

In addition, the researchers engaged in the MILIEU activities have added international networking and participation in the international arena in their CVs. ESRs also had the opportunity to follow specific seminars in the domain, with tips and hints on how to build the CV, to draft and to reinforce it, both within the Summer Schools of MILIEU and in the Summer Schools steadily organised at IPS.

4. Timing of activities

The calendars below include the core activities corresponding to MILIEU strategic plans for enhancing scientific excellence (D2.2), described in the current deliverable. Due to the synergy effects between WPs, they also include some actions belonging to the field of WP5 Expertise development in research management and fundraising, and WP6 Exploitation, sustainability and outreach (communication and dissemination activities). To avoid overlapping, results of these activities are recollected in more detail in the corresponding deliverables: mentoring and reinforcement in WP5 and communication and dissemination in WP6 reports. Due to the Covid-19 emergency situation, activities during the first half of 2021 were mostly carried out online.

ACTION PLAN 2021

ACTION	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Mentoring and reinforcement												
Training courses												
Qualitative sessions												
Visibility, networking, and internationalisation												
Communication and dissemination												
Knowledge management												
Joint research projects												
Exploitation of results												
Outreach activities												
RRI in practice												
Visits and staff exchange												
Introducing research lines												

ACTION PLAN 2022

ACTION	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Mentoring and reinforcement												
Training courses												
Qualitative sessions												
Visibility, networking, and internationalisation												
Communication and dissemination												
Knowledge management												
Joint research projects												
Exploitation of results												
Outreach activities												
RRI in practice												
Visits and staff exchange												
Introducing research lines												

ACTION PLAN 2023

ACTION	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Mentoring and reinforcement												
Training courses												
Qualitative sessions												
Visibility, networking, and internationalisation												
Communication and dissemination												
Knowledge management												
Joint research projects												
Exploitation of results												
Outreach activities												
RRI in practice												
Visits and staff exchange												
Introducing research lines												

5. Conclusions

The above mentioned activities in WP3, together with the synergies from WP4 and WP5 actions, have contributed to the successful completion of the following objectives: 1) boosting excellence in research and innovation capacity through the introduction of disability studies and gender mainstreaming within IPS-BAS and pursuing a shared research agenda among project partners; 2) enhancing knowledge exchange and transfer for what concerns the research topics at the core of MILIEU; 3) raising the profile and visibility of IPS-BAS and its staff; 4) increasing the international reputation and attractiveness of IPS-BAS within Bulgaria and in the EU.

Gender, diversity and inclusion studies, previously scarce, have become visible at IPS-BAS thanks to the organisation of project presentations, networking events, workshops and conferences, and participation of project partners, especially IPS-BAS, in this kind of international dissemination events. MILIEU team members from IPS were invited to participate in the committees for the elaboration of the GEPs of BAS and IPS and are now frequently invited as consultants or AB members to international project meetings and events.

Intensive knowledge exchange and transfer, as well as mutual learning experiences took place during the frequent short visits and secondments among IPS-BAS and partners. Joint abstract and session proposals and conference participation is expected to have improved the international visibility of IPS-BAS and partners, it also has contributed to an increased awareness of MILIEU core topics, women, disability and inclusion. The recognition received by both MILIEU and the team members, which acknowledges their efforts and the project outcomes, demonstrates the project's high results. MILIEU was recognised as the most notable internationally funded project executed by IPS-BAS in 2021, and it was prominently featured in the annual report of BAS achievements. MILIEU's manager, Lyuba Spasova, received a very high upvote score in the IPS Scientific Council elections. She was recently selected to participate in the SSH Sessions at the 42nd General UNESCO Conference and was also elected as a UNESCO representative of Bulgaria in the Intergovernmental Council of the MOST Programme.

Altogether, the activities listed in this report contribute to a renewed image and improved international reputation of IPS-BAS, related to values such as gender mainstreaming, inclusion, scientific excellence and internationalisation. The high number of joint project proposals, featuring new partners beyond the MILIEU consortium, and the significant potential for MILIEU spin-off projects to be coordinated by IPS-BAS demonstrate not only the consortium's effectiveness, but also the elevated reputation of the coordinating institution. Furthermore, the several collaborative initiatives related to gender, inclusion and disability topics, already in the planning stages for the coming year, demonstrate the consortium's ongoing commitment and collaborative spirit and their dedication to the topics of MILIEU. This positive momentum reflects not only the project's accomplishments, but also a promising trajectory for future endeavours and sustained collaboration.

Annexes

A.1. Event planning template

Event plan: title of the activity		 milieu <small>women disability and inclusion</small>	
Type of event:	Workshop, Training session...	Basic Agenda:	
Date, time and location:		09-10:00 Welcome	
Organized by:		10-11:00 Theory session	
Objectives:		11-12:00....	
Type of publics:			
Expected number of participants:		Final:	
WP:		Task:	
Trainers & speakers:			
Collaborating entities:			
Brief description of the event (máx 1 page):			
This event is part of the training activities for...			