



*Women, Disability, and Inclusion – Scientific Excellence in Bulgaria*  
 GA No. 952369

## Deliverable 5.3

# Recommendation to improve research management and administration in Widening countries

Work Package:	WP 5 - Expertise development in research management and fundraising
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Due date:	31-12-2023
Submission Date:	29-12-2023
Deliverable Type:	Document, report
Dissemination Level:	Public

## Version history

Version	Date	Author(s)	Comments
1.0	11/12/2023	Alessandro Meloni, Carla Maria Reale	First draft of the deliverable
1.1	27/12/2023	Lyuba Spasova	First Review
1.2	29/12/2023	Alessandro Meloni, Carla Maria Reale	Updates
1.3	30/12/2023	Lyuba Spasova	Review and Edits

## Deliverable abstract

This deliverable provides a comprehensive report on the MILIEU project activities carried out within WP5, highlighting the project's accomplishments, challenges, and strategic recommendations to improve research management and administration in Widening countries.

The report details the MILIEU project's pivotal role in shaping the discourse on gender equality and inclusivity, serving as a model for future endeavours seeking European funding in Widening Countries. Mentoring and reinforcement activities such as capacity building, high-level training, and the development of research management capabilities are highlighted as critical. Workshops, operational procedure reinforcement, template and documents creation, and the identification of contact persons for research offices are all activities that contribute to increasing external funding and aligning with Horizon Europe eligibility criteria. Furthermore, the report emphasises the importance of training courses in a variety of areas such as fundraising, project management, intellectual property rights, technological transfer, and gender and disability awareness. These courses demonstrate a strategic approach to comprehensive skill set development and knowledge dissemination within the context of a growing country.

Finally, the report identifies a range of challenges encountered during project implementation in Widening Countries, ranging from insufficient information on funding programmes to issues with international networking and co-financing. The report makes a series of strategic recommendations to address these challenges in a systematic manner. These recommendations emphasise the importance of specialised units, training courses, and policies aimed at improving institutional and administrative capacity, encouraging collaboration, and assisting scientists throughout the project lifecycle.

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# Glossary of abbreviations

BAS	Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
EC	European Commission
ERA	European Research Area
ESR	Early-Stage Researcher
EU	European Union
IPS-BAS	Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
RRI	Responsible Research and Innovation
UCM	Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Complutense University of Madrid)
UNIGE	Università di Genova (Genova University)
WP	Work Package

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# 1. Introduction

WP5 aims at developing the IPS-BAS staff's expertise in management and administration skills to improve their capabilities in project design and management, to boost the internationalisation of the institution and the incidence of external funds for pursuing research activities. These activities represent the core of the capacity building actions within projects like the present one, devoted to strengthening the coordinator from a widening country.

The WP is pursuing the following specific objectives:

1. to put in place capacity building activities and high-level training for developing research management capabilities within BAS staff;
2. to implement sustainable and durable actions for ensuring a higher number of submitted proposals for receiving external funds through national, EU- and international funded programmes;
3. to engage the highest possible number of staff in the coordinating institution, especially those in high-level positions.

To ensure the widest uptake of project results, WP5 is addressed to the management and administration level of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and not only to IPS.

The following document is an outline of what was done during the MILIEU project within WP5 and, in particular, the activities concerning tasks 5.2, 5.3 e 5.4. The D5.3 shows the final reporting on all activities performed, highlighting items addressed, training materials used (to be made available in a public format), number of participants, outcomes of training evaluation, as well as a set of recommendations to be disseminated towards other Widening countries facing similar problems.

## 2. Mentoring and reinforcement

(Refers to T5.2 Mentoring and reinforcement, M7-M36; Task Leader: IPS in cooperation with all partners).

This task is devoted to raising BAS staff's awareness of the need to increase the involvement of the researchers' community in project design activities, in building project proposals, as a task necessary to academic life.

This task is part of the grant agreement and has been implemented within the Deliverable 5.1 action plan.

This is being achieved through the following set of activities:

1. Organisation of workshops and periodic meetings with the high-level management of BAS to implement positive actions to enhance the openness of BAS, its participation in EU funded research and in international research activities;
2. Reinforcement of the operational procedures of the research units through a monitoring system so that researchers and managers can fix objectives and goals, monitor and review performance, foresee particular training needs and ensure efficient use of resources;
3. Preparing a set of templates and tools, building on the expertise of UNIGE and UCM. Such templates will be made available in the intranet of BAS to be easily accessible to all researchers and administrative staff, in M24
4. Identifying contact persons within the research offices of UCM and UNIGE to serve as a help desk to help BAS better manage research administration and the procedures related to proposal preparation and submission.
5. Gender Equality Plans and other relevant regulatory documents. The goal is to implement the activity related to the Gender Equality Plan.
6. National working group "Women with Disabilities: Opportunities for Research and Project Activities"

### 2.1. Mentoring and reinforcement activities

- **Workshop with IPS High Management** (September 2021).

Key findings and challenges from the analysis of D5.1 were presented in a meeting with the High Management of IPS - Director, prof. DSc Vesselin Petrov, and Head of Finances, Maya Andreeva.

- **AtGender Group-mentoring Initiative** (October 2021 **New AtGender Group-mentoring Initiative**).

Some ESRs members of the project are taking part in this mentoring programme organised by AtGender, the *European Association for Gender Research, Education and Documentation*, which aims to help ESRs and professors in the process of balancing personal and academic life in a time where hybrid working systems tend to isolate new the forming members of the academic sphere.

The initiative conducted by Aino-Maija Elonheimo and Berteke Waaldijk started in October 2021 and consists of six to seven monthly meetings with the main goal of connecting small groups of ESRs members of ATGENDER whose field of study is focused on any field of gender studies. In addition, it aims to establish a permanent structure of mentoring and support within the AtGender network.

This mentoring group is organised following the premise that the ESRs help each other to overcome the difficulties associated with academic life in a very collaborative way through a different set of group activities that are organised following certain themes, which are planned in advance in order to use each theme as a core topic for each session.

- **Workshop and networking meetings at UCM (December 2021)**

Meetings with diverse research groups on Gender Studies at UCM were organised for MILIEU consortium members during the stay in Madrid. Joint workshop Culture and Inclusiveness in the City of Madrid was held during the stay of IPS BAS team.

- **Workshop with BAS High Management (February 2022)**

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. Participant: 3 (2 female).

- **Presentation of MILIEU to the Scientific Board of the Centre for Education of BAS (February 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, incl. Chair of the SB and Deputy Chairwoman of BAS Prof. DSc Evdokia Pasheva.

- **Workshop on GEPs development and implementation (28th March 2022).**

A group of researchers from IPS-BAS 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 was held online on the 18th March 2022 and will give birth to international work groups on the theme in the next future, as proposed by one of the three alliances (Ulyseus).

- **Meeting with the high management of IPS to propose internalisation aiding initiatives (29th March 2022)**

A number of initiatives to promote visibility of IPS were proposed and discussed at the Director's Council such as: publishing institutional profiles, reorganisation of the IPS web-site, reorganisation of the mail-servers of the institute. Specific actions were undertaken by members of the MILIEU team to implement the measures. Participant: 6 (60% female).

- **Workshop in Spain (Gender and Media) Workshop: Education, research and methodologies for Gender in Media and Communications in the digital age. Post Conference and Workshop prepared by UNESCO and IAMCR (21st-23rd July 2022)**

The event was comprised of a first day of keynote speakers, panels, and roundtables, in hybrid format (in presence and online), and will also have a second “networking day” (also hybrid) where members are invited to get together, connect ongoing experiences and develop ideas for future collaborations in a more informal setting.

- **Networking and liaison event for sister projects (5th October 2022, Genoa)**

UniGE initiated a networking and liaison event for several sister projects - MILIEU, Gender X and EDIRE. Topics of the discussions included future plans for joint projects and joint initiatives. Participant: over 12 (10 female).

- **Presentation of MILIEU and participation of IPS-BAS at the EDIRE project (16th February 2023)**

Lyuba Spasova participated in EDIRE project (EDIRE – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) online open event on Gender Policies in European Universities.

- **Work Visit at UNIGE (DIBRIS - Department of Informatics, Bioengineering, Robotics and Systems Engineering – UniGe) (9th May 2023, Genoa, Italy)**

Work visit and networking of IPS team at UNIGE, meetings with Antonio Sgorbissa and PhD Students. Participant: 10 (50% female).

- **Networking meetings at Italian Institute of Technology - Centre for Diversity, inclusion and social impact (11th May 2023, Genoa, Italy)**

Work visits and networking of IPS team at IIT, meetings with Lina Duanamuna and colleagues. Participant: 10 (50% female).

- **Networking meetings at UNIGE - Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione, AG-AboutGender (12th May 2023, Genoa, Italy)**

Work visit and networking of IPS team at UniGE meetings with AG scholars - Emanuela Abbatecola and Isabel Fanlo Cortes. Participant: 6 (5 female).

- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM Equality Unit (30th May 2023, Madrid, Spain)**

Work Visit and Networking Meeting of IPS team at UCM Equality Unit – University of Complutense, Isabel Tajaurce and Clara Sánchez-Rebato Valiente. Participant: 4 (3 female).

- **Meetings with Beatrice Avolio, head of the Department of postgraduate studies in Business at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru** (30th – 31st May 2023, Madrid, Spain)

Expert in diversity and gender, founder of the Centre 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 and Networking Meeting at UCM Erasmus Department** (31st May 2023, Madrid, Spain)

Work Visit and Networking Meeting of IPS team at UCM Erasmus Department, José Antonio San Román and PhD Students. Participant: 4 (3 female).

- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM** (1st June 2023, Madrid, Spain)

Work Visit and Networking Meeting of IPS team at UCM, Franceso Zurian and Beatrice Alecchi. Participant: 4 (3 female).

- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM The Feminist Research Centre** (2nd June 2023, Madrid, Spain)

Work Visit and Networking Meeting if IPS team at UCM The Feminist Research Centre, Yanna Franco. Participant: 4 (3 female).

- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at IPS** (15 June 2023, Sofia, Bulgaria)

Work Visit and Networking Meeting of UniGe representatives with IPS managerial team. Participant: 5 (3 female).

- **Networking meetings at Universidad Sergio Arboleda** (16 June 2023, Bogotá, Colombia)

Work visits and networking of UCM representative to present MILIEU and MSCA Staff Exchange program initiatives. Participant: 12 (6 female).

- **Networking meetings at Kadir Has University** (September 2023, Istanbul, Turkey)

Networking meetings of IPS at Kadir Has University make contacts and plan future events. Participant: 6 (4 female).

- **Networking meetings at University of Trento, Feminist scholars** (3rd October 2023, Trento, Italy)

Work visits and networking at Trento. Meetings of IPS team with Elena Pavan and colleagues. Participant: 6 (5 female).

- **Networking meetings at UniGe, Franci Amoretti, Director of DisFor** (5th October 2023, Genoa, Italy)

Work visits and networking at Genovca with Franci Amoretti, Director of DisFor to have Erasmus agreement and project ideas. Participant: 6 (5 female).

- **Workshop “I want to be an astronaut” and networking tour at Genova Book Pride** (6th October 2023, Genoa, Italy)

Workshop organized by UniGe as part of the Genova Book Pride and visited by IPS team. Participant: 50 (50% female).

- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM** (24th October 2023, Madrid, Spain)

Networking meeting, IPS team and Vice Director with José Antonio San Román, Vicedean of International Relations, Faculty of Communication. Participant: 5 (2 female).

- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM** (24th October 2023, Madrid, Spain)

Networking meeting, IPS team and Vice Director with Ubaldo Cuesta, Vicerector of Communication, Complutense University. Participant: 5 (2 female).

- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM** (25th October 2023, Madrid, Spain)

Work visit and Networking meeting, IPS team with Cristóbal Fernández, Communication Manager of the Faculty of Communication. Participant: 5 (2 female).

- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at UCM** (25th October 2023, Madrid, Spain)

Networking meeting, IPS team with Dimitrina Jivkova, Vice Dean of Research, Faculty of Communication. Participant: 4 (3 female).

- **Networking event at the Museo del Traje** (27th October 2023, Madrid, Spain)

Networking event, organized by UCM and participated by IPS team and many colleagues and collaborators of UCM. Participant: 30 (60%female).

- **Networking and project dissemination in Latin America** (June 2023 - November, Colombia and Dominican Republic)

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.

## 2.2. Staff exchanges and short visits

In order to conduct all the mentoring and reinforcement activities listed above, the MILIEU team did a total of 10 staff exchanges and short visits in partnering institutions (visits in other institutions are not included here):

- **Work visit to UCM in October 2023**

From the 23rd to the 28th of October IPS 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. IPS members participated in a workshop for UCM students on the topic of “EU projects as a tool for enhancing careers in academia”. The working week finished with a networking cocktail event with top researchers from UCM.

- **Work visit to UniGe in October 2023**

This work visit was celebrated on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of October. On the 5<sup>th</sup> some members of the IPS had a work and networking meeting with Franci Amoretti, Director of DisFor to have Erasmus agreement and project ideas. On the 6<sup>th</sup> the workshop “I want to be an astronaut” was organised by UniGe as part of the Genova Book Pride and visited by the IPS team.

- **ESR staff exchange IFS at UCM in June 2023**

From the 30<sup>th</sup> of May to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, professors Shaban Darakchi and Aleksandra Traykova visited UCM. During their visit, they had meetings at the Gender Equality Unit from the UCM and at the Feminist Research Centre of UCM, and they also met with other visiting academics such as Beatrice Avolio from Perú. In addition the Bulgarian representatives had conversation with the Erasmus Department as well as with some PhD and Master degree students, who were going to be part of the Bulgarian Summer School in July 2023.

- **Work Visit and Networking Meeting at IPS in June 2023**

On the 15 of June, UNIGE representatives visited Sofia and had a networking meeting with the IPS managerial team to enhance knowledge exchange and plan further activities in terms of research and project proposals.

- **Short staff exchange at UniGe in May 2023**

From the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of May members of the IPS team accompanied by one ESR did a work visit UniGe, specifically the Dipartimento di Informatica, Bioingegneria, Robotica e Ingegneria dei Sistemi (DIBRIS) where they had a meeting with Prof Antonio Sgorbissa and PhD students. During this visit they also did networking at the Italian Institute of Technology, in the Center for Diversity, Inclusion and Social Impact where they met with Lina Donnarumma and colleagues. Lastly, during this visit the IPS members visited the Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione (DISFOR), seed of the journal AG-AboutGender, where they had networking meetings with AG scholars, Emanuela Abbatecola and Isabel Fanlo Cortes.

- **Short staff exchange IPS at UniGe in January 2023**

Two members of the IPS staff did a short staff exchange visit to UNIGE from January 24 to January 28, 2022. During the week, IPS staff members Lyuba Spasova and Shaban Darakchi worked together with the UNIGE team in future actions planning, among them the forthcoming call for proposals within the Horizon Europe Programme.

- **Short staff exchange at IPS in October 2022**

From the 3 to 8 of October one member of the UNIGE team, Cinzia Leone and two from UCM - Juan Pavón and Patricia Nūnes Gomez, did a short term staff exchange at IPS, on the occasion of the Conference held in Sofia as per the point 4 here in the following.

- **Short staff exchange at UCM in July 2022**

The IPS team and Doctoral students visited UCM to participate in the Summer school at El Escorial. Two IPS team members - Lyuba Spasova and Shaban Darakchi, and an ESR, part of the project - Ralitsa Dimitrova stayed until the 20th of July to attend additional work meetings, networking events and a workshop on the topic of "Faces and Places of Empowerment and Diversity".

- **Short staff exchange UCM at UniGe in May 2022**

Two members of the UCM staff did a short staff exchange visit to UNIGE from May 9th to May 13th, 2022. During the week, UCM staff members Olga Kolotouchkina and Liisa Hänninen worked together with the UNIGE team in future actions planning, among them the forthcoming summer school and other ESR activities. It was also the opportunity to participate in the MILIEU short video shooting and meet some ESR.

- **Short staff exchange at UCM in November/December 2021**

Two members of the IPS staff - Shaban Darakchi and Lyuba Spasova, accompanied by an ESR - Ralitsa Dimitrova, did a short staff exchange visit to UCM from November 29 to December 4, 2021. During their stay they participated in an international conference, attended a workshop and held a couple of networking meetings. Together with the rest of the partners they held a couple of work meetings to plan future events and joint endeavours within MILIEU.

## 3. Training courses

(Refers to T5.3 Training courses:M8-M36; Task Leader: UNIGE in cooperation with all partners).

Six kinds of training courses are being offered for different groups of personnel at BAS:

1. fundraising and research funding;
2. project design and drafting;
3. project management, administration and financial issues;
4. IPR and technological transfer;
5. Responsible Research Innovation principles, especially for what concerns Open Science, ethics and gender issues in research;
6. gender and disability awareness and unconscious bias for leading position Managers/Chairpersons of BAS, Secretaries of scientific fields, Directors and Deputy Directors of Institutes (around 200 persons on leading positions).

Some of those training courses are organized in synergy with FP3 and FP4, some are entirely in FP5, and there are some courses that are not included in the list below as they are conducted entirely within other work packages

In particular, the trainings on fundraising and research funding is being focused on both national and international funding. Regarding national funding, specific calls published by the Bulgarian government and Bulgarian Ministries or Regional Authorities are being considered. Additionally, another training line is devoted to the international arena and centred on Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe. All the training courses also aim at refining and establishing soft skills together with hard skills. In all courses, particular attention is devoted to explaining how to embed Responsible Research Innovation principles in project proposals.

To achieve maximum impact for the widening country, those courses were open also for scholars from other academic and educational institutions. The courses were available for ESRs in case of interest, although it should be noted that for some of the topics separate courses will be organized separately for ESRs because of the differing expertise and experience levels.

Precise timings, contents, locations have been described in D5.1 and it is a part of D3.2. D5.2 show part of the activities carried out until month 15Month.

### 3.1. Webinars/seminars and workshops

A number of webinars/seminars, workshops and training have been organised, both in-person and online:

- **Joint workshop Culture and Inclusiveness in the City of Madrid** (December 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., gipsy people in Spain through flamenco). Participant: 10 (60% female).

- **Seminar 'Proyectos europeos y ERCs, ¿cara o cruz?'** (24th November 2021, Madrid, Spain)

Seminar in Madrid about the themes of European Project. Participants: 24, 30% female.

- **Seminar: Academic blog sand Networking** (22nd February 2022)

In webinar the attendees learnt how to use social media tools such as blogs and several social media sites to build professional profiles with which they will be able to do academic networking.

- **Ph.D. Workshop "Gender, Disability and Violence"** (7th Oct. 2022).

Side event of the international conference "Gender, Disability and Violence". Moderator: Aleksandra Traykova.

- **Seminar 'Sex/ gender and intersectionality in Horizon proposals'** (15th December 2022).

This online training aimed at scholars from all the scientific fields and also early-stage researchers. It was dedicated to understanding the importance of the gender/sex dimension in project proposals that aspire to be funded by Horizon Europe (where this aspect is mandatory). During the training Dr. Bencivenga also pointed out relevant resources to learn how to implement this aspect in project's submissions. Participants: 15, 80% female.

- **Seminar 'Marie Curie postdoctoral fellowship program'** (December 2022).

The introductory meeting for the MILIEU initiative Marie Curie postdoctoral fellowship program: project preparation course. Participants: 7, 85% female.

- **Seminar 'Scholarships and Grants for Doctoral Students'** (24th November 2022).

The introductory meeting to present the Marie Curie postdoctoral fellowship program: project preparation course. The short session focused on funding opportunities and scholarship grants for ESR in social sciences and humanities. The training had approximately 20 participants, 80% of whom were female.

- **Seminar " Interdisciplinary research for philosophers and other non-scientists – A personal view on 4E cognitive science"** (22nd March 2022).

In a recent seminar, Carlos Vara Sánchez highlighted the growing significance of the interdisciplinary framework '4E cognition' and the methodology of dynamical systems. '4E cognition,' introduced by Shaun Gallagher in 2007, integrates theories from philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience. The seminar also covered key concepts from the dynamical systems approach in mathematics, emphasizing their application in theoretical models of cognitive processes, including state variables, attractors, repellers, self-organization, and constraints.

- **MILIEU training: Sex/gender and intersectionality in Horizon proposals** (15th December 2022).

Integrating a gender dimension in proposals funded by Horizon Europe is mandatory. Some researchers and particularly those in STEM disciplines are often puzzled by this request and believe it is sufficient to guarantee a numerical gender balance in the research team to satisfy the EU request. Dr. Rita Bencivenga will guide the participants in understanding the meaning of the “sex/gender dimension” in proposals and suggests valuable resources to learn how to implement it.

The course is intended for early-stage researchers and experienced scholars in all scientific fields. Participants: 42, 85% female.

- **Workshop “Mental Health in Academia”** (15th February 2023).

An online workshop dedicated to ESR’s but open to everyone. The activity provided tools to overcome these problems. The workshop aimed to show some of the mental health-related issues that can be faced when one is interested in pursuing an academic career, as well as the emotional element of that decision and, more importantly, some tricks to overcome those problems. This activity can be useful for a plethora of individuals, from university students of different levels to people whose work demands a high level of concentration and mental effort for very long periods of time.

- **Training course “Legal and ethical issues of EU Programmes”. Seminar: Contractual issues of EU Programmes. The Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement** (17th March 2023).

The seminar refers to the structure and the main contents of the model grant agreement regulating the relationships between the European Commission or other EU Granting Authority and the Beneficiaries of grants of the European Union. In addition, the seminars will consider the structure and the contents of the Consortium Agreement according to the model Desca.

- **Info session “Funding for research projects, scholarships, and research visits: Sources and tips”** (4th April 2023)

Although there are many research funding programs and collaborations, very often information about them can be confusing due to the multitude of measures they include, and sometimes presented in technical language that causes problems for researchers who do not

have experience with this type of project financing. Within this seminar, various funding opportunities for research projects, research stays, and conferences will be discussed and basic advice for applications and cooperation between national and transnational research teams will be offered. The main objective of the seminar is to inform about the different funding opportunities and the target groups for which these programs are intended. In the framework of the seminar, both Bulgarian funding sources and measures under HORIZON, COST, Marie Curie, ERC and other international programs will be presented.

- **Seminar: Useful Resources for Researchers in Gender Studies** (4th May 2023).

The seminar seeks to provide a comprehensive list of the databases, the institutions, the available funding schemes, and the most relevant publications in the field of Gender Studies for scholars that may be newcomers to the area. Throughout the seminar, we will explore the challenges and opportunities gender researchers face in their careers; discuss the potential for the social impact of our work, as well as the alliances that we can establish with grassroots associations and institutions that deal with gender (in)equality across different industries; and talk about the emotional labour and the importance of building communities in a field of knowledge that is so closely tied to affect and identity. Although Gender Studies has been, until very recently, an area of research that has been grossly overlooked and underfunded in various contexts, gender equality is now a top priority of European Union Institutions, so there are numerous opportunities for researchers, professors, trainers, and students that, through their various disciplines, have an interest in feminist thought and in gender and sexuality studies.

- **Workshop “The anti-gender movement in Bulgaria”**. (3rd October 2023).

Workshop for students and scholars at University of Trento. Shaban Darakchi and Lyuba Spasova. Participants: 35 (60% female).

- **Seminar: Academic journals indexing systems and impact factor: Web of Science and Scopus** (27th October 2023).

This online workshop will explore the most important academic journal indexing systems and their impact factors. Impact factors are 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. They are published annually, using the publication year of the article as a reference for evaluation. In this seminar, we will discover the most well-known of these indices is the Impact Factor (IF) published in the Journal Citation Reports (JCR), which calculates the citations received by journals indexed in the Science Citation Index and Social Sciences Citation Index, included in the main collection of the Web of Science (WoS) database. Also, in the seminar, we will talk about the journals indexed in Scopus and its several impact indices (SJR, CiteScore, and SNIP).

- **Seminar: Gender mainstreaming** (13th November 2023).

Gender mainstreaming in the EU has made significant progress in promoting gender equality. However, challenges remain in implementation, and criticism has led to a shift towards more

inclusive approaches that take into account a wider range of identities and experiences, e.g. related to age, ethnicity, disability, religion, etc.

- **Workshop “EU projects as a tool for enhancing career in academia” (24th October 2023).**

Workshop for students at UCM. MILIEU was presented in detail, as long with other useful strategies for academic career advancement.

- **Seminar: Social media as a tool for academic advancement of Early-Stage Researchers (27th November 2023).**

This webinar focused on the strategic use of social media in the context of scientific activities. The aim was to provide ESRs with insights into using social platforms to expand scientific networks, acquire essential skills and gain inspiration from experts using social media for scientific goals. Focus topics: Unconventional Networking: exploring unconventional methods of expanding scientific networks using social media. Skills acquisition: Develop skills for using social platforms as effective scientific tools. Insights from experts: Learn from experienced professionals familiar with using social media for scientific purposes.

## 3.2. Lecture courses

A number of lecture courses related to the topics of WP5 were conducted as well. As with the seminars and workshops some of those were held in synergy with WP4 and WP3. The list of lecture courses is as follows:

- **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.

The presentation from this training is available on the website and social media for unlimited download. Participants: 86, 62 females.

- **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, January 31, 2023)** Held by Shaban Darakchi from IPS.

In the first lecture of the course “Gender and Sexuality Studies”, basic notions and concepts concerning the social formation and regulation of gender and sexuality were examined. In this lecture participants learned about: (1) the importance of gender and sexuality topics in contemporary socio-political processes; (2) the difference between sex, gender and sexuality; (3) the main sociological approaches to the analysis of gender and sexuality; (4) gender and sexuality as cognitive and analytical tools in the social sciences.

○ **“Gender, Sex, and Socialization” (online, February 27, 2023).**

The lecture argued that socialization is a fundamental process in human development in which individuals acquire skills and knowledge for living in a given community and in society as a whole. The formation of the norms of masculinity and femininity based on the sex of individuals occupies a central place in the process of socialization. In the second lecture of the course, the main approaches and theories that explain the conscious and unconscious formation of male and female gender roles in different historical and cultural contexts will be examined. In this lecture, you will learn about: (1) the difference between biological and sociocultural approaches that explain gender socialization; (2) the factors influencing gender socialization (family, media, education) and (3) sociological approaches to the study of gender socialization.

○ **“Femininity and masculinity as sociological problems” (online, March 21, 2023)** It was held by Shaban Darakchi.

The lecture was focused on the topic of what are femininity and masculinity? Are there universal criteria for masculinity and femininity? Do notions of masculinity and femininity vary across cultures and historical periods? Masculinity and femininity are some of the most stable categories in public dialogue and public understandings that are taken for granted. The development of anthropology in the first decades of the 20th century proved that these categories were not universal across cultures and historical periods. Social movements and popular culture over the past few decades have further challenged the understanding of masculinity and femininity as universal categories. The third lecture of the course examines the ways in which femininity and masculinity are defined in different cultures and historical periods. Focusing on changing understandings of masculinity and femininity, this lecture examines (1) the nature of gender stereotypes based on the sex of individuals; (2) masculinity and femininity as sociological phenomena and (3) the main sociological approaches and concepts for their study.

○ **“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 inequalities is among the leading questions in sociology. Although absent from early sociological texts, the topic of inequalities between men and women became extremely relevant in the 20th century as a result of the industrial economy, military

conflicts and social movements for equality. In the fourth lecture of the course, basic sociological concepts about the influence of education, religion and the media on inequalities between men and women will be examined. The main objectives of the lecture are: (1) to examine the role of education in the reproduction of gender stereotypes and the main goals of inclusive education; (2) to analyse in a comparative perspective the regulation of men and women in fundamental religions and to present reformist religious movements that problematize religious texts; (3) to analyse the ways in which the media reproduce and reinforce inequalities between men and women and the policies to overcome them.

○ **“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.

The lecture argued that equality between men and women is one of the leading questions in sociology. Although absent from early sociological texts, the topic of inequalities between men and women became extremely relevant in the 20th century as a result of the industrial economy, military conflicts, and social movements for equality. In the fifth lecture of the course, basic sociological concepts about the influence of politics, media, and labour on inequalities between men and women will be examined. The main objectives of the lecture are: (1) to examine, in a comparative perspective, the role of politics in the reproduction and control of gender stereotypes and inequalities; (2) to present the basic concepts that examine the ways in which the media reproduce and reinforce inequalities between men and women and the policies to overcome them; and (3) to present basic concepts about the role of work practices and relationships in the process of gender socialization and their impact on gender inequalities.

○ **“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.

Gender and social interactions have been central themes in social research for decades. Understanding how gender norms influence the way we love, perceive our bodies, and encounter violence is crucial to dismantling existing stereotypes and fostering more inclusive societies. This lecture will provide a comprehensive overview of these issues and their implications for modern relationships and society as a whole. The main objectives of the lecture are: (1) to explore the multifaceted ways in which societal expectations, cultural norms, and personal experiences shape expressions of love and discover how these factors influence relationship dynamics, intimacy, and emotional connections between individuals of different genders; (2) to gain insights into the construction of gendered bodies and identities, examining the impact of societal beauty standards, body image, and resistance to gendered “body” norms and (3) to delve into the disturbing reality of gender-based violence, including domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and discrimination and to learn about the root causes of such violence and the measures society can take to combat it.

- **“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.

The societal influence on sexuality was generally ignored in early sociological texts, which often treated it as a private, individual affair. A transition happened in the mid-twentieth century. Traditional standards were challenged by the sexual revolution, women’s liberation, and movements, prompting interest in studying how societal institutions influence sexuality. The 1970s saw the emergence of critical voices such as Michel Foucault’s “History of Sexuality.” They highlighted the ways in which power, rhetoric, and institutions affect sexual identities and behaviours. This transformation, together with increasing social consciousness and activism, brought sexuality into the subject of sociology, recognizing its importance in comprehending human societies and their dynamics. Aiming to summarize these developments, the main objectives of the lecture were: (1) to explain how human sexuality became a sociological phenomenon shaped and regulated by cultural norms, values, and institutions; (2) to introduce key concepts in the sociology of sexuality as a basis for a more in-depth understanding of the subject; (3) to explore the rich tapestry of theories that underpin sexuality in sociology. From field theory, which investigates sexual encounters as dynamic social fields, to social script theory, which investigates how cultural scripts impact sexual behaviour, to macro-sociological theories, which evaluate broader societal consequences on sexuality.

- **“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.

This lecture delved into the subtle study of sexuality within the area of sociology, illuminating a twofold framework that splits the investigation into two major sections. The first section examines sexuality in the context of individual interactions. This includes everything from casual sexual interactions to the complexity of sexual monogamy, prostitution, and the frightening dynamics of sexual violence, such as rape. The lecture dives into the sociological aspects of these personal connections, examining the cultural institutions and power dynamics that shape and impact them. The second main section of investigation broadens the scope by investigating the deep influence of social institutions on human sexuality. The family, politics, education systems, religious organizations, and the media are among the key institutions investigated. The lecture investigates how these societal foundations impact sexual norms, attitudes, and expectations. It sheds light on how family structures and politics influence the formation of sexual identities, how educational systems impart sexual knowledge and values, the role of religious beliefs in influencing sexual norms, and the pervasive influence of media on shaping societal attitudes toward sex.

- **“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.

The lecture provided an overview of the emergence and the development of two key social movements, one focusing on gender and the other on sexuality. The goal of this lecture was to examine the complex relationships between these movements, using multiple methodologies within social movement theories with a special focus on the New Social Movements theories (NSM). The audience acquired insights into how these movements have influenced and shaped one another over time, generating a deeper understanding of the complex processes that govern social change in the realms of gender and sexuality. Finally, the lecture discussed critical approaches in studying social movements based on gender and sexuality issues in different contexts.

- **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.

This online lecture aimed to familiarise the participants with some of the already existing explanatory models that attempt to analyse and define disability. During the lecture attendees learnt about the following topics: the importance of the topic of disability in contemporary social-political processes; the main theoretical approaches to defining concepts such as “disability” and “illness”; the conceptual differences between the presented explanatory models and definitions.

- **“Social exclusion of people with disabilities” (online, February 28, 2023).** This seminar was held by Aleksandra Traykova from IPS.

Social exclusion is what happens when a particular person or category of persons faces obstacles in an attempt to achieve full social, economic, political or cultural participation in society. Certain groups are more likely than others to experience social exclusion. In the second lecture of our course, we will be discussing some of the key factors in the social exclusion of people with disabilities. In this lecture you will hear about: (1) the connection between unconscious bias and discrimination against people with disabilities in the workplace; (2) the role of assistive technologies in building inclusive environments at universities and workplaces, and (3) the impossibility of achieving academic and professional milestones as an obstacle to social inclusion.

- **“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. As it stands today, there is still widespread confusion over the meaning of “finding employment for people with disabilities”. Several aspects must be kept in mind when addressing the issue of targeted employment services.

- **“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.

Life with disabilities is a complex phenomenon tied to multiple social issues, which is why studying it necessitates an interdisciplinary approach. Bulgarian sociology’s first successful attempt to build a comprehensive account of social attitudes towards disability and the people living with disabilities (both across the nation and globally) exists thanks to Prof. Bozhidar Ivkov. Prof. Ivkov’s years-long academic career in the field of medical sociology and the sociology of health care has produced the necessary theoretical-methodological basis for a truly profound look at problems such as social barriers, social inequalities, stigmatization etc. In lecture four of the “Disability and social inclusion” training course, we will examine Prof. Ivkov’s monograph “Sociology of Disability” and its contributions to the Bulgarian branch of disability studies.

- **“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.

The first part of the seminar – “Multisensoriality for Accessibility in Architecture” deals with some theoretical aspects concerning the role of multisensory perception of an architectural space. The involvement of the body in the process of interaction between a person and the environment is considered fundamental, as it allows one to overcome certain limits still determined by a strictly visual architectural conception. The stimulation of the senses is, therefore, a factor capable of enriching perception for everyone and assumes a determining value, especially in the field of disability. This topic will be developed, for example, through a perceptive comparison between sighted and blind people. The seminar aims to highlight the role of the multisensoriality of space and how communication through all the senses can promote accessibility and inclusion of architecture to a wider audience.

The second part of the seminar – “Architecture to be seen, heard and touched” deepens the themes of multisensoriality through some didactic proposals developed during last year’s courses for the master’s degree in architecture at the Department of Architecture and Design in Genoa. The activity of teaching plays a fundamental role in encouraging the training of professionals who are aware of people’s needs and who ensure that everyone can access and understand a space independently. The topics dealt with focus on the communication possibilities useful for transmitting architectural features through the

stimulation of senses alternative to sight. The aim is to show how, through teaching, it is possible to transmit values and knowledge useful for the training of the architects of the future, who are more attentive to the theme of accessibility and inclusion.

- **“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.

According to data provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centre for Disability Rights (CDR), people living with disabilities are between 1,5 and 2,5 times more likely to become victims of physical, psychological, sexual or other violence, compared to people without disabilities. The numbers among women with disabilities are even more shocking, as at least one out of two admits to have been at the receiving end of some form of abuse in her lifetime. In this lecture, we will: 1) outline the main types of violent situations that are more likely to involve people with disabilities; 2) raise awareness about the struggle of exceptionally vulnerable groups of people with disabilities, such as women, children or POC with disabilities.

- **“Education in homes for children with mental disabilities in Bulgaria” (online, September 27, 2023).** Held by Georgi Todorov from BAS. Organized and moderated by Aleksandra Traykova from IPS.

One of the lecture’s main goals is to provide a comprehensive outline of the education in Bulgarian social homes for children. The degree of individualization fostered by care and pedagogical efforts in the institution will be analysed. However, the development of cognitive abilities is not always advocated.

- **“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.

The sexual sphere of people with disabilities is surrounded by stereotypes and misconceptions but it’s mostly absent from public debates and policies. In this lecture we will examine this topic through the category of fundamental rights which means recognizing sexuality as a relevant component of humanity defined by the principles of equality, self-determination and the promotion of the person’s well-being. The lecture will adopt an interdisciplinary approach, by creating a dialogue between legal knowledge and categories developed in social sciences, specifically sociology and political philosophy.

- **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.

The seminar refers to the structure and the main contents of the model grant agreement regulating the relationships between the European Commission or other EU Granting Authority and the Beneficiaries of grants of the European Union. In addition, the seminars will consider the structure and the contents of the Consortium Agreement according to the model Desca.

- **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.

Requirements to comply with ethical rules have been an important aspect for approval and present as a provision for EC-funded projects since the establishment of the framework and grant programs and are, with each subsequent program period, increasingly refined. The seminar examines the ethical principles and rules applicable to the research projects funded by European Union, as reflected in the project proposal and the grant agreement regulating the relationships between the European Commission or other EU Granting Authority and the Beneficiaries of grants of the European Union.

- **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.

Under grant agreements, if not specified otherwise, the results of the project remain the property of the beneficiaries. However, the European Commission is granted with the right to use project results and deliverables and the specific provisions may be quite different in different cases. The seminar examine the rights on the results of the projects funded by the EU, as reflected in the program documents and the grant agreement regulating the relationships between the European Commission or other EU Granting Authority and the Beneficiaries of grants of the European Union.

- **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.

### 3.3. Summer school trainings

Various trainings and seminars related to project management, proposal drafting, RRI and other topics related to WP5 were also offered during the MILIEU Summer Schools in synergy with WP4:

- **Varna Doctoral Summer School 2021** (15-20 September 2021, Bulgaria, co-organized with IPS-BAS)

The MILIEU team took an active part in the organisation of the Summer Doctoral School **“Perspectives of today’s social world – between the natural and virtual reality”**. Experts and researchers from IPS-BAS, UNIGE, and UCM conducted several training courses and workshops aimed at developing the scientific capacity of ESRs. Among the specific topics taught during academic sessions were:

- Academic writing.
  - Planning and design of scientific research.
  - Project design and management.
  - Techniques for enhancing creativity and innovative thinking.
  - Doctoral dissertation writing and defending.
- **MILIEU Summer School “Diversity and Inclusion in Responsible Research, Innovation and Communication” course** (12nd-15th July 2022, El Escorial, Spain).

The first MILIEU summer school was organised within the framework of the Complutense Summer School in El Escorial (Madrid). The 3-day course focused on some of the core issues of the MILIEU project, under the title “Diversity and Inclusion in Responsible research, Innovation and Communication”. The main thematic sections were the following:

- Creative thinking and RRI as success drivers for today’s R&I.
- Challenges of making visible the invisible: sports, disability and women.
- Best practices of inclusion, diversity and responsibility.

The academic contents included some of the key aspects related to inclusion and diversity, offered by highly experienced scholars, members from the Paralympic Committee and companies that stand out in the field of responsibility. The course participants also learned from the direct experience of paralympic athletes and received insights on motivation. Apart

from the learning experience, the summer course offered a lively and inspiring environment for international networking, exchanging ideas, cultural and social experiences.

- **Varna Doctoral Summer School 2022** (12th-16th of September 2022, Varna, Bulgaria, hybrid form of event).

The second edition of the Varna Doctoral School for PhD students from the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, co-organized by MILIEU, was held in the Golden Sands, Varna from 12th to 16th September 2022 in hybrid format.

Thematically, that year activities were dedicated to the main subjects of MILIEU, such as responsible research and innovation, gender, disability and inclusion.

- **MILIEU Summer School “Doing academia: communication, (self)presentation and networking”** (12nd-16th July 2023, Borovets, Bulgaria).

The MILIEU Summer School at Borovets, themed "Doing Academia: Communication, (Self)Presentation, and Networking," provided a comprehensive platform for participants to delve into various aspects of academic life. With a focus on effective communication, attendees engaged in practical workshops addressing the building of academic profiles, project presentations, and honing skills in writing abstracts for conferences and articles. These hands-on sessions aimed to equip scholars with the necessary tools to navigate the academic landscape successfully.

In addition to communication skills, the summer school incorporated critical discussions on minority groups, gender, and disability within research, fostering inclusivity and diversity in academia. The program also featured seminars on publishing in esteemed platforms like Scopus and Web of Science, offering valuable insights and tips. With a blend of interactive workshops, informative seminars, and reflective sessions, the MILIEU Summer School created a dynamic environment for participants to enhance their academic prowess, form valuable connections, and contribute to a more inclusive and collaborative scholarly community.

- **Varna Doctoral Summer School 2023** (25th-29th September 2023, Varna, Bulgaria, hybrid form event).

The third Varna Summer School took place from the 25th to the 29th of September of 2023. The activities carried out around the topic of “Communication of science and scientific results. Presenting to a non-professional audience”. Following this theme, the attendees participated in activities related to working efficiently with a deadline, creative writing and speaking in public in non-academic venues.

- **ECREA Summer School** (24th-30th July 2022)

The ECREA European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School 2022 brings together members of the European research community to debate contemporary issues in media, communication, and cultural studies. The main emphasis of this summer school is on

providing structural and individuated PhD-support for young European scholars, through a variety of working forms, including feedback seminars, workshops, and lectures. The summer school aims to provide a supportive international setting where doctoral students can present their ongoing work, receive feedback on their PhD-projects from international experts and meet students and academics from other countries, establishing valuable contacts for the future. <https://ecrea.eu/page-18213>

## 4. Visibility and internationalisation

(Refers to T5.4 Visibility and internationalisation (M8-M36; Task Leader: UNIGE in cooperation with all partners).

Staff working within the management and administration services of BAS is being introduced to the international arena by offering selected participants a list of events to enhance knowledge, capacities, soft skills, and internationalisation. This is improving the openness of managerial and administrative staff at BAS, by engaging in the internationalisation, using the following main activities (operational details have been included in D5.1 on the basis of the outcomes of T5.1):

1. Participation in brokerage events and networking events at EU level;
2. Participation in national initiatives to implement ERA priorities, research enhancement and project drafting;
3. Organisation of periodic meetings and workshops (at least 3 per year) with the high-level management of IPS and BAS, possibly inviting selected representatives of other research institutions in Bulgaria, to ensure an impact at national level and not only at the institutional level, and organise working groups related to research funding, fundraising, management, administration, financial issues, and others;
4. Publication of professional profiles in the international platforms and in specific social media (i.e. LinkedIn and others).

D5.3 contain the final reporting on all activities performed, highlighting the items addressed, the training materials used (to be made available in a public format), the number of participants, outcomes of training evaluation, and a set of recommendations to be disseminated to other Widening countries facing similar problems.

The mid-term report of such activities is addressed in this deliverable in the following section.

### 4.1. Update on visibility and internationalisation events

All the partners' activities in representation of the MILIEU project contribute to the internationalisation of IPS-BAS as they give the consortium visibility in the international arena and offer interesting learning opportunities, but still IPS-BAS action and participation in this field has a key role. Following activities are resuming what has been done up to the present moment, beyond the participation in the networking events listed in section 2.

- **TWINNING 2020-Coordination Info Day (Nov. 2020)**

MILIEU Team members were invited to visit the online event organised by REA at EU level. The goal of the event was to present important aspects of TWINNING projects management and implementation. Following the official programme, a get-to-know meeting was organised by MILIEU PO for team members of selected projects.

- **Workshop with IPS High Management** (28th September 2021, Sofia, Bulgaria)

Key findings and challenges from the analysis of D5.1 were presented in a meeting with the High Management of IPS - Director, prof. DSc Vesselin Petrov, and Head of Finances, Maya Andreeva. Participant: 3 (2 female).

- **MILIEU Networking Workshop at UCM** (Dec 2021)

Meetings with diverse research groups on Gender Studies at UCM were organised for MILIEU consortium members during the stay in Madrid.

- **8th Creative Cities International Conference**, 1 December 2021, Madrid, Spain

A multidisciplinary panel session “Women, disability and inclusion on an urban space” presented the most relevant research results of the project team and ESRs of the three partner universities, from the standpoint of multidisciplinary research conducted in the field of gender, disability, and inclusion on an urban scale.

- **MILIEU International Conference "WOMEN, DISABILITY AND INCLUSION"**, 15 December 2021, Sofia, Bulgaria and online mode

The conference sessions addressed a series multidisciplinary topics of gender and social inclusion research with a particular focus on disability studies, gender and diversity indicators, challenges of accessibility, violence and discrimination, among other topics. Attended by researchers from IPS, UCM, UNIGE, CHRIST University (India); University of Nigeria, Nsukka; AIAS Bologna Onlus; and University of Benin. ESRs from MILIEU partnering institutions participated in the conference organisation. Participants: 75 (40 female).

- **MILIEU Networking Workshop at UCM** (22nd February 2022, Madrid, Spain)

Meetings with diverse research groups on Gender Studies at UCM were organised for MILIEU consortium members during the stay in Madrid. Participant: 6 (4 female).

- **A 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** (17th March 2022)

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. It also offered a platform to discuss selected examples of good practices, lessons learned and innovations that governmental institutional mechanisms on the advancement of women and of gender can bring to policy making and institutional transformation. Participant: around 40.

- **Communicative Cities Research Network Symposium, London School of Economics** (24-25 March, 2022).

MILIEU consortium proposal “Smart urban futures and the digital divide realities: the tale of three European cities” by Olga Kolotouchkina, Liisa Hanninen (Complutense University of Madrid) and Lyuba Spasova (IPS-BAS) has been accepted for the presentation at the Symposium. Participant: 85 (60 female).

- **Publication of professional profiles in the international platforms and in specific social media** (i.e. LinkedIn and others).

A number of professional profiles of scholars from IPS were published in scientific social media such as LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Academia, OrchID. Information on the importance and usage of those profiled was part of several of the trainings conducted within MILIEU and is also included in the Visibility and Empowerment Guidelines.

Update of the IPS webpage to contain links to the profiles of the researchers in the scientific social media was proposed and discussed at the Director’s Council of IPS in March 2022.

- **5th International Conference on Gender Research, 28 - 29 April 2022, University of Aveiro, Portugal**

The ICGR2022 aims 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 will participate with a non-academic paper presenting key aspects of the project and will also be able to meet and exchange with scholars working in the field of gender research. Participant: more than 100 (80% female).

- **Inspiring Women-Global faces Gendered MediaSpace, 8 March 2022, online mode**

Organized by IAMCR and Unesco. The webinar addresses key challenges in the long way to go for elimination of discrimination and oppression of women and ensuring them a guarantee for emancipation at home and empowerment at workplace. MILIEU member Prof Dr Patricia Núñez Gómez, Spain participated in the event as a discutant. Participants: 140 (113 female).

- **72nd Annual International Communication Association Conference 2022, 25-31 May 2022, Paris, France**

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 Bonales Daimiel from UCM. Participant: 2.200 (50 female)

- **IAMCR, Global 2022 Conference**, 11-15 July 2022, Beijing, China, and Online mode

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 Bonales Daimiel from UCM. Participant: over 2.000 (50% female).

- **ATGender 2023 Conference “Feminist Pedagogy of/beyond Borders”** 4-6th September 2023, Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Turkey.

People involved on MILIEU, presented project in the panel: Anti-gender, campaigns in Bulgaria: Actors, discourses and Resistance.

- **ECREA 9th European Communication Conference, "Rethink impact"**, 19-22 October 2022, Aarhus, Denmark

A panel “Spotting good practices in the domain of gender, disability and inclusion: twinning for the East” outlining research insights from the three partner Universities was held at the Women’s Network Section of the Conference. Participant: over 2.000 (50% female).

- **MILIEU Conference "Gender, Disability and Violence"** 6-7 October 2022, Sofia, Bulgaria, and online mode

Recognising the many challenges related to gender, disability and violence studies, MILIEU aimed to contribute to the current academic discourse by organizing 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. Participant: 75 (80% female).

- **MILIEU Info Seminar** (25 November 2021 and from 10 March 2022).

MILIEU is pleased to invite you to an information seminar on the MILIEU project, held on November 25th from 10:00 (for Bulgaria) and March 10th. At the seminar, The partners group presented in detail the project and its goals, as well as a preliminary schedule of the upcoming initiatives.

- **SPEAR national conference "Equality of Women and Men in Academic and Scientific Organizations - Good Practices, Challenges and Perspectives"** 15 December 2022, Sofia, Bulgaria, and online mode

A conference, organized by the SPEAR EC project "Equality of Women and Men in Academic and Scientific Organizations - Good Practices, Challenges and Perspectives" (in Bulgarian). Participant: 25 (80% female).

- **Gender Equality Plans and Universities of the future** 25th January 2023

Lyuba Spasova, the coordinator of MILIEU, presented insights and good practices from MILIEU in a talk called “From women to gender: a journey in several stages. History of a controversial terminology. Participant: 100 (80% female).

- **EDIRE roundtable: Research, University, Gender and EDI Policies** 16th February 2023

A roundtable on the topic of “RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY, GENDER AND EDI POLICIES” will be held on the 16th of February 2023 with the participation of Lyuba Spasova, the coordinator of MILIEU. The roundtable will be held under the framework of the EDIRE project – a sister project of MILIEU – which aims to increase the research profile and research capacity especially in the field of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion of the Sarajevo School of Science and Technology.

- **BASEES Annual Conference** 31st March-02nd April 2023, Glasgow, UK.

A conference organized by the British Association for South-Eastern and Eastern European Studies. Participants: 500 (70% female).

- **QueerFem International Conference** 28th-30nd April 2023, Athens, Greece.

Organized by Feminist Autonomous Centre for research. Participants: 50 (90% female).

- **ESSHC European Social Science History Conference** 12nd-15th April 2023, Gothenburg, Sweden.

A conference by the European Association for Social Studies History Research. Participants: 300 (60% female).

- **International Conference of Latin American Reserchers (ALAIC)** 7 May 2023, Barranquilla, Colombia.

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.

- **29th International Conference of Europeanists** 27th-30th June 2023, Reykjavik, Iceland.

A conference organized by the Council of European Studies (CES). Participants: 500 (50% female).

- **Midterm Conference of ESA RN23 Sexuality** 27th-29th September 2023, Zagreb, Croatia.

A conference organized by the Sexuality Network at the European Sociological Association. Participants: 60 (80% female).

- **Gender in Media and Communications in the digital age** 28th-29th September 2023, Madrid, Spain.

Organized by IAMCR, Unesco and UCM.

- **International academic conference “II Congreso Internacional sobre Pedro Almodóvar”** 24th-25th October 2023, Madrid, Spain.

Conference organized by UCM and visited by IPS. Participants: 40 (80% female).

- **MILIEU International Conference "Gender, Disability and Social Change"** 24-26th November 2023, Sofia, Bulgaria, and online mode

Conference based on MILIEU project themes. The main strands of the conference were: Arts and Expression, Pop Culture and Media, Social Policies and Legislation, Best Practices and Case Studies, Social Movements and Grassroots Activism, Backlash and populism. Organized by IPS and MILIEU team.

Participant: 50 (80% female).

- **International Conference: ASEES – 55th Conference** 29th November -3rd December 2023, Philadelphia, USA.

Conference organized by ASEES. Participants: 600 (50% female).

- **MILIEU Final Dissemination Event** 12nd December 2023 Brussels, Belgium.

Final dissemination event of the MILIEU H2020 Project, held at the House of the Permanent Representation of Bulgaria in Brussels. The event showcased the many achievements and results of MILIEU, part of which were also detailed in this report.

## 4.2. Documents and strategies

A number of documents and strategies were developed within WP5 in order to ensure the long-term effect and sustainability of MILIEU.

- **D3.1 Visibility and empowerment guidelines [M9 – UNIGE]:** Roadmap for ensuring the empowerment and the enhanced visibility of IPS staff members and of the institution as a whole.

Although developed within the WP3 activities the Visibility and Empowerment guidelines are directly linked to implementation of the visibility and internalisation activities. The main goal of the guidelines is to enhance the visibility and empower scholars and especially ESRs by guiding them into developing self-promotional skills and expertise for popularising their research and academic work. The deliverable presents a series of strategies and reference points to help scholars better navigate their way into the international academic world. It provides insight and guides on using scientific social networks, public profiles, scientific databases, networking opportunities presented by associations or academic forums, EU networking and funding resources, grant opportunities and useful productivity applications. The guidelines are public and were disseminated with the scholars and via the website and the social networks.

- **Development of Gender Equality Plan for the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences**

The lack of GEPs is among the key deficits identified in the analysis of the current situation in IPS and BAS and their elaboration and adoption is among the important policy proposals in D5.1. As part of the mentoring and reinforcement activities the necessity of developing Gender Equality Plans was communicated with the high management of IPS and the other institutes.

Members of the MILIEU team had a leading role in drafting the GEPs both for the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and, later, for the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology.

A model GEP was elaborated for BAS to serve simultaneously as an action-plan for the BAS administration and central management and as a template document to be adapted later from the rest of 58 units of BAS.

By elaborating the GEP of BAS MILIEU team contributed to both implementation of ERA priorities and to reinforcing internalisation and capacity for attracting funding for all BAS institutes, since GEPs are an eligibility criterion for Horizon Europe.

- **Development of Gender Equality Plan for the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology**

A Gender equality plan was also elaborated for the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology. The GEP of IPS is a separate document, elaborated to reflect the specific situation and needs in the Institute which differ from the ones in BAS. The GEP was uploaded on the website of the institution and is available for all interested parties. A number of initiatives are envisaged in the GEP to implement the GE and Gender Mainstreaming strategy in BAS as some of those were already conducted within MILIEU.

Again, the elaboration of the GEP contributes the implementation of ERA priorities and serves as a tool for reinforcing internalisation and boosting the repute of the institution.

- **Development of a Communication strategy of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology**

A communication strategy was elaborated for the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology that defines the current state and gaps and elaborates visibility tools and channels for communication, e.g. website, social media, etc. A new IPS website design was implemented featuring a full version of the site in English. New social media accounts and communication plan was established and put in practice. A number of meetings with partners in MILIEU were organised to aid and inspire the process.

The communication strategy will ensure the appropriate communication of IPS and dissemination of key events and results of scholars from the Institute. It will directly aid the

visibility and internalisation of the institution and be the basis of the communication activity for the next 3-5 years, also aiding for sustainability of MILIEU.

- **Strategy for establishing IPS as a leading research institution at EU and national level in the field of social sciences and humanities**

A “Strategy for establishing IPS as a leading research institution at EU and national level in the field of social sciences and humanities” largely based on the know-how and insights gained with MILIEU was elaborated. The strategy is a comprehensive document that sets 6 Priorities and the corresponding policies and tasks with a linked short term and long-term plan for action, that set the basis for the management activities within the IPS. The priorities of IPS for the 2023-2026 period are as follows:

- Priority 1. Stimulating academic research and fostering high quality results
- Priority 2. Balanced development of IPS-BAS's academic potential as a main requirement for carrying out intense research, expert and education activities with visible positive effects for Bulgarian society
- Priority 3. Producing a significant and measurable social-economic impact on Bulgarian society by means of high-skilled project and expert activities
- Priority 4. Optimizing the work of IPS-BAS's administration and internal structures as part of the basis for high quality academic, research and education activity
- Priority 5. Improving the visibility of IPS-BAS in the public space through focused messages of the academic results and expert activities
- Priority 6. Research infrastructure renewal and upgrade

The policies and tasks set for the achievement of those priorities largely reflect the insights gained within MILIEU implementation and follow the recommendations detailed in the next section.

The Strategy aims to ensure that the knowledge gained within MILIEU is properly applied to form the managerial priorities of IPS. The Strategy, as well as the relevant short and long-term implementation plans, will directly aid MILIEU's sustainability and contribute to IPS-BAS's improved research management and administration capacities. Because the document is public and has been posted on the IPS website, it can also serve as a model strategy for strengthening management and administrative capacities in Bulgaria and the rest of the Widening countries.

## 5. Recommendations for Widening Country

This comprehensive report highlights the accomplishments and challenges encountered during the MILIEU project, as well as valuable recommendations for overcoming project implementation obstacles. The identified barriers, which ranged from a lack of information on funding programmes to difficulties in international networking, were met with strategic proposals aimed at improving institutional capacity, fostering collaboration, and navigating the complexities of project management.

Lessons learned in MILIEU and, in particular, the analysis of the practice in the Bulgarian academic field (based on data from several BAS institutes and prominent university centres in the country) may provide grounds for drawing general conclusion about the challenges in drafting and implementing scientific projects for Widening Countries.

The challenges vary, but those caused by a lack of institutional and administrative capacity predominate. Diverse such difficulties are encountered at nearly every stage, including in generating project ideas and writing project proposals, in applying to funding institutions, subsequently in the implementation of projects that have won funding, and in their reporting.

In this section we summarize the identified obstacles and propose some recommendations for overcoming them. Many of these recommendations were implemented at IPS-BAS during the MILIEU project or became the base for further policy proposal to foster institutional changes.

Anticipating the presentation of the challenges and obstacles, many of them are related to the need of strengthening the institutional and administrative capacity for drafting and implementation of projects, especially those under European funding, as well as the acquisition by scientists of knowledge and skills to identify financial sources for the development of a valuable project proposal and its quality implementation.

Challenges and obstacles	Recommendation
1. Insufficient information and knowledge on relevant international European programs and financial instruments.	1.1. Recommendation: Creating new and more efficient institutional channels for disseminating information on open calls and procedures by establishing a unit at central level and/or employing experts in the divisions/departments/faculties. The employees responsible for discovering and disseminating information should be well versed in the matter and have this as their primary task; this is an administrative

	<p>position, not a task to be assigned to scientists.</p> <p>1.2. Recommendation: Issuing a bi/trimonthly e-newsletter for dissemination of reliable information about the upcoming new procedures and calls, providing useful links, etc.</p> <p>1.3. Recommendation: Issuing informational newsletters presenting basic instructions for the most popular but also the opened procedures and stakes. The purpose of these brochures is to familiarize the scientists and to assist them in developing project proposals and applying to the relevant funding institutions.</p> <p>1.4 Recommendation: Periodic training courses need to be organized for scientists and researchers, providing information on open and forthcoming procedures and calls. Dedicated courses will provide maximum specific information and guidance on the development of project proposals and their practical implementation.</p> <p>1.5. Recommendation: Organizing dedicated training courses on fundraising and research funding for scholars, staff and ESRs.</p>
<p>2. Insufficient institutional administrative capacity for the implementation of European projects. Experts with general knowledge of the various financial instruments and with understanding of the regulatory framework and conditions for applying for the various financial instruments are scarce among the employees at academic institutions.</p>	<p>2.1. Recommendation: Strengthening the administrative and institutional capacity of the institution for implementation of EC funded projects establishing a specialized department to work with European programs and financial instruments. Employees in this department must be well versed in the various financial instruments and provide advice to scientists who develop project proposals and implement projects. Relevant staff will be able to provide competent advice, which will increase the quality of the developed project proposals and reduce the risk of errors in the practical implementation of funded projects.</p> <p>2.2. Recommendation: Hire employees to work with European programs and financial</p>

instruments. These employees must have the necessary competencies, e.g., English language and good knowledge and experience with European funding instruments is essential.

2.3. Recommendation: Research institutions and universities as well as departments/units need to develop and effectively implement specialized policies to support project initiatives. These policies should include: formalizing the project idea generation phase, institutionalizing the project idea development phase, institutional support and assistance to project development teams, including administering the preparation of project administrative forms, and financial advice for project budget.

2.4. Recommendation: Preparing wiki-pages/blogs presenting basic instructions and FAQ for the most popular programs with the aim of assisting scientists in developing project proposals and applying to the relevant funding institutions.

2.5. Recommendation: Gathering a database and translation of the basic documents of the most popular funding opportunities and leaving them at disposal of all researchers and administration. For example - the Annotated Grant Agreement for Horizon Europe.

2.6. Recommendation: Special efforts should be made to develop the capacity of young scientists to draft and implement projects under EC funding. For this purpose, expert training modules must be conducted presenting the main financial instruments and programs. This can also be part of the curriculum of the doctoral students.

2.7. Recommendation: Organizing training courses for experienced researchers and staff for project design and drafting projects is as well needed.

	<p>2.8. Recommendation: Organizing workshops and discussions among scientists for sharing their personal experience, problems or good practices.</p> <p>2.9. Recommendation: Organisation of workshops and periodic meetings with the high-level management to implement positive actions to enhance the openness of the institutions especially for what concerns its participation in EU funded research.</p> <p>2.10. Recommendation: Preparing basic tools for project drafting and having them at disposal of all scientists.</p> <p>2.11. Recommendation: Proposing every project activity with a translation into local language in order to facilitate the participation of the staff. Proposing English courses to enhance international capacity and comprehension.</p> <p>2.12. Recommendation: Consider and study in advance possible discrepancy in national legislation rules and rules/possibilities of the programme you are applying for.</p>
<p>3. Difficulties are identified in the preparation of project budgets. Lack of trained staff certified to provide financial consultation: budgeting raises doubts about the eligibility of the planned costs.</p>	<p>3.1. Recommendation: Hire new employees in the accounting units trained in financial services for European projects and fluent in English.</p> <p>3.2. Recommendation: Appointing an expert with financial education and literacy in the European Programs to specialize in advising on emerging issues related to the preparation of budgets, the practical implementation of projects and their reporting (preparation of financial reports).</p> <p>3.4. Recommendation: Specialized training courses should be organized at the start of large framework programs and new financial instruments. Those will be with focus on the rules for eligible costs, requirements for drafting the budgets, etc.</p>
<p>4. With regard to projects with EC and international funding, the subject of most of</p>	<p>4.1. Recommendation: In order to have a greater degree of coherence between the</p>

<p>these projects is externally set - by the priorities of financial donors and calls. This could potentially reverse the logic of research and divert research topics away from investigative curiosity or societal problems and challenges identified at local level.</p>	<p>research interests of scientists and the priorities of the financial instruments, it is necessary to encourage scientists to participate actively in the campaigns and research conducted by the EC when structuring programs.</p> <p>4.2. Recommendation: Conducting a survey among scientists and researchers from the academic community at national or EU level once every couple of years with the aim to identify current scientific issues and areas where research and financial support are needed. Based on this information, propositions can be made for designing the priorities and problem areas of national (operational programs) and European financial instruments.</p> <p>4.3. Recommendation: Establishing work groups/networks that would share information on specific topics, rather than branches of science (e.g., women studies, disability studies, etc.) Those groups can also contact the experts in the project department and declare interest to be informed on relevant to the topic calls.</p> <p>4.4. Recommendation: Development of a national framework/ funding scheme for Increasing the capacity of the academic community in each country to implement European projects. Suitable financial source for this project could be the operational programs, but also EC funding itself.</p> <p>4.5. Recommendation: Organize informative sessions and seminars for scientists to be thoroughly informed about EU fundings opportunities.</p>
<p>5. Difficulties in creating an international network, as required by large-scale partnership in European projects.</p>	<p>5.1. Recommendation: Dedicating efforts to building adequate profiles in all major networking platforms for the University, Research institution, units, departments, work groups. Conducting systematic actions for establishing partnerships in the subject areas in which research is carried out and</p>

	<p>which coincide with the lasting scientific interests of the scientists from the units.</p> <p>5.2. Recommendation: The Institution/each unit/department need to develop and update forms with standard information about the institution in English. This information should be available and provided to teams that draft projects on request. All relevant information on the websites should be translated also in English and be updated regularly.</p> <p>5.3. Recommendation: At the institution's level a scientific communication expert could be appointed. Such an expert would be responsible for the visibility and networking and will assist in the search for and establishment of partnerships with new institutions. Those experts will also be responsible for project dissemination that will as well promote visibility and networking.</p> <p>5.4. Recommendation: Training for building adequate profiles in all major networking platforms for the scholars and staff in the institution should take place.</p>
<p>6. Co-financing is an issue for some research performing institutions and sometimes for universities</p>	<p>6.1. Recommendation: Getting the community duly acquainted with the possibilities for being provided with loans to secure working capital. Special attention should be paid to the conditions under which the funds are provided and the financial commitments of the respective academic unit.</p> <p>6.2. Recommendation: Steps must be taken so that the State/Ministry of education and science, contribute to research funds in the universities and research performing institutions to ensure enough funding is available for the project teams that need loans for co-financing or pre-financing by the applicant.</p>

<p>7. Absence of essential regulations and documents, such as e.g., Internal rules for application and implementation of projects with external funding, European Charter for Researchers &amp; Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, GEPs etc.</p>	<p>7.1. Recommendation: Stricter control and aid is advisable in regard to adopting the necessary regulatory documents.</p> <p>7.3. Recommendation: Developing a GEP, if not already existing, as it is essential for applying under Horizon Europe calls.</p>
<p>8. Insufficient experience of the staff with the regulatory framework on the phase of implementation: issues with financial requirement, distribution of roles, tasks, activities.</p>	<p>8.1. Recommendation: Strengthening the administrative and institutional capacity of the institution for working on EC funded projects by establishing a specialized department is essential as well for the stage of implementation. See 2.1 for details.</p> <p>8.2. Recommendation: Appointing an employee in the academic units or in the divisions whose functions will be to work with European programs and financial instruments. See 2.2. for details.</p> <p>8.3. Recommendation: Conducting specialized workshops and seminars, where scientists who have successfully implemented a project under a financial instrument or program share their experience with other colleagues who intend to apply. Sharing experience is extremely important as our experience shows that many of the problems different teams face are identical. The workshops will also facilitate the implementation of future projects. This applies both to younger colleagues and to other scientists who have more limited experience in implementing project activities.</p> <p>8.4. Recommendation: Conducting workshops on methodological experience. Encouraging the sharing of methodological experience by the scientists who have carried out large-scale research through projects within the framework of the research conferences. This experience in most cases is methodologically unique and deserves to be shared.</p> <p>8.5. Recommendation: Taking up the role of coordinator of a project will give an</p>

	<p>immense contribution to the growth of your institution. If it is the first time it is highly suggested to apply for CSA twinning project in order to have support in the learning process and establish connections with more experienced partners</p> <p>8.6 Recommendation: Consider establishing a board of experts before, during or as a result of the project in order to provide advice/suggestions for further project proposal inside your own institution</p>
<p>9. Weak institutional support and a lack of systematic control over project implementation, lack of concrete tools to be used for project management.</p>	<p>9.1. Recommendation: Appointing an administrative officer (managerial function, e.g. assistant director) within the units to monitor the implementation of projects is an option.</p> <p>9.2. Recommendation: Purchasing a licence at institutional level for project management software can prove to be beneficial for the project implementation.</p> <p>9.3. Recommendation: Developing tools for project management/research performance monitoring system, and providing it at disposal of all scientists who need them.</p> <p>9.4. Recommendation: Organization of seminars and courses for project management and administration for both the scientists in the teams that are currently managing projects, but also for the administrative personnel in institutes. Such seminars can be as well targeted to researchers who intend to start drafting projects, as this constitutes essential knowledge for the application preparation.</p>
<p>10. Problems with conducting public procurements.</p>	<p>10.1. Recommendation: It is essential that the institution has one or more employees who are trained to conduct public procurements. In this regard, assistance is expected from the institution to organize training for employees in order to build in the units at least the minimum necessary capacity for conducting public procurement.</p>

	<p>This will be the minimum required guarantee for the successful conduct of public procurement, in compliance with the regulations.</p> <p>10.2. Recommendation: Providing support and legal assistance for resolving individual cases related to public procurement.</p>
<p>11. Specific attention should be put to further usage of research results and data. If the project (or institution) does not participate in the ODRP hardly any data are made available for use and reuse from other scholars. IPR and technological transfer should also be considered.</p>	<p>11.1. Recommendation: Adopting at institution's level policy for open access to research data similar to the ODRP of Horizon.</p> <p>11.2. Recommendation: Training courses on IPR and technological transfer.</p> <p>11.3. Recommendation: Training on Responsible Research Innovation principles, especially for what concerns Open Science, ethics and gender issues in research.</p>

## 6. Conclusion

The MILIEU project has played an important role in guiding discussions within academic and scientific circles, with a focus on promoting gender equality, advocating for inclusivity, and addressing the challenges faced by people with disabilities. The numerous seminars, conferences, and initiatives that have been organised show a strong commitment to bringing about positive change through collaborative efforts.

This report provides a detailed analysis of the MILIEU project's significant accomplishments and challenges, providing a nuanced understanding of its efforts. Furthermore, it makes astute suggestions for overcoming project execution challenges, such as dealing with a lack of information on funding initiatives and dealing with difficulties in international collaboration. In response to these challenges, recommendations are formulated that seek to strengthen institutional capabilities, foster collaborative efforts, and effectively navigate the complexities of project management.

To summarise, the MILIEU project, with its diverse range of events and initiatives, is a tangible manifestation of academic and scientific communities' commitment to shaping a fairer and more inclusive future. This endeavour not only advances the cause of gender equality and disability rights through bold confrontation of challenges and practical recommendations, but it also establishes itself as a guiding framework for future projects in the complex domain of European funding and research initiatives.