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RESISTIRÉ

Reducing gendered inequalities
caused by COVID-19 policies

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Summary report on mapping cycle 2

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List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GIA	Gender impact assessment
GBV	Gender-based violence
HoReCa	Hotel, Restaurant and Café
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NGEU	Next Generation EU
NPO	Non-profit organisation
NR	National Researcher
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
SEN	Special Educational Needs
[Country ISO Code]_NR	Identifier of specific National Researchers (e.g., CZ_NR refer to the National researcher that mapped the situation in the Czech Republic)
[Country ISO Code]_POL	Identifier of the specific policies analysed for those countries not belonging to European Union (see Table 1 for more info)

Summary

The aim of RESISTIRÉ is to understand the unequal impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic and its policy responses had on behavioural, social, and economic inequalities in 31 countries (the EU 27 along with Iceland, Serbia, Turkey, and the UK) and to work towards individual and societal resilience. RESISTIRÉ does so by collecting and analysing policy data, quantitative data, and qualitative data, and by translating these into insights to be used for designing, devising, and piloting solutions for improved policies and social innovations that can be deployed by policymakers, stakeholders and actors in relevant policy domains. The project relies on a ten-partner multidisciplinary and multisectoral European consortium and a well-established network of researchers in the 31 countries.

The aim of the present report is, first of all, to understand if and how the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (or equivalent recovery policies in the case of the countries that do not belong to the European Union but are part of the RESISTIRÉ project) address gender inequalities in specific domains (gender-based violence; work and labour market; economy; gender pay and pension gaps; gender care gap; decision-making and politics; environmental justice; health; education), and their intersections with selected inequality grounds (social class/socioeconomic background; age; disability; nationality; ethnicity; religion/belief; sexual orientation; gender identity). In line with the theoretical and conceptual approach of RESISTIRÉ, the report builds on an intersectional approach to gender that acknowledges the mutual shaping of multiple complex inequalities. Secondly, the analysis focuses on the processes that led to the design of these policies to understand the level of involvement of relevant stakeholders. Finally, it examines how civil society reacted both to the content of these policies and to the process by which they were designed.

The empirical data base for this analysis consists of 31 grids (26 related to NRRPs and 5 related to equivalent policies) filled by 30 national researchers representing each country under the lens of RESISTIRÉ. In the grids, specific questions were presented to collect information on the policies, the design processes, and the reactions from civil society. All the data were analysed through a thematic analysis. In addition, when possible, the main author analysed the closed questions from the grids by creating frequency tables and graphs to provide the most relevant contextual data on the mapped policies.

The overall findings of the second cycle of policy mapping are the following:

- **most plans contain some attempts to propose policy measures aimed at mitigating gender+ inequalities, mostly in the area of work, education, and care, while there are big differences between countries in this;**
- **in most cases the NRRPs' gender+ issues are mainly relegated to the level of a general reflection or a description of the context, without being linked to concrete solutions - this can be partly explained by the lack of gender dimensions in the criteria for evaluating the plan and the lack of a specific budget for this purpose;**

- **there is a striking lack of measures related to violence (e.g., GBV) and inequalities in the sharing of power (e.g., decision-making and politics) and women are mainly dealt with just as workforce participants;**
- **the plans have embedded stereotypes that see women's problems in accessing the labour market, lower wages, or difficulties in career progression as simply due to a lack of skills and education or their need to learn (male) management skills;**
- **there is still an excessive focus on male-dominated economic sectors and the difficulty of mainstreaming gender in those sectors;**
- **an intersectional approach is completely absent in most plans, and although there are measures relating to age, social class, and disability, these grounds are usually presented as silos, without considering interactions between them;**
- **with rare exceptions, a discussion of inequalities related to religion/belief, gender identity, and sexual orientation is noticeably absent;**
- **there was a low level of involvement of representatives of feminist, immigrant, and LGBTQI+ organisations in the process of designing the plans;**
- **the process of stakeholder involvement and public consultations, when not absent, were rather tokenist in nature or lacked transparency.**



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Introduction

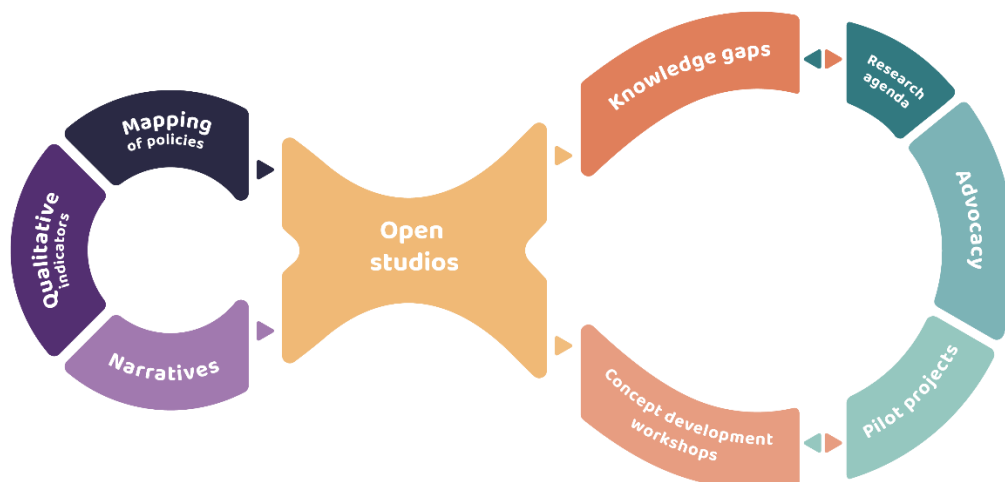
The outbreak of COVID-19 prompted multiple national policy responses aimed at slowing infections, preventing deaths, and mitigating the economic and social effects of the pandemic. In this situation, already marginalised groups were left behind (Axelsson et al. 2021), and gender mainstreaming and intersectional responses were scarce (Cibin et al. 2021). At the same time, the effects of COVID-19 and the responses to it were (and remain) highly gendered and related to sex, age, disability, ethnicity/race, migration status, religion, social class, and the intersections between these inequalities (Stovell et al. 2021; Lokot & Avakyan 2020; Walter & McGregor 2020). The pandemic and the related policies had (and still have) consequences - intended or not - that are uneven, unequal, and disproportional for different groups, and their long-term impacts are uncertain (Cumming et al. 2020).

The aim of RESISTIRÉ is to understand and provide insights and solutions to mitigate the unequal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the policy responses to it on behavioural, social, and economic inequalities in 31 countries: in the EU 27, Iceland, Serbia, Turkey, and the UK, and to work towards individual and societal resilience. To meet these aims, RESISTIRÉ conducts policy analysis, quantitative analysis, and qualitative research activities with the aim of informing the design of innovative solutions. In this way, RESISTIRÉ responds to the outbreak through co-created and inclusive strategies that address old and new inequality patterns in and across the domains set out in the EC Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.

RESISTIRÉ builds on an intersectional, gender+ theoretical approach (Verloo, 2013). The project focuses on the intersection of specific domains of gender inequalities (work and the labour market, the economy, the gender pay and pension gap, the gender care gap, gender-based violence, decision-making and politics, human and fundamental rights, and environmental justice) with selected inequality grounds (sex and/or gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, nationality, class, age, religion/belief, disability, and gender identity).

The overall methodology is based on a step-by-step process running in three cycles over 30 months (April 2021 - September 2023). All project activities are organised in the three cycles, feeding results into one another, including feedback loops between the cycles (see Figure 1). The project involves a ten-partner multidisciplinary and multisectoral European consortium, and a well-established network of researchers in the 31 countries.

The report is developed in parallel with a quantitative report focused on statistical data related to gender+ inequalities and the pandemic, led by Oxford Brookes University in the UK (Stovell et al. 2022) and a qualitative report on the impact of COVID-19 policies on women and specific vulnerable groups (Sandström et al. 2022).



RESISTIRÉ methodological step-by-step three cycle process

This report focuses on an analysis of the policies that were designed to stimulate and support the socioeconomic process of recovering from the pandemic in Europe. The main objective is understanding if and how these policies have considered the mitigation of gender+ inequalities among their goals and the role of civil society in the design of these policies. The report relates mainly (but not exclusively) to the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs). These are the investment and reform plans that the EU 27 countries were required to draw up in order to obtain economic support from the European Union for the socio-economic recovery from the pandemic.

The aim of the report is, first if all, to determine whether the NRRPs (or equivalent recovery policies for those countries not in the European Union but targeted by the RESISTIRÉ project) contain actions that focus on inequalities in specific domains (gender-based violence; work and the labour market; the economy; the gender pay and pension gaps; the gender care gap; decision-making and politics; environmental justice; health; education) and their interactions with selected inequality grounds (social class/socioeconomic background; age; disability; nationality; ethnicity; religion/belief; sexual orientation; gender identity). Secondly, the analysis focuses on the process that led to the formulation of these policies, to determine whether and how relevant stakeholders have been included. Finally, we examine how civil society reacted both to the content of these policies and to the process by which they were designed.

In the first cycle of RESISTIRE, the focus was broad and sought to map the impact on gender inequalities+ of the initial policies that were put in place to make a quick fix regarding the health, social and economic crisis caused by the spread of the pandemic. At the same time, the initiatives promoted by civil society organisations to mitigate these issues were mapped. The results described how policies at the national level were largely not gender mainstreamed and revealed the need to strengthen the collaboration between public authorities and civil society organisations supporting vulnerable groups, along with the need to intervene structurally on the dimensions of work-life balance and gender-based

violence. In addition, the results underlined the absence of intersectional approaches and how policies mainly focused on 'traditional' family models, on citizenship criteria, and on the existence of standard employment contracts, excluding large segments of European societies from their area of intervention. The findings also highlighted the lack of diversity in the decision-making processes surrounding the pandemic and the need to intervene to solve digital inequalities. At the same time, the analysis offered an interesting picture of the enormous work civil society carried out in support of the vulnerable groups that were severely affected by the crisis (Cibin 2021).

The decision to focus the second cycle on the analysis of NRRPs was taken for three main reasons. The first is the massive amount of funds that these plans are called upon to use to implement investments and reforms. The second is that the aim of these funds is 'to mitigate the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic and make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions',¹ a goal that strongly resonates with the focus of the RESISTIRÉ project. Finally, the fact that gender equality has been set as a cross-cutting priority for the plans offers an opportunity to compare how different countries translate gender-related issues into their policy agenda.

The report is structured as follows: the methodology; a section describing the rationale behind the NRRP; the results section related to the gender inequality domains; the results section related to other inequality grounds; the results section related to the reactions of CSOs to the content and the design process of the plans; the description of some bottom-up initiatives promoted by CSOs; the conclusion.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en
(last access 14 April 2022)

Methodology

National Researchers

As in cycle 1 of this project (Cibin et al 2021), the data for the present analysis were generated by 30 NRs, representing EU27 countries (minus Malta²), along with Iceland, the UK, Serbia, and Turkey. Nine of the NRs are part of the project's partner teams, while the other 21 were identified through a network of professional connections among members of the consortium. Most of them are researchers and experts in gender studies and inequality studies. In addition to the data produced for this report, for Work Package 3 the NRs were also asked to update the information on the rapid assessment surveys (RAS) mapped in the first cycle (Stovell et al. 2022), and for Work Package 4 they were asked to interview experts on the topic and people in precarious and vulnerable groups (Sandström et al. 2022). These activities will be repeated in another cycle over the course of the project's duration.

The focus of the mapping process

In this cycle, the NRs were asked to analyse policies designed to stimulate and support the socioeconomic process of recovering from the pandemic in their respective countries. In particular, the NRs related to the countries belonging to the European Union examined their National Recovery and Resilience Plans, that are the plans of reforms and investments that each Member State had to define in order to have access to the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)'s funds (for more information on the NRRP, see the section below titled 'The rationale of the NRRPs and the role of gender+'). For Iceland, the UK, Serbia, and Turkey, the request was to identify and analyse one (or more, if available and time permitting) equivalent national policy aimed at socioeconomic recovery from the pandemic.

The analysis was aimed at understanding whether and how the policies considered the following domains of gender inequalities and inequality grounds:

- Domains:³ gender-based violence; work and the labour market; the economy; the gender pay and pension gaps; the gender care gap; decision-making and politics; environmental justice; health; education.
- Inequality grounds: social class/socioeconomic background; age; disability; nationality; ethnicity; religion/belief; sexual orientation; gender identity; other.

At the same time, the NRs were asked to underline whether measures in the NRRPs or in the equivalent policies had taken into account inequalities that emerged or deepened

² Due to some issues that arose during data collection, this report does not include contributions from the Maltese NR.

³ These domains are based on the EC Gender Equality Strategy (2020-25) and on the Beijing Platform for Action. To better focus on specific issues emerged during the analysis on cycle 1, the "human right" domain present in that cycle has been substituted with "health" and "education".

specifically during the pandemic. As well, the NRs were asked to explore whether and how societal actors had been involved in the design of the policies, and their main reactions to the content of the documents and to the design process.

The NRs were asked to describe the measures included in the NRRP and in equivalent policy through the guiding questions of a grid (Appendices 1 and 2).

The NRRP (EU27)

The NRs in EU 27 countries were requested to consider the NRRPs in their latest version, whether draft or final, and to analyse the content of the document and its design and implementation process using a gender+ approach. During the period of the analysis, most of the plans had already been approved by the European Commission, with the exception of Hungary, Poland, and Sweden, whose plans were still being assessed, and Bulgaria, whose plan was returned for revisions. In the case of the Netherlands, due to issues concerning the formation of a new government, no plan was available. The analysis was therefore based on a draft⁴ written on behalf of the previous outgoing government, and which, according to the Dutch NR, was not expected to undergo major changes under the new government because it is formed by the same parties.

Using the specific grid, the NRs were invited to describe:

- The content of the plan:
 - Whether the plan provides concrete actions to mitigate inequalities related to the domains and grounds defined in the RESISTIRÉ project;
 - The plan's overall orientation from a gender+ perspective;
 - How the EC assesses the plan in terms of social equality (for those countries where plans have been adopted).
- The policy process: the involvement of stakeholders from civil society in the design of the plan, from a gender+ perspective.
- The reactions to the plan: how civil society reacted to the plan (in relation both to the content and to the design process).

For the analysis of the content of the plan, National Researchers were asked to search for information within the plan itself and, if useful, in the attached documentation. The NRs were not expected to read and analyse the document in its entirety but were supposed to search for issues of interest for the research by following the index of the NRRP, reading the introductory parts, and doing automatic searches using key words (e.g., gender,

⁴ As stated by the Dutch NR: "No definite plan is yet submitted to the EC. The Dutch government resigned on January 15 2021, followed by new elections on March 15-17, 2021. Negotiations between parties for a new government were difficult and the new government was installed only on January 10 2022. The same four parties formed a new government. A draft plan was written on behalf of the previous outgoing government; the latest version being drafted was dated November 1 2021. Submission of the final plan is expected before the summer of 2022." The draft is available at the following link (last access on 13 April 2022) <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2021/11/01/kamerbrief-vervolgproces-rrp>

inequalities, minorities etc.).

For the reactions from CSOs, the NRs were asked to identify information within summaries that could be found through an internet search among institutional sites, CSOs' websites, and relevant newspapers. In addition, the NRs could rely also on their direct network of contacts among stakeholders and CSOs.

Equivalent policies aimed at socioeconomic recovery from the pandemic (Iceland, the UK, Serbia, and Turkey)

As mentioned above, the NRs from non-EU 27 countries had to identify policies that had similar objectives to those of NRRPs, i.e., socioeconomic recovery from the damage caused by the pandemic.

The policies identified and analysed for the countries not belonging to the European Union are the following:

Table 1 Policies identified and analysed by the countries that are not EU members

Acronym used in the text	Country	Title	Description
IS_POL	Iceland	Fiscal budget proposal for 2022 ⁵	Icelandic's government budget bill for 2022
UK1_POL	UK	Recovery Premium and Schools COVID-19 Operational guidance ⁶	Education recovery programmes to supporting disadvantaged pupils
UK2_POL	UK	Children's Social Care COVID-19 Regional Recovery and Building Back Better Fund ⁷	Fund to support projects tackling the issues facing the most vulnerable children in society in 2021-22
RS_POL	Serbia	Law on the budget of the Republic of Serbia ⁸	Serbia's government budget bill for 2022
TK_POL	Turkey	COVID-19 Resilience and Response Project ⁹	Project is funded by the Government of Japan and carried out by Turkish Ministry of Industry

⁵ The policy webpage: <https://www.stjornarradid.is/verkefni/efnahagsmal-og-opinber-fjarmal/opinber-fjarmal/fjarlog/fjarlog-fyrir-arid-2022/#almennt>; shorter information in English: <https://www.government.is/news/article/2021/11/30/Fiscal-budget-proposal-for-2022/>

⁶ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/993053/Education_recovery_support_June

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-recovery-fund-to-tackle-harms-facing-vulnerable-children>

⁸ http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/cir/pdf/predlozi_zakona/2021/1955-21.pdf

⁹ <https://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/en/home/projects/COVID-19-response.html>

			and Technology (and The Directorate General of Development Agencies) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
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The policies were proposed by the NRs and selected after consultation with the main author of this report and other consortium partners. When possible, the NRs also identified initiatives that were promoted by CSOs to support the socioeconomic recovery from the pandemic. The four initiatives collected are described at the end of the report (section 'Some initiatives promoted by CSOs').

Data collection and analysis

Between 1 December 2021 and 30 January 2022, the NRs produced 31 grids on 26 NRRPs and 5 equivalent policies. All the data were analysed by means of a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. Initially, the main author of this report created a codebook based on findings related to the first-cycle analysis or developed by means of desk research. Codes and groups of codes were related to inequality domains, grounds, the process of policy design, the reactions from CSOs, etc. The codebook was shared with the analysis group's team members (3 researchers) and was then discussed and edited together. Different countries were assigned to each member of the team to be coded using Atlas.ti software (version 9). Every coder was able to create new codes, which were then discussed in several online meetings. Finally, the authors of this report analysed the material by observing the relations between the top-down codes and themes in the documents and integrating them with the codes that emerged, bottom-up, from the analysis.

In addition, when possible, the main author analysed the closed questions from the grids by creating frequency tables and graphs to provide the most relevant contextual data on the mapped policies and social initiatives.

The content of the report's sections concerns the analysis of the NRRPs while the findings related to the equivalent policies for the non-EU countries are described in special boxes at the end of most of the sections.

A note on language editing: within this document there are many quotations taken from the grids produced by the NRs. In most cases we copied the quotation verbatim from the reports. We have only made minor edits in places where, in our opinion, typos or mistakes could impede the correct understanding of the text. The need to obtain information from so many different researchers in different countries has resulted in a loss, in a small number of cases, of consistency in the use of certain terms (e.g., in some cases, man/male and woman/female are used interchangeably as if they denote the same concept). However, we decided to avoid modifying the NRs' original texts as much as possible so as to retain the authenticity of the quotation.

The rationale of the NRRPs and the role of gender+

The regulatory framework

In 2021, to respond to the social and economic crises caused by the pandemic, EU Member States agreed to the creation of the Next Generation EU (NGEU), a financial stimulus tool (€806.9 billion, in current prices) that is financed with money borrowed by the EU on the markets (Sapala 2021; Crescenzi et al. 2021). The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) (European Parliament 2021) is the key instrument through which most (€723.8 billion) of the NGEU funds are distributed to Member States, provided that they design a National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) that has a positive assessment by the European Commission and is approved by the Council. The plans must also be ratified by the national parliaments. The NRRP must outline a series of reforms and investments to be undertaken by individual states by 2026.

In general, through the plans, every Member State should describe: 'the main challenges that they are facing under the pillars set out in Article 3 [see below] and how the plan represents a comprehensive and adequately balanced response to the economic and social situation of the Member State. The six pillars are:

1. Green transition;
 2. Digital transformation;
 3. Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, including economic cohesion, jobs, productivity, competitiveness, research, development and innovation, and a well-functioning single market with strong SMEs;
 4. Social and territorial cohesion;
 5. Health, and economic, social and institutional resilience, including with a view of increasing crisis reaction and crisis preparedness; and
 6. Policies for the next generation, children and youth, including education and skills.'
- (European Commission 2021, p. 4)

In particular, 37% of the expenditure contained in the plans must have a positive effect on the climate transition (together with other objectives linked to the green transition such as biodiversity) and there can be no measures that have a negative effect on environmental objectives; 20% of the expenditure must concern the digital transition; the effect of the plan on the economy must be long-lasting; investments and reforms must be coherent with each other (European Parliament 2021; European Commission 2021; Bisciari et al 2021).

In addition to these issues to which a specific budget is allocated, RRF sets gender equality as a cross-cutting priority for the plans. This means that:

'[...] the RRF recognises women as one of the social groups worst affected by the COVID-19 crisis. According to the text of the regulation, mitigation of the social and economic impact of that crisis, in particular on women, is one of central objectives of the RRF. The regulation states that the Member States should mainstream and promote objectives relating to gender equality throughout the process of preparing and implementing their recovery and resilience plans. Furthermore, the regulation emphasises the importance of investment in

robust care infrastructure, which is essential to secure gender equality and the economic empowerment of women. It allows more women to take part in paid work and therefore has a positive effect on GDP (see recital 28)' (Sapala 2021, pp. 2-3; European Parliament 2021). The presence of this reference to gender equality was possible after the European Court of Auditors (ECA) called for these issues to be taken into proper consideration in the RRF and NRRP regulations and despite the fact that the first version of the regulation was completely gender blind. The legislative process, driven by pressure from civil society (Sapala 2021; Klatzer and Rinaldi 2020) and the European Parliament, made it possible to include the reference to the gender dimension in the regulation (Sapala 2021).

However, it should be pointed out that in addition to not being allocated a specific budget on the issue, unlike the green and digital transitions, the issue of gender equality is not included among the 11 main criteria used by the Commission to assess the plans (Sapala 2021). In addition, as Barry and Jennings (2021) point out, in any of the six pillars there is no mention of care, the care economy, and the care sector, areas that have been severely hit by the pandemic and usually fall as a responsibility on women. 'There is a specific but limited reference to gender equality under the theme of 'social and territorial cohesion.' Gender mainstreaming is stated should apply across all six themes. But without references to gender and gender equality issues under each specific theme, they are unlikely to be prioritised in MS submissions under the RRF' (Barry and Jennings 2021, p. 73).

The Commission's guide on how to prepare the plan (European Commission 2021) clearly explained what were the expectations in terms of gender equality contained in article 18(4)(o) of the RRF regulation (European Parliament 2021). In particular, it specified that Member States should:

- '[...] outline the most important national challenges in terms of gender equality and equal opportunities for all, including those resulting from or aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis [...]
- [...] explain how the reforms and investments supported by the plan will be instrumental in overcoming the equality challenges identified [...]
- [...] demonstrate that the objectives of gender equality and equal opportunities for all are mainstreamed into the plan, i.e. that the plan promotes the integration of gender equality and equal opportunities for all across the six pillars of Article 3, including green transition and digital transformation.
- [...] disaggregate the data they present by gender, age, disability and racial or ethnic origin wherever possible.' (European Commission 2021, pp. 10-11)

These points were also to be considered in the plans with reference to the United Nations sustainable development goal number 5 on gender equality, the European Pillar of Social Rights (see Box 2), and any other existing national gender equality strategy (Sapala 2021).

Preliminary debate on the content of NRRPs in relation to gender+ issues

To date, and to the best of our knowledge, discussions that can be identified in the scientific and specialised literature in relation to NRRPs mainly concern general descriptions of NGEUs and RRFs: the context in which they were defined (e.g., Dauderstädt 2021); the

process that led to their definition (e.g., De la Porte and Jensen 2021; Alcidi and Corti 2021); the power relations between stakeholders in the definition and implementation processes (Bekker 2021; Verdun and Vanhercke 2021). Crescenzi and colleagues (2021) propose an evidence-based approach that helps to predict what type of projects contained in the NRRPs '[...] are more likely to offer timely and concrete results while serving the new overarching objectives of the EU recovery plan' (p. 280). Czubala Ostapiuk and colleagues (2022) underline how the digitisation support contained in the Spanish NRRP can contribute to fighting the increase in depopulation in some areas of the country.

Comparisons between the contents of the plans from an economic and general investment point of view are also available: Bisciari and colleagues (2021), for example, describe the expenditures and reforms contained in the plans of France, Italy, Spain, and Belgium. Corti and colleagues (2021) compare and assess reforms and investments contained in the plans of Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Portugal, and Slovakia. In every case there are just a few references to issues concerning women.

Particular attention to how gender equality is addressed in Member States' plans can be found in a briefing written by Magdalena Sapala (2021) for the members and staff of the European Parliament. The briefing focuses on the 12 NRRPs that were approved at the time of writing, which are those of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Austria, Portugal, and Slovakia. Sapala underlines that all the analysed plans (with the exception of Luxembourg's) contain a chapter or separate section on gender equality, with this described as a horizontal objective that has to be taken in account in all measures. 'However, not all Member States have included dedicated reforms or investments addressing gender-related challenges explicitly, or indicating women as the main beneficiaries' (p. 6). It is stressed that the Belgian, Spanish, Italian, and Austrian plans contain a higher number of measures of this type. The briefing also reports on some criticism of how the women's perspective is not sufficiently represented in the plan, the difficulties in the implementation of the objectives related to gender equality, and the risk that funding green and digital transitions without specific rules will create jobs mainly for men.

Zarra and Ceron (2021) look at 25 plans (EU 27 excluding Estonia and Netherland) to analyse the salience of gender issues within them. To this end, an automated text analysis of all the plans is carried out, followed by an in-depth qualitative analysis of the French, German, Italian, and Spanish plans. It is emphasised that gender equality is only a background theme within the plans and is almost completely concealed within the reforms and investments contained in the documents. At the same time, greater, albeit minimal, attention to these issues is detected in the plans of countries that have already shown themselves to be sensitive to these issues. The analysis of the text identified Spain and Sweden as the best performers.

In the continuation of this report, a similar analysis of how gender issues have been taken into account within the plans will be offered in an effort to extend the analysis through the observations and experiences shared by the NRs of each country. In addition, the use of an intersectional approach will also provide insight into how the plans deal with inequality grounds other than sex/gender.

General overview: the content

The RESISTIRÉ's inequality domains

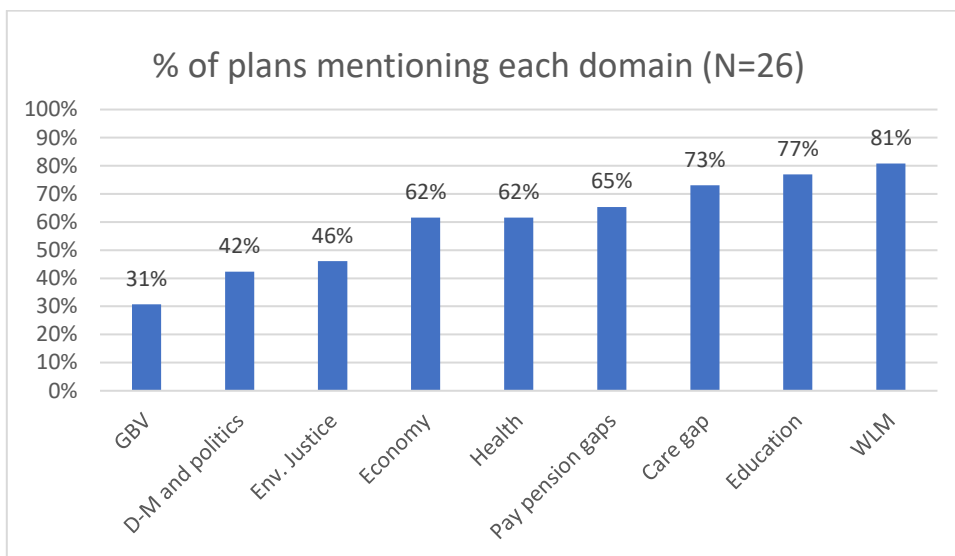


Figure 1 Percentage of plans that mention each domain (N=26). (Question: Does the plan include projects/actions/measures aimed at mitigating sex/gender inequalities in the following domains? Please, highlight explicit mentions of intersecting inequality grounds, if any)

In their analysis of the plans, the NRs indicated if the documents included projects, actions, or measures aimed at mitigating gender/sex inequalities in the RESISTIRÉ's domains. Figure 1 offers an overview of their answers. As we will see more in detail below, the fact that a specific domain is discussed in the plan is not sufficient to say that the document contains concrete measures to address the inequalities related to that domain. We will see that, for example, **many of the plans deal with gender issues only in a vague and general way or only as a side effect of measures with other objectives**. We will offer a more precise picture of the presence or absence of concrete actions to address the different inequalities in the following sections. However, these data are interesting to get a picture of what domains are mainly considered in the plans and which, instead, are the topics utterly absent from the discussion. For instance, **only 31% of the plans (8 plans) consider the domain of gender-based violence**, although during the pandemic there has been an increase in the number of cases. Other domains that were mentioned in only a **small number of plans are decision-making and politics** (42%, 11 plans) and **environmental justice** (46%, 12 plans). The **primary attention is on the domain of work and the labour market**, mentioned in 81% of the plans (21 plans), followed by **education** (77%, 20 plans) and the **care gap** (73%, 19 plans). The domains of the economy (62%), health (62%), and the pay and pension gap (65%) are each mentioned in more than half of the documents.

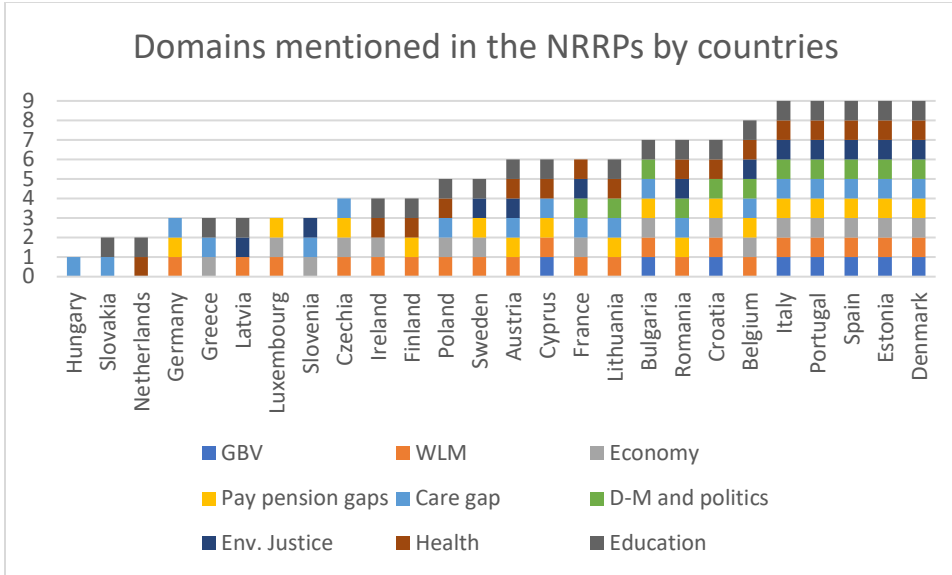
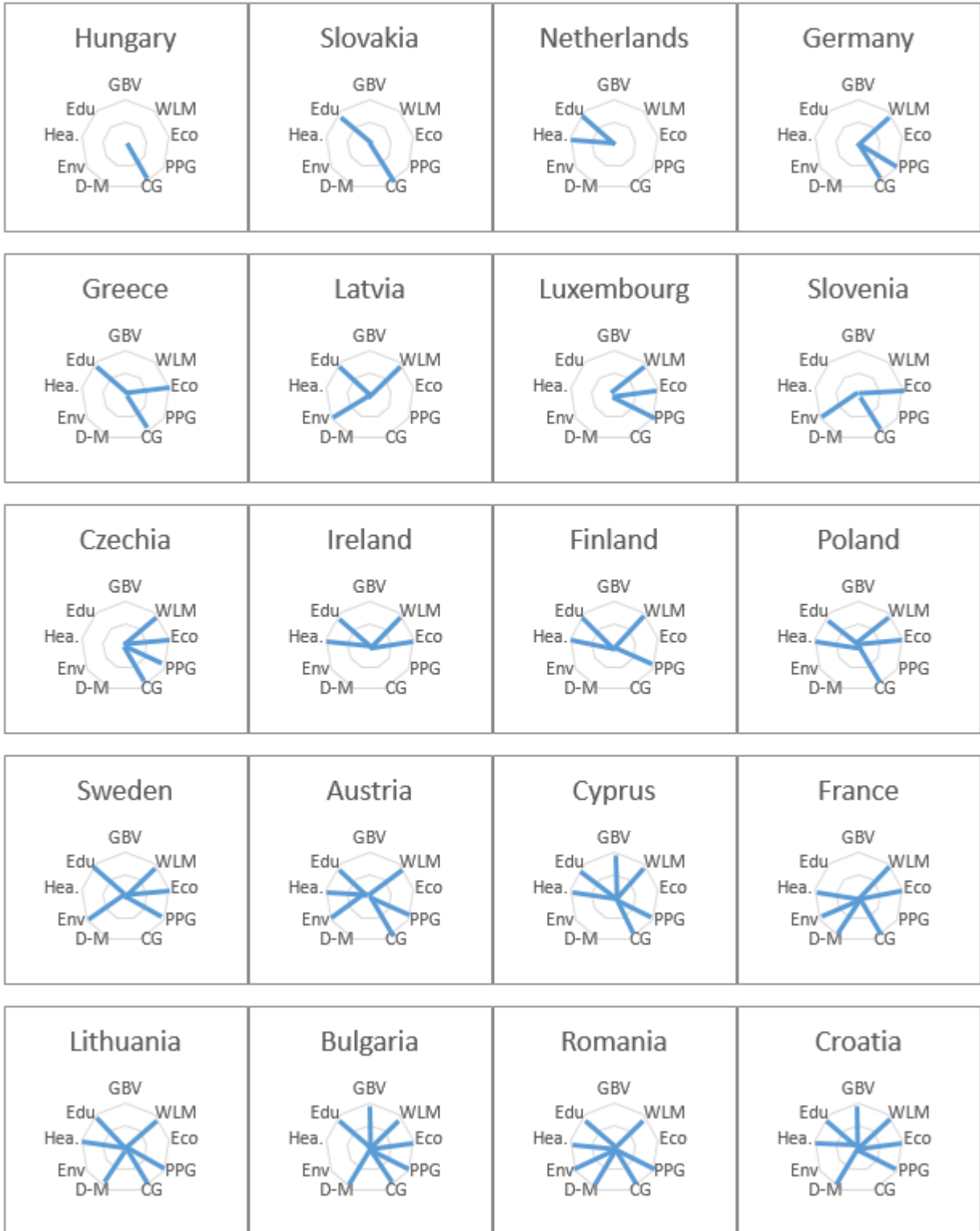


Figure 2 Presence of the different gender inequality domains in the different NRRPs

Figure 2 underlines the presence of the nine domains in the different plans. The data show that **the Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Estonian, and Danish documents considered all the domains** in some ways. At the same time, **the Hungarian draft contains only some content relating to the gender care gap**. Approximately one in three documents mention fewer than four domains.

Figure 3 offers another visualisation of the presence of each domain in the different NRRPs.





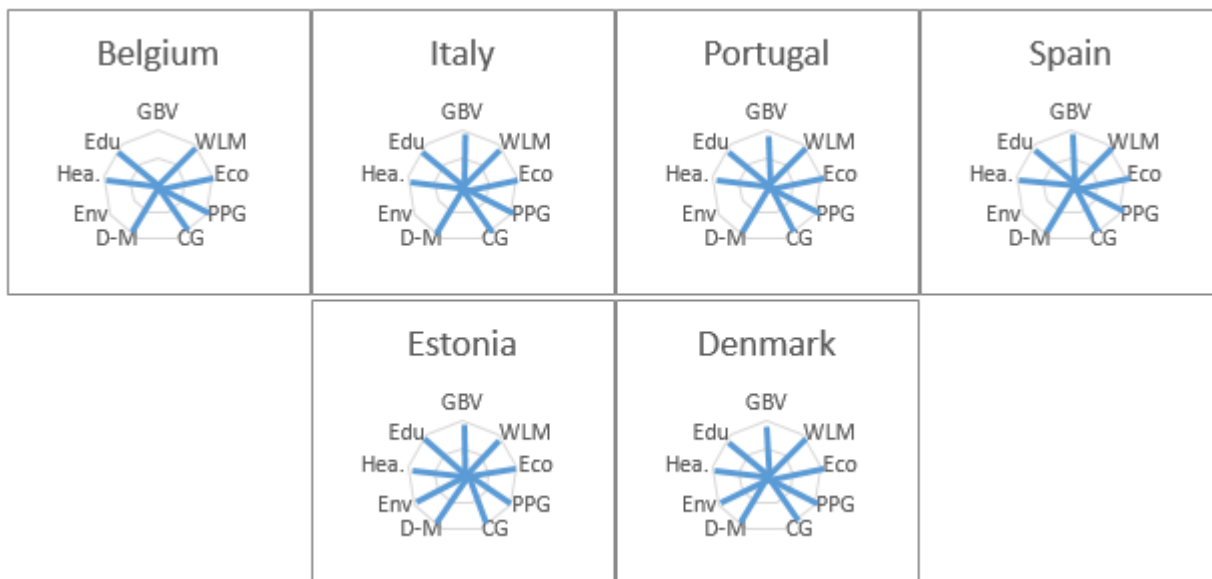


Figure 3 The presence of different gender inequality domains in the plans of each country (legend: GBV = gender-based violence; WLM = work and the labour market; Eco = the economy; PPG = the pay and pension gap; CG = care gap; D-M = decision-making and politics; Env = environmental justice; Hea = health; Edu = education)

The RESISTIRÉ's inequality grounds

As for domains, the NRs indicated whether the documents include projects/actions/measures aimed at mitigating inequalities for vulnerable groups related to the RESISTIRÉ's grounds. Again, the point made in the previous section applies: **how these grounds are addressed in the plans ranges from vague general considerations to concrete measures**. At the same time, this information helps us to understand which issues are most discussed and which are absent. We will offer a more detailed picture of the presence or absence of concrete measures to address the different inequalities in the following sections. Figure 4 shows that **almost all the plans contain some considerations or actions related to the need of mitigating inequalities pertaining to age** (96% of the total, 25 plans except Latvia) **and social class/socioeconomic background** (92% of the total, 24 plans except Sweden and Finland). Inequalities related to disability are mentioned in 81% of the plans. **Almost completely absent** are considerations of issues pertaining to **religion and belief, gender identity, and sexual orientation**. Nearly half of the plans contain some content dealing with inequalities related to nationality (42%, 11 plans) and ethnicity (50%, 13 plans). A similar number of documents deal with grounds not included among the proposed options and that fall into the 'other' category. This category mainly contains **inequalities related to geography** (e.g., urban vs rural) and **employment status**, but also inequalities related to **digital access**, the consequences of being **prisoners**, and **health status**.

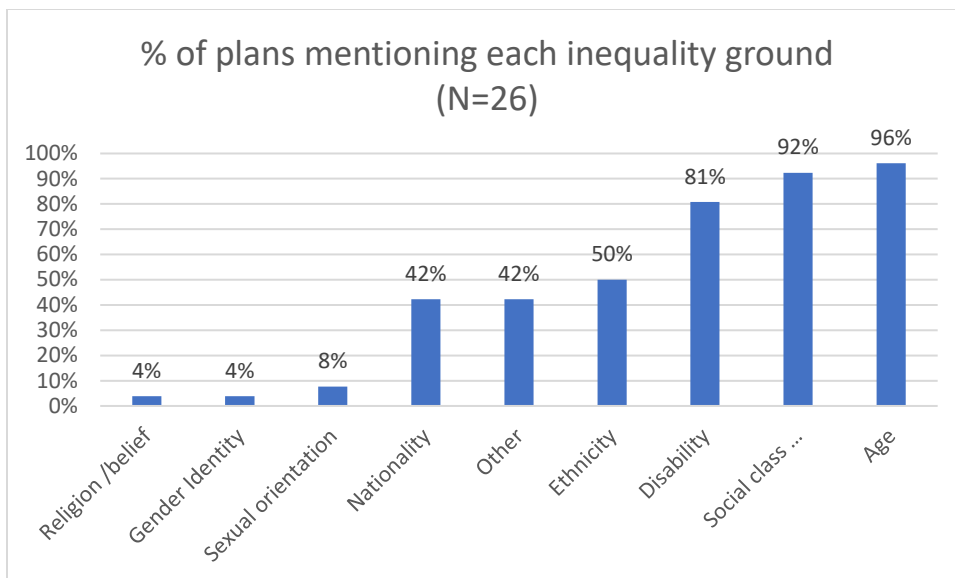


Figure 4 % of plans mentioning each inequality ground

Like what was said in the preceding section in relation to inequality domains, Figure 5 shows that the **Spanish plan is still ranks top** for the number of different inequality grounds mentioned in its contents. The **Portuguese and Irish** plans mention a high number of grounds too. **At the bottom** of this list, we find **Latvia, Luxemburg, and Sweden**, whose plans respectively refer to just two grounds.

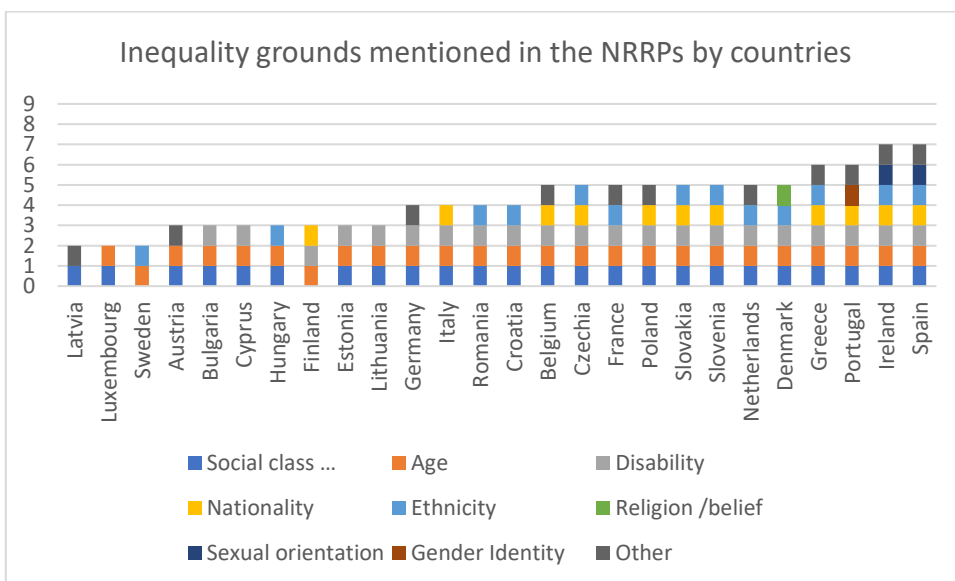


Figure 5 The presence of the different inequality grounds in the different NRRPs

How gender equality issues are represented in the policies

The **regulation governing the distribution of the RRF** pushed different countries to devote in their plans **special attention to gender mainstreaming** and thus to the impact that investments and reforms will have on gender equality. This request has been **translated differently** by the different national governments involved.

The majority of plans have **independent sections on gender equality**, often indicating the main issues to be tackled and what the plan proposes to do.

- For example, in Belgium, there is a small section that describes how about half of the planned measures have the potential to positively impact gender equality and equal opportunities.
- There is a similar section in the Cyprus plan, which indicates the problems, expected reforms, and some measures to help address gender issues.
- In the Irish plan, the government's commitment to addressing gender issues is described in a section called 'Social Impact'. In addition, the plan submitted to the EC by Ireland is coupled with another document at the national level in which a short, more specific section emphasises the willingness to address issues concerning the gender pay gap and support for women in business.
- The Portuguese document includes a five-page section describing how the plan mainstreams gender equality.
- Increasing female employment and gender equality in economic sectors are the objectives of the Romanian plan, described in the document's introduction. The plan states that all the different components address gender equality.
- In the Slovak document, a specific section defines gender equality as a horizontal priority throughout the plan.
- A similar situation is described by the Slovenian plan and its three-page section on gender equality. On a general level, this plan states that the principles of gender equality and equal opportunities for all are considered at all levels of the reform process, which are preparation, implementation, and evaluation.
- In the Spanish plan, gender equality and the reinforcement of social and territorial cohesion represent two central axes of the document. In particular, the Gender Equality axis is composed of transversal measures aimed at fighting female unemployment, reforming the long-care system, improving educational proposals and equal opportunities, and reducing the digital divide. In addition, gender equality and equal opportunities are incorporated in all administrative procedures involved in the plan and processes like data collection for policy design, public procurement, funding, and consultation bodies. Then the gender dimension is elaborated for each component.
- The Italian plan also identifies transversal axes concerning opportunities for young people, gender equality, and territorial inequalities. Gender issues are then addressed within the various missions on themes concerning equal work and positions in public administration, the improvement of education services and training, investments in women's entrepreneurship, social housing for vulnerable people, attention to elderly people, people with disabilities and care work,

increasing home caring activities, and removing the barriers that hinder access to the world of work.

- A description of gender equality as a transversal pillar is also found in the Luxembourgish document. This plan's impact assessment underlines the focus on equal protection, inclusion, equal opportunity, and support for vulnerable citizens.
- There is a three-page section entitled 'Gender equality and equal opportunities for all' in the Latvian plan. The gender equality situation is here described in relation to employment, education, and health. The plan describes how specific measures to promote gender equality are not present in the document. However, it is stressed that an integrated approach that supplements particular measures in the plan with a gender lens has been used.
- In the Finnish plan, there is a two-page section on 'Gender equality and equal opportunities' that describes the plan's intentions to promote gender equality and beyond (also with reference to Roma communities), the impact of the pandemic on these dynamics, and how the plan addresses these issues directly and indirectly.
- The Lithuanian plan has a four-page section on gender equalities and equal opportunities, stating the plan's adherence to these principles and offering a general description of these issues, the institutions dealing with them, and the main related laws.
- In the Danish plan, there is a two-page section called 'gender equality and equal opportunities for all' that describes the current situation in relation to this topic in the country, all the activities and measures introduced by the government in the previous years to increase gender equality, and the problems that still need to be tackled. The government states that it wants to make Denmark a global advocate for the rights of women and girls.
- The Swedish draft plan contains a specific section on gender equality and equal opportunities in the introductory part, in which issues related to the gender pay gap and discrimination against foreigners are addressed.
- The Hungarian draft plan contains a section on 'Gender equality and equal opportunities for all', which contains little specific information.
- The Bulgarian draft plan is described by the NR as referring mainly to the need to implement the 'National Strategy for Gender Equality for 2021-2030', focusing more on repeating its objectives than on proposing concrete measures.

In some plans, although specific sections related to gender equality are not present, some connections to related topics can be identified **within sections on specific reforms**. For instance:

- in Belgium, the plan contains a section related to promoting an inclusive labour market and preventing discrimination against vulnerable groups, with a specific section related to care issues.
- The few measures aimed at mitigating gender+ inequalities in the Czech plan mainly refer to the labour market and education areas.
- In the French plan, there are some measures to improve working conditions and salaries in the healthcare system (a measure presented as having a substantial impact on women), a reform of the civil service, which should affect women's careers, actions

to put pressure on companies to reduce gender inequalities. The document also mentions that access to employment can be unequal for people with disabilities. In addition, the plan refers to 'inequality of opportunity' (and sometimes of 'destiny') concerning generic 'vulnerable groups' that from the context could be identified as linked to socioeconomic and ethnic grounds.

- The Greek plan generally mentions gender+ inequalities in relation to the digitisation of SMEs. However, the NR underlines that no concrete measures to solve the problems of inequalities are proposed. Gender issues are observed in more detail in the description of investments related to the care of children, people with disabilities, and elderly people. In addition, the plan proposes some solutions to the issue of diversity in the labour market by strengthening the Observatory for Equality at Work and by incentivising companies to hire workers from different groups, also through the funding of specialised courses for specific categories.
- In the Portuguese plan, the sections on Housing, Work, and the Labour Market emphasise using a gender approach, describing issues, identifying targets, and formulating measures to achieve them.
- The Slovak plan addresses gender issues mainly in the area of care, with reforms concerning the care of children, the disabled, and elderly people, and in education with the introduction of gender equality in the reform of curricula.
- Latvia's plan, despite its integrated approach, as mentioned above, describes some activities that can have an impact on gender inequalities, such as: the possibility for people of all genders to access the State Fire and Rescue Service; the reduction of the gender gap in ICT-related professions; funds for low-rent housing; the improvement of STEM training; the revision of employment-related social protection systems.
- In the Danish plan, we find a description of measures to improve services for GBV victims and the possibility for men to take more parental leave. Furthermore, there are measures aimed at enhancing medical consultations of young and old people through digitisation and improving the quality of work in health and care systems.

Some of the plans also have general descriptions of **how the pandemic has impacted particular vulnerable groups**.

- In Germany, the need for new measures to combat domestic violence is mentioned. In this plan, as in Greece's plan, inequalities in unpaid work are highlighted, especially to the detriment of mothers.
- The Polish draft of the plan underlines the government's will to mitigate the socioeconomic effects of the crisis, particularly regarding women.
- The Italian plan emphasises that the pandemic has increased existing inequalities, especially concerning women, young people, and the elderly in need of care.
- In the Estonian plan, an analysis of gender inequality in the labour market is presented. Some targets are set to reduce the gender pay gap, and some measures are put in place to address the care gap for children and the elderly.
- In the Danish plan, it is pointed out that women suffered more during the pandemic because more women work in the service sector than men.

The examples above give an overview of how **all plans have, in some way, incorporated a discussion related to gender inequalities and other specific grounds**. In most cases, this was done, first of all, through the presence of a specific section on the topic, where the situation is outlined, and the intention to remedy the problems is described. In some cases, it is possible to find also a short description of how the pandemic affected these issues. There are also some plans where gender inequality issues are discussed within measures concerning other topics. Some countries have tried to consider gender equality and equal opportunities as transversal axes that concern all the documents, while others deal with this topic only in relation to specific measures. We will see in the next section that, despite this general attempt by different countries to show a concern about gender+ inequalities, **the descriptions the NRs provide on what the plans specifically contain to tackle these inequalities is almost unanimously very critical**.

Inequalities that are not represented in the policies

In the NRs' descriptions, **the plans focus mainly on the economy and finance, support for business and the construction of infrastructures, economic stabilisation, and reorientation on the macro level**. This situation can be illustrated by the position of the Portuguese national government, which considered their plan as a way of bringing about the 'structural improvement of the country, not 'just to solve punctual problems'" [PT_NR]. About **one-third of the NRs explicitly state that most of the measures in their plans do not address inequalities that were highlighted by or emerged during the pandemic**. In some cases, the **measures were designed before the COVID-19** pandemic but were never implemented. For this reason, the RRF funds now represent an opportunity to respond to previous requests for reforms made by the EC. For instance, in the Czech Republic, 'the plan was used rather instrumentally to cover an intervention [for childcare facilities] whose funding should have been secured a long time ago [from the national budget]' [CZ_NR]. In Austria, '[s]ome issues which became more apparent during the pandemic - e.g., access to digital devices, support for remedial learning, the digitisation of bureaucratic processes - are taken up by the NRRP. Many measures, however, have been already discussed prior to the pandemic (i.e., in the coalition agreement of the current government or suggested by feedback to previous recovery and resilience plans)' [AU_NR]. The **attention to digital and green innovation**, the two mandatory areas of intervention present in each plan, are indicated by some researchers as **potentially favouring male-dominated sectors**. One of the most evident findings is the **lack of attention and measures to support GBV issues**, even though this area was strongly affected by the consequences of the pandemic (e.g., Dlamini 2021). The complete absence of measures to contrast GBV and help the victims is explicitly noted by the NRs who analysed the plans for Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, and Sweden.

In the care domain, the Irish NR underlines the **lack of measures related to childcare and general care**. The Polish NR stresses that there are **no measures to increase the involvement of men in care activities** in the analysed document.

The NRs are almost unanimous in stating that the various plans put **insufficient effort into finding solutions to the gender+ inequalities that emerged or deepened during the pandemic**. In most cases, it is emphasised that **general statements are not followed by concrete measures**. A good description of this situation is provided by the Slovenian NR, who stresses how issues relating to gender+ equality in the plan are only addressed through the inclusion of standard formulas at the end of some measures:

'The Plan contains a chapter on gender equality (pg. 29-32), which expresses that gender+ equality will be ensured at all levels of execution of the plan and also lists all relevant components. However, it can be noted at numerous points in the plan that the only (further) reference to gender+ equality is sometimes limited to sentences like "Equal opportunities for all will be ensured"; "All proposed measures will contribute to gender equality and equal opportunities"; "Vulnerable groups will be given special attention"; "Listed measures will address principles of European Pillar of Social Rights, such as the 3rd principle (Equal opportunities)" [SI_NR]

Accounts from National Researchers on **how plans have failed to address gender+ inequalities** are various, for instance:

- In Bulgaria, 'The NRRP does not provide an adequate approach to addressing gender+ inequalities. The few mentions of gender and other types of inequalities, with some small exceptions, often sound like namedropping more than an actual strategy or having an actionable plan how to deal with the issues at stake' [BG_NR].
- In Croatia, 'The overall impression is that authorities completely forgot, or better to say, did not care to incorporate any concrete measures related to gender equality while developing the NRRP' [NR_HR].
- In Poland, 'In general, it can be stated that the NRRP is unclear regarding the description of measures to be implemented for various groups and in diverse domains. It means that while some measures are explicit and concrete, some are just abstract and vague ideas' [PL_NR].
- In Sweden, the NR informs that no individual reform or investment in the plan has gender equality as its primary objective or rationale, and women are never the primary target.
- In the Czech Republic, 'Overall, the plan fails to approach the gender+ inequalities consistently, structurally, complementarily, and across all the pillars and domains. It proposes either singular interventions or uses the plan's budget to cover projects that did not receive funding from elsewhere' [CZ_NR].
- In the Netherlands, 'The two Annexes that are currently written as a draft for the Dutch RRP do not reflect a sensitivity to gender+ inequalities' [NL_NR].

A lack of attention to vulnerable groups and the pandemic

If the attention devoted to individual gender domains and inequality grounds in the plans is rather limited, the NRs note there is **even less attention given to concrete measures** aimed at considering the intersections between gender inequalities and other inequality grounds.

- In the Bulgarian plan, 'there is no mention of different vulnerable groups of women' [BG_NR].
- In Germany, 'What is missing is the "+ Perspective" as there is no relation made to, e.g., women with migratory background or women with disabilities. All the additional perspectives to gender (refugees, social inequality, etc.) are mentioned separately but without making reference in special to gender' [DE_NR].
- In Luxemburg, 'Gender and intersecting inequalities are absent from the plan' [LUX_NR].
- The Portuguese plan is described by the NR as probably '[...] conceived under a bias of a binary approach to gender, not a gender+ perspective, and it is built around a vision of the pandemic impacts in the standard family/individual (heterosexual, middle class, qualified)' [PT_NR].

National researchers describe several situations in which the plans forget to take into account particular categories of women and vulnerable groups. In the Spanish plan, for instance, '[...] more ambitious measures could be expected after the COVID-19 pandemic, to improve this highly feminised (and racialised) sector, measures beyond training and funding in infrastructures but more focused on wages and other working conditions. The informal care sector seems to be neglected' [ES_NR].

The **lack of measures to tackle low-paid and precarious employment**, 'two areas of work often over-represented by women and those of a migration background' [IE_NR], is highlighted in relation to the Irish plan. The Hungarian plan does not cover the **problems of single parents**, 'the vast majority of whom are women' [HU_NR], who faced extreme difficulties in performing their work activities due to the closure of educational institutions during the pandemic. In addition, in this plan, there is **no support provided to the employees in the highly feminised sectors that were particularly affected by the pandemic**. A similar concern is expressed in the analysis of the Portuguese plan, especially with respect to the lack of measures it contains to support women entrepreneurs working in sectors impacted by the pandemic, such as tourism.

Various NRs stress the lack of attention for the **situation of vulnerable people and inequalities related to specific grounds**. The Irish measures do not mention any minority group specifically. In the Bulgarian plan, the only grounds mentioned are social class, age, and disability, and **no intersections with gender are present**. There are some measures for youth and elderly people in the French document, which also mentions disability. Other inequalities are not mentioned or are included in a generic and vague definition of inequality of 'opportunity' or 'destiny'. The Greek NR highlights the **absence of measures**

dealing with social class, migrant status, race, and sexual orientation. For instance, the NR notes the lack of measures aimed at 'promoting the socioeconomic integration of female and LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, migrants and refugees, who are facing extreme forms of exclusion or exploitation because of racism and xenophobic prejudices' [GR_NR]. The **need for a greater focus on ethnic, religious, sexual, and gender minorities** is also reported by the NRs working on the Danish plan. In the Swedish document, according to the NR's analysis, the **measures observed are not aimed at fighting the institutional inequalities highlighted by the pandemic, but seek to offer vulnerable people with some tools to overcome the main obstacles.** The NR who worked on the Dutch plan makes a similar observation, noting how the measures related to particular socioeconomic groups, the elderly, and the unemployed just offer some tools for empowerment without providing guidance on how people can access them. The **absence of measures to support Roma communities** is highlighted in the analysis of the Portuguese plan. In the Czech one, there is a limited number of measures relating to these communities, and the NR states that generally '[...] the plan does not consistently promote the integration of this marginalized community' [CZ_NR]. The **lack of attention to the ethnicity ground** is underlined in the Austrian, French, and Estonian plans. The Danish, Dutch, and Swedish NRs note the **lack of awareness about inequalities affecting LGBTQI+ communities.**

The analysis on the plans from Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland, Poland, and Portugal explicitly underline the absence of measures dealing with the gender pay and pension gap in their related documents.

Stereotypes and implicit assumptions

As noted above, gender equality is poorly or superficially addressed in the plans and when addressed it seems that this is mostly due to the criteria set by the EC's framework. Governments claim that the measures included in their plans will have a positive impact and mitigate inequalities or help foster more equal relationships. However, this is mostly empty rhetoric that is easily exposed by the lack of concrete measures or even by the use of gender stereotypes and implicit assumptions in the plans. This empty rhetoric is usually deployed to justify measures that meet the overarching objectives of the green and digital transition.

In this cycle, the NRs were not asked to identify stereotypes, but some such narratives were mapped during the codification process. Stereotype narratives are particularly evident in the domains of the gender pay and pension gap and the gender care gap.

In relation to the **gender pay gap**, the plans usually adopt measures aimed at training, counselling, and mentoring programmes that specifically target women, and they are guided by the assumption that women's access to the labour market, their lower wages, and their obstacles to getting promoted to managerial roles are mainly caused by their lower skills and lack of education or by their need to learn (male) managerial skills:

- In Austria, for instance, the plan promotes female education in finance as a measure to foster their economic independence and mitigate the income gap (par. 6).
- In Romania, gender inequalities in the research careers of men and women, especially in the STEM sector, are tackled through the creation of career counselling centres.
- In Portugal, the plan envisages the introduction of management training as part of the reform to public administration, and the training will include a gender dimension. The training is aimed at female empowerment in the performance of leadership positions.

Similar assumptions apply to vulnerable groups, suggesting the difficulties they face in the labour market are mainly subjective or individual:

- In the Netherlands, investments like ‘Life Long Learning’ programmes or ‘Lifestyle Programmes’ are implemented to encourage the employability of vulnerable groups, like the elderly, and people with a vocational education. As the NR pointed out, while the implicit aim is to enable them to participate in the labour market, these measures implicitly locate the source of inequality as the vulnerable group themselves.

In the **gender care gap** domain, the plans usually recognise that work-life imbalances affect women’s participation in the labour market (for more information see the section related to the work and labour market domain). In some countries, positive measures are adopted in this regard, such as expanding childcare facilities for children 0-3 years old (e.g., Spain, Poland). However, the rationale adopted for these initiatives usually reaffirm the stereotypical division of roles between men and women, along the breadwinner/housekeeper stereotype, in that the initiatives target mothers as being primarily responsible for childcare:

- In Greece, the plan introduces measures to tackle the gender care gap but mostly focuses on mothers (creating new childcare units, including daycare centres in private companies, and adopting a special programme of care for disabled children) instead of the gender sharing of care responsibilities in households. As the NR points out, the focus on women as mothers in the plan is in tune with broader policies to support families and tackle the demographic deficit.
- In Poland, the plan proposes widening access to daycare services for children until the age of 3 as a measure to increase women’s participation in the labour market. Yet, ‘it lacks measures to increase men’s engagement in care, which in general maintains the traditional division of gender roles’ (POL_NR).
- In Austria, the reorganisation of primary healthcare is described as beneficial for women. In particular, part-time work and working in team would make it easier for women to reconcile work and care responsibilities. This in turn, the plan argues, would attract women to become general practitioners.
- The Romanian plan includes an infrastructure project to introduce water and sewage systems, which is presented as an improvement in women’s quality of life as they are identified as being primarily responsible for domestic and care labour.

Another measure illustrates the hierarchy between traditional and non-traditional families and the attention focuses on the former:

- In Austria, a reform to the retirement system called ‘pension splitting’ allows pensions to be calculated by combining contributions from both parents (automatically, if they are married; voluntary if they are in other kinds of partnerships). This should - according to the NRRP - reduce the pension gap and poverty amongst elderly women.

How intersectionality is (not) addressed in the plans

The analysis indicates a **general absence of the use of an intersectional approach** among the various plans and policies observed. Even when there are some measures addressing women or specific vulnerable groups, the inequalities related to the intersections among different identities are not considered. The following quotations offer some examples of that:

- In the Bulgarian plan, ‘[r]egarding the different inequality grounds, most are not mentioned at all. The only ones that are present in the NRRP are social class, age, and disability, but they are not intersected with gender’ (BG_NR).
- In Greece, ‘the plan also envisages the financing of a training programme promoting diversity in the labour market, mostly in the public sector, but also in the private sector and several training initiatives that prioritise or are exclusively focused on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups: training on STEM for high school children with a 50% quota on women and girls, training on digital skills for the elderly, training for the integration of refugees and the Greek Roma. Overall, however, the plan does not explicitly mention intersectional measures’ [GR_NR].
- In the Italian plan, ‘an intersectional approach is not applied’ [IT_NR].
- In the Luxembourg plan, ‘There is a general reference to the gap between unemployed people and the skills needed to access the labour market, but no consideration is given to intersecting inequalities other than a reference to people aged 45+ lacking digital skills’ [LU_NR].
- In the Portuguese plan, ‘the intersection of inequalities is not effectively done in the PRR. Inequalities are addressed by items, forgetting that often they accumulate in the same person’ [PT_NR].

However, we found **some exceptions in some documents** that mention the importance of considering specific intersecting categories or showing how some specific measures can positively impact these categories. For instance, concerning gender and social class, the Austrian plan underlines how the investments in improving public transportation can support **women and people with low income** who often don't have a car. Similarly, in Spain, ‘The fight against energetic poverty specifically targets women, especially female-headed households’ [ES_NR]. In France, measures against fuel **poverty** are described as

potentially helping **single-parent families, which are mostly led by women**. The actions on improving social services and social housing in Italy are described as supporting **women's empowerment** and fighting gender discrimination, particularly in the area of **material poverty and housing hardship**. The Croatian plan states that the planned reforms regarding the labour market will devote special attention to single mothers, women victims of violence, and the long-term unemployed. Referring to the ground of age, the Austrian plan states that the measures to combat energy poverty should help **elderly poor women** who cannot afford heating costs. In Spain, measures for active employment are described as potentially supporting **unemployed youth through a gender perspective**.

In Greece, some measures aim to create new care units and special programmes of care for **disabled children** that are described as supporting the integration of mothers in the labour market.

There are also some **intersections between sex/gender, ethnicity, and social class** - for instance, in a Romanian measure aimed at providing 10 mobile medical units to screen for breast and cervical cancer, which will be used in disadvantaged areas with a focus on Roma communities. In Slovakia, measures for improving care services are described as potentially supporting **Roma mothers**.

In Croatia, '[f]ifty percent of the Guaranteed Minimum Income Benefit (GMIB) is planned for **homeless, survivors of violence, and victims of trafficking** who are accommodated in shelters during the crisis'.

In some plans, we also found mentions of intersections where gender is not one of the variables directly involved. For instance:

- Concerning the grounds 'social class' and 'disability': Cyprus mentions a measure against energy poverty in households with disabled people.
- In relation to the grounds 'age' and 'disability': in the Romanian plan, 'young persons with disabilities are identified as potential targets of recruitment for careers in the field of research, according to their competences' [RO_NR].
- Concerning the grounds 'social class', 'age', and 'nationality': in Germany, the plan mentions the risk of multiple discrimination in the labour market and on unemployment, especially among young adults and people with a migratory background. In the Spanish one, there are investments for the 'building and renovation of centres for children and the youth (especially unaccompanied migrant minors and children with special needs, two groups presenting intersecting vulnerabilities)' [ES_NR]. In Estonia, there is mention of the importance of integrating young people without higher education in the labour market. The Dutch draft 'mentions (just once) measures for the younger generations, particular from lower socioeconomic background' [NL_NR]. In the Danish plan, there is the provision of 'additional pedagogical support to vulnerable children between the ages of 0 and 5' [DK_NR].

Some general positive aspects highlighted by the NRs

In the evaluation made by the national researchers on how the plans addressed, or not, the gender+ inequalities related to the pandemic, there is also space for **some positive comments**. First of all, there is some **hope regarding the consideration of gender+ issues in the reforms and measures**. The Spanish plan, for instance, is considered a 'well-structured' document [ES_NR] that offers a 'solid assessment of the most significant struggles in terms of gender equality' and also devotes attention to different inequality grounds and some space to their interactions. At the same time, the NR underlines how the gender analysis in the plan is more detailed for topics concerned with employment and care but is still too general and vague for other areas.

In most of the other plans, it is difficult to identify any measures that focus explicitly on gender inequality domains and almost impossible to find measures that mention intersections between gender and other inequality grounds. However, some NRs underline **how some actions can have indirect effects** on these areas. For instance:

- In Poland, 'women are explicitly targeted as the recipients of only a few measures, but there are also areas with planned changes (for instance, the healthcare system, the long-term care system), where women, due to the structure of employment in a given sector of the economy, are the main beneficiaries' [PL_NR].
- In Slovenia, 'although not explicitly addressing gender inequalities/issues, certain measures envisaged in the plan will have gender impact. For example, the component of strengthening competences, especially digital ones, will have certain gender impact in the sphere of education, while the teaching profession in Slovenia is feminised in inverse proportion to the level of education' [SI_NR].
- The Italian NRs praise the fact that the plan included the fight against gender discrimination and youth policies among its cross-cutting strategies.
- At the same time, the Portuguese one underlines the particularly good organisation from a gender+ perspective of the sections about housing and work and labour market.
- The Romanian NR notes how the NRRP is one of the first policies in that country to use the concept of 'gender equality' instead of the classic 'equal opportunities between women and men'.
- In the analysis of the Estonian plan, the NR states that even if it is not possible to notice the effects of gender mainstreaming in all the areas of the plan, 'yet, the very presence of many of the gender + dimensions is a positive development' [EE_NR].

Recovery and Resilience in the countries not belonging to the EU 27

As stated in the introduction, the RESISTIRÉ project also included in the analysis four countries that are not part of the EU 27 group and therefore do not participate in the allocation of funds linked to the Recovery and Resilience Facility and linked to the creation

of an NRRP. For these countries, however, policies (and a project, in the case of Turkey) dealing with post-pandemic recovery and resilience were considered.

In the GIA of the budget from Iceland (IS_POL), the government states that '[...] most of [the budgetary measures] are considered conducive to gender equality, and many more are considered to maintain the status quo. A small share of measures is considered likely to widen the gender gap' [IS_NR]. The NR underlines that the policy has no specific actions to mitigate gender+ inequalities that became evident during the pandemic. However, there are some actions that could have a positive impact on gender+ equality and that relate to the economic protection and financing of health and elderly care services. In general, the NR highlights the lack of concrete measures to mitigate gender+ inequalities and in particular notes that '[...] the government needs to more firmly address gender+ inequalities in relation to, e.g., unpaid care work, GBV, poverty, and health issues' [IS_NR].

In relation to the Serbian budget law (RS_POL), the NR states that 'Serbia is currently improving its budget policy transparency by introducing programmatic-based budget funding rather than a non-transparent budget. However, not all ministries are part of the programme-based and gender-responsive budgets, which is also obligatory by the law, but they will have to be until 2024. Part of this is the obligation of state bodies financed from the budget to dedicate at least one goal within the project to gender equality. In a document of over 1,000 pages, of the 72 goals that should lead to the promotion of gender equality, only one-third aim to improve the position of women and achieve equality'.

The NR related to UK underlines that the orientation of the 'Children's Social Care COVID-19 Regional Recovery and Building Back Better Fund' is '[...] one that considers gender+ issues in the projects they wish to prioritise, focusing on GBV, age, migration and socioeconomic status' [UK_NR]. There is interesting funding to undertake pre-birth assessments with expectant mothers: '[a]s research has shown during the pandemic, expectant and new mothers suffered greatly from a lack of familial, social, and medical support and therefore this aspect of the policy could be especially impactful' [UK_NR]. The policy also offer assistance to unaccompanied children who seek asylum. The NR notes also several criticisms of the proposed solutions to these issues. For example, there are funds to finance hubs that support disadvantaged families but these funds do not fully compensate for the cuts made before the pandemic. There are funds to address FGM but they are described as scarce and not guaranteed after 2022. There is no discussion of the long-term sustainability of these actions. Finally, ethnicity or LGBTQIA+ issues are absent.

On the contrary, in relation to the UK policy 'Recovery Premium and Schools COVID-19 Operational Guidance', the NR states that 'Despite the publicised educational attainment gaps between boys and girls, among LGBTQ+ students, and those from non-White British

backgrounds, the Recovery Premium only allocates specific funds and extra support for those with disabilities and Special Educational Needs' [UK_NR]. 'In an attempt to provide equal opportunities and assistance to all students "regardless of background", the plan does not consider the specific issues of children and young people in their education in regards to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race and ethnicity, religion or nationality.' [UK_NR]

Regarding the Turkish 'COVID-19 Resilience and Response Project', the NR underlines that although the project is described as promoting 'inclusive and gender sensitive approach to risk-informed resilience, [...] the project has not been designed from a gender+ perspective. Therefore, project actions have not been planned with an overall aim to mitigate gender+ inequalities emerged or deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic' [TK_NR]. The NR had the possibility to interview the UNDP expert responsible for the project, who described how 'the official bodies of the Turkish state do not even want to use the term "gender equality" but instead prefer using "equality between women and men", which she thinks, is a tendency that emerged in the past two years. She also said that this was not an issue up until two years ago. So, the UNDP had to negotiate with the Ministry to include a section titled "gender equality" in the region-based fragile sectoral reports' [TK_NR]. Even if gender+ was not the focus of the project, the NR stresses that 'the project actions and the digital methods used during the offered trainings have unexpected consequences in terms of mitigating gender inequalities in the domains of work and the labour market' [TK_NR].

General overview: the process

The design of the plan: stakeholders' involvement

The NRs also investigated the **level of participation of different categories of stakeholders in the design of the plans** (Figure 6). Not all the NRRPs contain descriptions of this process, so the NRs tried to supplement the information, when possible, by researching other authoritative sources of information. The high percentage of 'cannot assess' answers for some categories highlights that this activity was not easy in several cases. As we will also see later in reference to the response from civil society, **many criticisms of a plan's design refer to the lack of transparency in the design process**. We will also see cases where governments claimed to have involved specific organisations but were then contradicted by those organisations, which said, for instance, that they had never been contacted or that the process was only a token one with no real implications for the design of the policy.

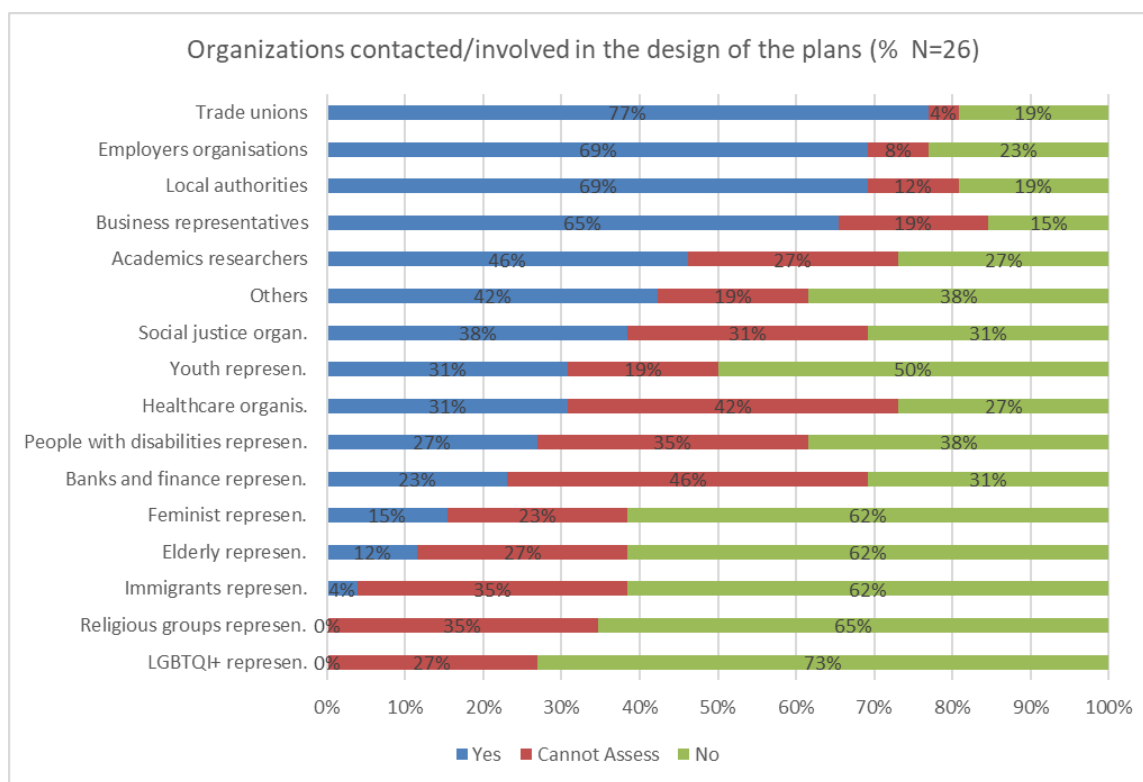


Figure 6 How many plans involved each category of civil society organisation in the design process (% N=26)

In addition, Figure 6 highlights some major critical points. The **organisations consulted and/or involved mainly belong to the production, labour, and economic sectors** (trade unions, employers' organisations, business representatives). **Local authorities** have been

involved in some way in the design of about 70% of the plans. It is also important to underline which actors have been mainly excluded from the creation of the plans. **In at least 62% of the plans, there was no involvement of feminist organisations;** the same percentage of plans saw the exclusion of both **elderly and immigrant representatives;** at least **65% of the plans indicate no participation of representatives of religious groups;** finally, at least **73% of the plans indicate no involvement of representatives of LGBTQI+ groups.**

The involvement of stakeholders took place in different ways, for instance: the invitation of relevant organisations or local authorities to **meetings, public hearings, and seminars** with government officials or specific government departments (e.g., Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain); the possibility for the organisations to **submit official proposals and statements** (e.g., Austria, Ireland, Portugal); specific expert thematic meetings and working groups (e.g., Slovakia and Spain).

Various NRs raise many concerns in relation to these processes about the **lack of proper involvement of relevant stakeholders and the lack of transparency of the process.** For instance, in the Czech Republic, '[w]hile the NRRP states that it sufficiently engaged all the relevant actors, the CSOs claim that the process was not transparent and the engagement was a mere formality' [CZ_NR]. In Slovenia, '[t]he Plan contains a chapter about the process of stakeholders' engagement; however, it is not clear if it included general public. It is also unclear which and to what extent the comments from different stakeholders have been considered and included' [SI_NR]. The NRs from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, France, Lithuania, and Luxemburg have made similar comments on the **lack of information about the involvement process.** In a few cases, there are also some **mismatches between what is stated in the plan and the comments of some civil society organisations.** For instance, as reported by the Hungarian NR, the leaders of the umbrella organisation of the largest women's organisations and the largest women's trade union claim that they were not consulted about the plan's design, even if the documents state the opposite.

Figure 7 shows that **fewer than half of the Member State governments (42%) conducted a public consultation process to collect feedback from the general public** on the drafts of their plans. This process mostly took place by posting the **draft of the plan online and inviting comments to be submitted through specific forms or by email.** In some cases (Bulgaria, Portugal, Hungary), the NRs note how this process focused only on **preliminary short versions of the documents.** Another problem underlined by some NRs relates to the **short duration of the process.** For instance, in the Czech Republic, the document was made available in April 2021, and 'given the fact that the plan was officially submitted on June 1, 2021, the time for significant revisions was somewhat limited' [CZ_NR]. In Bulgaria, people had two months to submit their comments, in Poland 1 month, in Portugal 15 days, and in Slovakia 10 days. Concerning the amount of participation in these processes, we can say that:

- In Portugal, '1,950 comments were posted in the online public consultation process' [PT_NR].

- In Slovakia, '2,500 comments were submitted both by institutions officially involved in the consultative meetings as well as other stakeholders and representatives of the public' [SK_NR].
- In Poland, 'over 5,500 applications with comments were submitted via a dedicated form on the website' [PL_NR].
- In Romania, '[t]he Government reported to have collected 1,939 proposals through an online form available to the general public' [RO_NR].

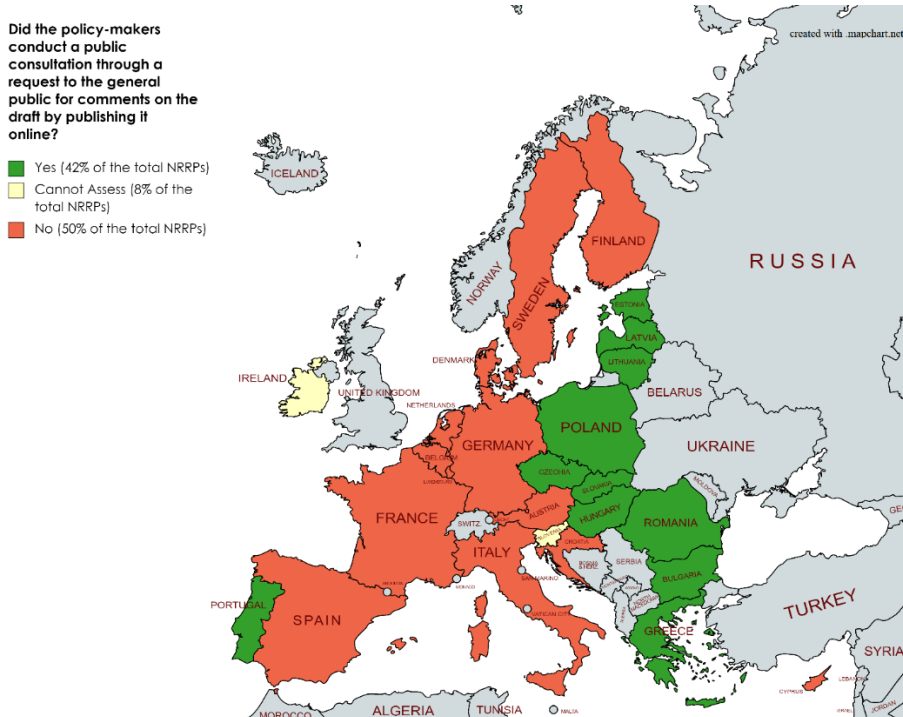


Figure 7 Countries that conducted a public consultation process for the design of the plans

In some countries (e.g., Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia), people could give feedback on the draft of the plan during special public discussion events.

Gender impact assessment

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) defines a **gender impact assessment** as '[...] an ex-ante evaluation, analysis or assessment of a law, policy or programme that makes it possible to identify, in a preventative way, the likelihood of a given decision having negative consequences for the state of equality between women and men. The central question of the GIA is: Does a law, policy or programme reduce, maintain or increase the gender inequalities between women and men?' (EIGE 2017, p. 8). Figure 8 shows the countries where such an assessment was carried out for their plans. The image shows, in green, the **countries in which it is certain that the plans were subject** to this type of assessment: they cover **only 23%** of the total number of documents analysed (6 plans out of a total of 26). For instance:

- In the Austrian plan, a table summarises all the measures and assigns to each one a grade concerning its contribution to achieving gender equality: neutral, positive, or very positive. However, the NR who analysed this plan underlines that it is unclear how this assessment was conducted and its basis.
- In Belgium, the plan was assessed by the Institute for Gender Equality, which stated that the 18% of the investments will have a positive effect on women and 52% will potentially have a positive impact on that category.
- The Cypriot plan states that 'the implementation of the envisaged reforms and investments comprises several measures that promote equal opportunities for all such as the transparency of recruitment and advancement processes and a gender impact assessment of new policies and adoption of family-friendly policies' [CY_NR].
- In the Italian plan, a specific model ('MACGEM-IT') was used to understand the impact of the measures on women's employment. The same model will also be used to monitor the plan's implementation. The analysis shows that the plan's actions may lead to a more significant increase in female employment than male employment (+ 1.2%) over the last three years of the plan's implementation.

Has a Gender Impact Assessment of the Recovery Plan been carried out?

- Yes (23% of the total NRRPs)
- Cannot Assess (27% of the total NRRPs)
- No (50% of the total NRRPs)



Figure 8 Countries that conducted a GIA of the plan

- In the Spanish plan, specific sections assess the impact of the plan on all 30 components in general and go in detail on specific aspects like the gender pay gap.

The measures that contribute to reducing the gender gap are divided into measures with a direct impact, measures able to transform productive sectors that will reduce the gender gap, and measures with an indirect impact on the gender gap. In addition, a gender impact assessment is mandatory for any laws enacted to implement the Recovery Plan.

- In the Swedish plan, all the measures contain a section on gender equality assessment. The analysis is typical for economic assessments, aimed at the definition of costs and benefits in relation to gender equality more generally or to specific gender equality objectives. The NR underlines that ‘the quality of the assessments varies considerably’ [SE_NR]: there are seven measures described as having a positive gender equality effect; three measures are described as having a potential positive effect; for five measures the assessment is unclear and ‘mostly repeating objectives and statistics but with no clear analysis’ [SE_NR]; nine measures are described as having no effects at all but there is no further explanation; for two measures the assessment will be conducted in the future; and two measures are described as having a negative impact on gender equality.



Policies and gender inequality domains

This section will present in depth how the various gender inequality domains identified by the RESISTIRÉ project are taken into account within the various plans. At the end of each section, specific boxes on the policies of non-EU member states are present.

Work and the labour market (WLM)

General statements

As seen before (e.g., Figure 1), the **work and the labour market domain is the one that is mentioned most in the majority of the plans**. Only the NRs for the plans of Greece, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Netherlands stated the absence of measures intervening in this domain in their documents. As we will see below, however, also in some of these countries' plans, there are indirect or general considerations for issues related to this domain. The way the different plans often consider gender+ inequalities within the work and labour market domain, indeed, is often through the **description of generic positions and the need to act on some issues**. However, there are also several **cases of concrete measures**.

As far as **general observations** are concerned, the plans often include among the objectives of their reforms the aim to combat **the employment gap, gender segregation, and stereotypes at work**, through various generic solutions. For instance:

- In the Bulgarian plan, '[t]he challenges for attaining gender equality on the labour market require measures for increasing employment; access to education, professional training, and life learning; increasing professional qualifications; overcoming gender segregation in employment; increasing controls on compliance with the law; equal pay for equal work; support for women in terms of the specific difficulties they have on the labour market; overcoming gender stereotypes; special care for certain groups of working women; improving the quality of work positions; developing opportunities for flexible work, remote work, and professional mobility; promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship; increasing knowledge about payment, and others' [BG_NR].
- The Hungarian NR stated that the analysed plan aims to promote research and not actions. In particular, in the work domain, '[t]he Action Plan aims to carry out researches to provide a basis for future measures to assess the needs of women and men and the low rates of atypical forms of employment through research, to analyse gender employment gaps, to examine the different participation of women and men in "unpaid" work, to examine the role of carers (caring for sick or elderly relatives) through research, to examine the role of men in the family and to investigate the causes of the pay gap between women and men. research on women and men in employment' [HU_NR].

- In Latvia, '[t]he plan states that it is planned to reduce the gender gap in employment through various employment services in order to reduce the length of periods of unemployment, as well as to help the unemployed to retrain effectively or improve their skills to ensure a better employment situation' [LV_NR].
- In Estonia, 'The reduction of the gendered segregation of the labour market is mentioned as an important goal' [EE_NR].

As shown by these examples, there is an **emphasis on the need to offer more education and training to women and vulnerable groups as tools to fight segregation and the unemployment gap**. There are also some mentions of the need to **remove the obstacles that prevent women from reaching higher career positions**, both in the private and public sector, and increasing their access to entrepreneurship. In addition, among these general goals, there is some space for specific categories of women and vulnerable people. The French, Slovak, Swedish, and Luxembourg plans, for instance, highlight the **will to improve the working conditions in the health sector**, thereby having an indirect positive impact on the situation of women. The Estonian plan mentions the **importance of integrating people with disabilities** into the labour market. In the Croatian one, **reform to innovate the labour market** is presented in the document as devoting **special attention to vulnerable groups**, especially single mothers, women victims of violence, long-term unemployed, and people over 50. The Spanish plan mentions a future reform that, if approved by the Parliament, should tackle the **problem of precarious work**, a condition common among women and young people.

In some cases, the plans describe the impact of reforms on gender inequalities through **complex chains of actions and their consequences**. One example concerns support for energy efficiency in the construction of flats in Sweden. This measure is described as indirectly supporting women and people with a foreign background for the following reason: 'More men than women work in the construction sector. In general, therefore, more men than women will be affected by the support from a labour market perspective. In recent years, the construction sector has strived for more women and people who live in Sweden but have a foreign background to be recruited. If employment decreases, these groups risk losing their jobs to a greater extent, as they more often have a shorter employment period. The current support, which bridges the decline in the sector's employment rate, could thus benefit women and people with foreign backgrounds by enabling them to keep their jobs to a greater extent' [SE_NR]. The quotation highlights an **awareness of the problem of a gap in the use of short-term contracts for women and foreigners. Still, the solution envisaged (indirectly) is not to mitigate this problem but to work around it**.

As already mentioned, in some plans the interest in inequality issues in this domain remains only at the level of general findings. However, in most of the documents, as we will see below, these broad goals are translated into measures with different characteristics.

Concrete measures

Several plans contain actions aimed at offering **tools** to women and, in some cases, to

vulnerable groups so they can **face the labour market in a more prepared and conscious way** and **have access to sectors from which they are usually excluded**. Sometimes these measures are based on the (tacit) gender stereotype that identifies the cause of the gender+ gap in the labour market only as a lack of skills, while disregarding structural issues. Thus, various **empowerment courses, training activities, and mentoring programmes provide skills in specific areas**, e.g., digital or STEM. For instance:

- In Romania, 'the plan envisages support for the acquisition of digital competencies (digital inclusivity) for a larger segment of the population, including vulnerable groups, through public library media literacy courses, which are designed to have a gender quota of 50% applied to student recruitment, applied to a total number of 100,000 persons from vulnerable communities, who are expected to be included in the educational programme. This is expected to have a positive impact on labour market inclusion' [RO_NR].
- In Cyprus, '[i]n Policy Axis 5 of the NRRP, a set of measures provides employment skills for entering the labour market to both women and men, but more likely to women, and it enhances early school leavers and other vulnerable groups to acquire competencies and skills to enable them to enjoy market potential. The proposed actions qualify NEETs single mothers, short- and long-term unemployed, low-income family members, and groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion to enter or re-enter the labour market' [CY_NR].
- In Austria, the plan allocates more funds to an existing project of the Job Centre 'to facilitate unemployed women's re-entry into the job market' [AU_NR].
- 'The NRRP for Ireland includes the Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP) and the Solas Green Skills Action programme, which will provide workers affected by the pandemic with re-skilling for the areas which are experiencing growth and skills shortages. Women are explicitly mentioned as a group disproportionately affected by the pandemic and thus a target group for these two programmes. Specific measures include allowing One-Parent Family Payment (which is disproportionately allocated to women) as eligible payment for WPEP' [IE_NR].
- In the Spanish plan, '[...] specific investments target female employment in rural and urban areas (through awareness-raising, training, and support in specific domains connected to digitisation, sustainability, and care)' [ES_NR]. There are also specific investments to provide 'training and specific employment reinsertion programmes for women victims of GBV, trafficking and sexual exploitation, with a commitment to their recruitment' [ES_NR].
- In the Estonian plan, 'Specific measures include support for employers who employ young people and support for their training on their entry to the labour market' [EE_NR].
- In the German plan, 'The program dtec.bw is a digitisation and technology centre of the University of the Armed Forces aimed at adapting individual research conditions, like the adaptation of working hours or the facilitation of the arrangement of private and professional life. Applications from women are explicitly requested. Special programmes like mentoring programmes for female executives or career events for women are planned' [DE_NR].

Other measures relate more to **overcoming obstacles connected to the balance between paid work and care work by offering new services or reorganising old ones, creating facilities, and new regulations**. The Belgian, Cypriot, and Czech plans, for instance, envision investments in the **construction of new childcare facilities** as a way of stimulating women's entry (or re-entry) into the labour market. The Polish and the Cypriot plan introduce measures favouring **remote/flexible work** to support a better work-life balance for women, older people, people caring for family members, single parents, etc. In particular:

- In Belgium, 'The NRRP provides for the creation and renovation of childcare facilities, which will allow more women, and especially single mothers (explicitly mentioned in the plan), to enter the labour market' [BE_NR].
- In Cyprus, '[...] new care centres for children to help young parents, especially young mothers, to join or re-enter the labour market are provided in the RRP to be established' [CY_NR].
- In Germany, '[t]he plan acknowledges the fact there is a variety of structural issues that influence gender+ inequalities at the labour market but, on a concrete level, it focuses only on increasing the availability of childcare facilities. The plan foresees to increase the labour market participation of women with small children through investment in facilities for children below the age of three and a legislative amendment to ensure sustainable financing of low-age childcare and its adequate coverage in the regions' [DE_NR].
- In Denmark, '[t]he government wants to change the fact that women take longer parental leave than men. They are doing this through the EU directive on two months of parental leave earmarked for each parent and through working with organisations in the labour market' [DK_NR].
- In Poland, '[f]lexible work organisation, including remote work, is a tool that will improve the employment opportunities of people in a special situation on the labour market - older people, people caring for family members, parents of younger children and single parents, etc.' [PL_NR].

There are also some measures aimed at fighting inequalities through **actions focused on the structural context**. For instance, to **increase diversity in the workplace**, the Danish plan proposes introducing a **set of rules in recruitment and boards** to be adopted on a voluntary basis, and the Greek one contains a **training programme to promote diversity** in the labour market, in both the public and private sector. Other examples are:

- In Italy, '[t]he NRRP introduced advance mechanisms, such as equality criteria in calls for tenders, and made project funding subject to the condition of employing young people and women' [IT_NR].
- In France, '[c]ompanies are encouraged to improve their gender performance, and they will have to publish their equality index if they get funds from the recovery plan. A reform of the civil service includes a gender dimension: improving the percentage of women in higher positions, aiming to go from 37% to 40%' [FR_NR].
- In the Greek plan, there is a measure aimed at 'the implementation of the Diversity Badge Scheme that gives companies incentives to hire more workers from diverse groups, to enhance intersectional diversity' [GR_NR]. The strengthening of the Observatory for the Equality of the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs will also

contribute to improving the diversity of the labour market through the analysis of disaggregated data.

- In Spain, the plan '[...]' states that gender mainstreaming is mandatory in all active employment policies of the National Employment System, in all their components' [ES_NR].

In some cases, measures aim to **increase the support for social protection and insurance in light of the problems that emerged during the pandemic**. For instance, in Lithuania, the plan proposes lowering the **requirements for social security benefits** from having been employed for 12 months during the last 30 months to 9 months before the end of 2022. The Danish plan establishes a **compensation scheme for self-employed women**. In Estonia, the plan strengthens **unemployment support**. In Spain, the **improvement of the Minimum Income Scheme**, together with other policies for re-joining the labour market, is described as having a positive impact on gender equality since women are vulnerable to poverty and exclusion.

The work and labour market domain in the non-EU 27 countries

- To combat rising unemployment rates due to the pandemic, through TK_POL '[...]' trainings and capacity building activities have been carried out for upgrading the digital skills of unemployed individuals. The aim is to improve the skills of youth in NEET for their employability in fragile sectors during the pandemic, which will also support the imminent needs of the private sector. [...] Out of 3,074 young people who participated in training, 1,944 were women, 1,130 were men. The UNDP expert particularly said that they had to organise trainings online as part of the COVID-19 measures, which unexpectedly resulted in higher participation by young women' [TK_NR].
- In RS_POL there is a programme that '[...]' aims to develop and promote women's innovative entrepreneurship at the national and local levels. In addition, the programme aims to increase awareness of the importance of women's creative entrepreneurship and enable women entrepreneurs to play a more significant role in the labour market through the development of their business, the employment of more people, and the achievement of higher and sustainable incomes. The programme will commit to the systematic promotion of innovative entrepreneurship among women, the advancement and affirmation of women's innovative entrepreneurship, direct support for realising their entrepreneurial ideas, and the development of entrepreneurial skills and capacities among women. The government allocated 100 million RSD (approx. 850,000 EUR) for this programme. Another programme aims to support women's cooperatives - it is not clear how much money will be allocated for this, but the whole project is titled 'Planning and Implementing Rural Development Policy'.
- IS_POL states that an '[...]' action group on pay equality and equality in the labour market will be appointed and working until the end of 2023' [IS_NR].

The gender care gap

The plans of 22 countries (all except Ireland, Sweden, Finland, Croatia, the Netherlands, and Latvia) contain measures aimed at overcoming the gender care gap. These measures target both carers and care recipients and focus on improving the working conditions in feminised sectors, promoting new services as a means to improve care provision and to facilitate women's equal access to the labour market, promoting community care activities, and reorganising or introducing new forms of care services.

The NRs highlighted the presence in the plans of several **policies aimed at improving working conditions in the health, care, and education systems**. The policies are described as potentially beneficial for gender equality since these sectors employ mainly women. For instance:

- In the French plan, the '[i]mprovement of working conditions in the health sector, is presented explicitly as concerning women: "The massive investments and reforms to strengthen the health system and for solid healthcare infrastructures will make it possible to promote equality between women and men, support the economic emancipation of women, and fight against precarious conditions in an essential sector in which women represent the majority of workers"' [FR_NR].
- In the Cypriot plan, '[u]nderstanding the different needs of the sexes, the health system is reorganised and equipped with appropriate human and material resources to handle present and future healthcare requirements' [CY_NR].
- In the same vein, the Italian plan offers support for at home measures: 'A direct impact of this mission on gender gaps could come from strengthening outreach and home care support services. They could encourage an increase in employment both in the care services sector, to which women contribute more, and more generally in the economy by reducing the burden of care activities provided in the family by women' [IT_NR].
- Among the measures adopted to achieve this objective, Romania establishes the formalisation of domestic work through the introduction of work tickets as a means of payment for domestic services.

Other measures identified relate to the **promotion of new services and/or the improvement of existing services as a way of facilitating the care of children, the elderly, and disabled people**. The measures in this area can be divided according to two main objectives. The first one is the **improvement of care provision**, where there are measures targeting the care of the younger/older population and these include: the creation, extension, and re-qualification of the network of social facilities or social responses in the areas of children, the elderly, people with disabilities (Portugal); social housing and

community services for the prevention of mother-child separation (Romania); and the extension of childcare, especially for socially neglected children, to strengthen their educational competences (Germany).

The second objective is the **reduction of the care gap** that is generated by the fact that care work is concentrated in the hands of women. In some cases, the NRs note how this issue is addressed indirectly in some **reforms of the elderly care sector** (Estonia, Luxembourg). There are also some measures aimed at promoting the integration of women into the labour market by relieving them of the burden of care and these include: **new flexible working conditions for parents** who are raising children on parental leave (Lithuania); measures dedicated to **agile working in public administration** (Italy); **flexible work, remote work, and professional mobility** (Bulgaria). Special emphasis is put on **long-term care**, in the case of the elderly, and on the **lengthening of the school day for younger children** (Germany, Italy) or the **expansion of care services to younger ages** (Spain, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Greece). Some concrete measures relate to the **creation of new day centres for the elderly** (Romania) or daycare for children in private companies (Greece), together with the **creation of a space for childcare that can be open beyond the traditional working hours** (Germany).

In some plans, special reference is also made to the most vulnerable groups of women in the labour market as a result of care activity, such as **single mothers** (Belgium), **young mothers** (Cyprus), or **middle-aged women** (Lithuania).

Other plans underline the **impact of COVID-19 on the increase in the care gap** (Denmark, Hungary, Estonia). Some measures are introduced to address this: **benefits for fathers who take unpaid leave** to care for their children (Estonia) or the **extension of parental leave only available to fathers** (Estonia). Other parental leave reforms are found, for example, in Germany where since September 2021 **working parents can work up to 32 hours weekly** (before: max. 30 hours/week) **and still receive parental benefits** or where care-supporting benefits can be claimed up to 10 working days for short-time work prevention.

A specific pilot project is the **Community Nursing project** in Austria, 'which is intended to provide support for care recipients in their own homes, which in turn should reduce the burden on caregivers, who are predominantly women. This support should make it easier for caregivers to participate in the labour market' [AT_NR].

A noteworthy case is that of Slovenia (together with France), where the improvement of informal carers' conditions is explicitly linked to the provision of care, as described by some of its goals: '[...] strengthening the competences of employees and informal care providers for the implementation of quality and secure long-term care services; with providing adequate and sufficient infrastructure within which the services will be provided; and with establishing new forms of staff training. In the process of deinstitutionalisation of elderly care new nursing homes will be established, offering more capacities and long-term care at

home for persons over 65 years, therefore having an impact on informal care for elderly, which is usually done by women. This care for elder family members usually results in lower economic status of women, seclusion of women and difficulty for re-employment of women afterwards' [SI_NR].

The impact of the pandemic on nursing homes has prompted an interest in experimenting with forms of **community care**. The objective is the deinstitutionalisation of care services for the elderly and/or disabled people, facilitating their life in the community and promoting autonomy and comprehensive care. Some plans promote community care with a special focus on **rural areas** (Spain, Lithuania, Slovenia, France, Bulgaria). However, there is a **risk that deinstitutionalisation may increase women's caretaking**. Measures for the provision of community care include: mobile teams, day centres, long-term care (health and social care together), and new nursing homes for the elderly.

Some measures concerning the **reorganisation or the use of new forms of provision of care services** have been found (Belgium, Lithuania, Cyprus, Portugal). Examples of such measures are the **digitisation and simplification of administrative procedures and teleworking**, although in some cases there is mention of a **risk of increasing the care gap**: 'Concern is also mentioned about the context of teleworking as a phenomenon that may exacerbate pre-existing gender asymmetries' [PT_NR].

The gender care gap domain in the non-EU 27 countries

- In RS_POL there are funds for a project whose goal '[...] is to improve the capacity of women and men to balance life and work, by developing a series of interactive and innovative tools aimed at increasing equality by changing practical and everyday skills and social norms regarding attitudes and stereotypes, especially when it comes to caring for children. Through the cooperation of Estonia, Germany, and Serbia, the results will be relevant for the entire European Union, scientific contributions and availability in several languages. The project also includes an analysis of factors that hinder the establishment of a balance between life and work. The project budget is 840,000 RSD (approx. 7,000 EUR)'.

Education

Education is another domain present, in different ways, in the vast majority of the plans analysed. We have seen, for instance, that a good part of the **narrative and measures** described in the section dedicated to the work and labour market domain was **based on the need to provide women and vulnerable groups with educational tools that offer them adequate skills to face the challenges of the labour market**. Only the NRs who analysed the plans of the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, and Slovenia underlined the lack of projects, actions, or measures aimed at mitigating sex/gender inequalities in this domain.

General statements

Among general considerations on the topic, some plans underline the **importance of increasing women's skills in the digital** (Spain, The Netherlands) **and STEM** (Austria, Latvia, Estonia) **areas**. Inequalities in **access to education for women** (Bulgaria) **and for children** (Italy), which exacerbate the gender gap in the labour market, are also highlighted. The goal of **improving educational infrastructures** is also specified (Latvia, Croatia). In the Estonian plan, the **correlation between a low level of education and lower life expectancy** for men and women is underlined, and the **need to reskill people with low levels of education** is mentioned. In Denmark, the importance of **providing high-quality education** and getting **young people more involved in environmental sustainability issues** is emphasised.

Concrete measures

Having reviewed the general considerations in the plans, we can now look at the more concrete measures they contain. **The keyword shared by the majority of the measures is 'digital'**. There are different actions, for instance, designed to provide **women and specific vulnerable groups with digital skills, devices, and infrastructures**. The plans also devote some attention to offering **training in Science, Technology, Education, and Mathematics (STEM)**. For instance:

- In Romania, '[t]he plan envisages support for the acquisition of digital skills (digital inclusivity) among a larger segment of the population, including vulnerable groups, through public media literacy courses are designed to have a gender quota of 50% applied to a total number of 100,000 persons from vulnerable communities who are expected to be included in the educational programme' [RO_NR].
- In Spain, '[a] specific programme aims to foster women's digital skills and their scientific-technological vocations at school, through targeted professional orientation (to both students and adult women) and actions directed at unemployed women aged 45+ (C19.I1). The digital inclusion of girls and boys and the youth is also targeted through a programme to develop teaching materials; the distribution of digital devices to students from vulnerable groups, and the creation of interactive rooms for hybrid teaching (C19.I1)' [ES_NR].

- In Greece, '[o]ne of the flagships of the plan focuses on digital skills upskilling and reskilling with emphasis on the participation of women and girls. (Axes: 2.2., 2.3.,3.1., 3.2., 3.4., 4.3., 4.6). Measures introduced Under Axis 3 include a programme that subsidises training in Science Technology, Education and Mathematics (STEM) for high school students, with a 50% quota for girls' [GR_NR].
- In Latvia, '[i]n the digital transformation component of the plan, measures aimed at increasing the number of ICT specialists are also planned to direct funding to activities specifically aimed at involving women and introducing them to career opportunities in the field of ICT' [LV_NR].
- In Portugal, '[c]ombating gender stereotypes and sexual segregation in the field of digital technologies was established as one of the objectives of the Reform for Digital Education included in the section "Digital School component", and in the digital skills training initiatives of Component C16 - Companies the plan is to monitor initiatives with data disaggregated by sex with a view to balanced representation between women and men' [PT_NR].
- In Cyprus, '[a]n issue for improvement recognised in the NRRP is the education and training of women in the information and communication technologies. To facilitate that, financial schemes promoting women's entrepreneurship, education, and training programmes in the ITC for women are introduced' [CY_NR].
- In Poland, '[w]omen (and children living in single-mother houses) are one of the specified target groups of the NRRP's Digital Competence Development Programme. The programme includes strengthening the process of managing the development of digital skills, developing digital education, and supporting the digital skills of citizens, especially those excluded or at risk of exclusion (including seniors, people with disabilities, people in a difficult life situation using the help of various care facilities, women and children from single-mother homes), and employees of central and local government administration and teachers and educators, in particular in pre-school education, as well as students and parents supporting remote learning. In order to implement the tasks, a network of regional/local leaders in digital development will be created, which will support the digitisation process and organise a support system for individual institutions. The training will be tailored to the needs and skills of individual groups of recipients' [PL_NR].
- In Belgium, '[v]arious projects to stimulate education in specific domains (i.e., STEM) are also planned, with the projects partly targeting women (as they are underrepresented in some of these fields)' [BE_NR].
- The Swedish plan provides resources 'to meet the demand for education at universities and colleges' [SE_NR], and particularly to strengthen distance education and training. The plan describes these measures as indirectly having a positive impact on women (because they are the majority of university students) and people living in sparsely populated areas. Similarly, an increase in the compensation level for people receiving vocational education combined with courses in Swedish for immigrants is described as indirectly supporting immigrant women's integration (since there are more women than men in these courses).

In some cases, these kinds of policies are **not explicitly directed at women** but have either a more generic or a different target:

- In the Czech Republic, '[t]he plan also foresees investment in digital equipment in schools to ensure access to learning for disadvantaged pupils and students. However, none of the measures explicitly targets sex/gender inequalities within the domain of education' [CZ_NR].
- In Germany, '[f]urther training shall be offered to citizens of all ages and by 2025 50% of all adults shall have had the opportunity to take part in a further education measure. By 2025 the share of digitally educated adults (between 16-74) shall be of 70%. At least 75% of pupils younger than 13 years shall have an average level of knowledge about IT usage' [DE_NR].
- In Luxembourg, '[a]ge is also mentioned in more general terms regarding access to public digitised services and the necessity to reinforce digital skills' [LU_NR]. In addition, training courses for digital skills are organised to increase the skills of job seekers.
- The Danish plan wants to '[...] to strengthen digital education among children and young people' [DK_NR].
- In Slovakia, '[t]he education component presents a reform needed from a long-term perspective. Nevertheless, it also has measures directly related to the pandemic aimed at mitigating the impact of low access to online schooling for children from socially disadvantaged groups' [SK_NR].
- In Ireland, 'Section 3.3: Technological Universities Transformation Fund includes a promise to "ensure learner access in the context of required digital connectivity and meeting the needs of vulnerable persons including those in under-represented or socially or economically disadvantaged groups or areas in these contexts"' [IE_NR].

Three plans contain **measures aimed at preventing the school drop-out of girls and vulnerable people**:

- The Slovak plan states that a 'system for the prevention of early school drop-out will be developed that includes specific measures oriented on girls related to early pregnancy, domestic and sexual violence' [SK_NR].
- In the Spanish plan, the '[c]omponent 21 is dedicated to the modernisation and digitisation of the education system. It targets the improvement of educational services, with reference to the gendered and nationality-based dimension of school failure and early drop-out. First, early and free schooling for children 0-3 years old (C12.I1), which is a measure to extend education but also address the gender care gap. Second, funds are directed to centres with a special educational complexity that implement personalised learning, in order to reduce school failure and early drop-out, particularly centres situated in rural areas, areas of social disadvantage, where families with low socioeconomic and educational levels live (C21.I2). The plan foresees the creation of Support Unities for those students and their families that live in vulnerable situations (C21.I3)' [ES_NR].
- In Romania, the plan contains measures aimed at strengthening '[...] distance learning and the implementation of the Early Warning System in Education to

improve the schooling rate and prevent school drop-out of children from vulnerable backgrounds' [RO_NR]

In many European countries, the most acute phases of the pandemic brought about the closure of schools and a rapid switch to various experiments in **online teaching**. It is well known (e.g., Engzell 2021; Haelermans et al. 2022) that such sudden changes had a **negative impact on the learning opportunities of many students**, especially those from more vulnerable groups. **In very few of the analysed plans, however, we found measures that address this kind of problem.** In Austria, for instance, a measure allocates more funding for remedial lessons in school to mitigate the effect of home-schooling, with particular attention to 'schools with an overrepresentation of students from a challenging socioeconomic background or students in need for promoting their language proficiency' [AT_NR]. The Czech plan envisions additional tutoring for children at risk of failure due to the school closure. Similar support is foreseen in the German document. The Finnish plan contains a measure aimed at offering guidance to young people with low education. Finally, the Danish plan envisions 'additional pedagogical support to vulnerable children between the ages of 0 and 5' [DK_NR], and the Spanish one provides '[...] early and free schooling for children 0-3 years old (C12.I1), which is a measure to extend education but also address the gender care gap' [ES_NR]. In the Portuguese plan, more funding is provided for the education of adults with a low level of literacy and numeracy.

The education domain in the non-EU 27 countries

- In IS_POL, '[t]he policy field "Universities and research organisations' (no. 21.1) has the objective of improving the quality of education and educational environment in universities. One action is to assess the quality of distance education and post-graduate programmes, specifically from a gender- and equality perspective.' [IS_NR]
- In UK2_POL, '[o]ne of the projects in strand two is "Safeguarding adolescents from extra-familial harms" and focuses on education as a mitigating factor, describing "education as protection". Funding is available to undertake work in the local authorities to strength multi-agency safeguarding using insights gathered during the pandemic to ensure efficient education placements and alternative provisions (alternative learning arrangements for those children who cannot learn in mainstream schools)' [UK_NR].
- In RS_POL, '[w]ithin the support of educational programmes that include all levels of education, only two gender-responsive goals are included, which strengthens the capacity of scientific research staff and increases the number of doctoral students receiving scholarships from the Ministry. Within the same programme, another goal is envisaged, including popularising science through electronic and print media. The programme's ultimate goal is to promote gender equality in science and increase women's interest in careers in science. Within this goal,

workshops on gender stereotypes towards women in science are also planned' [RS_NR].

UK1 POL: Recovery Premium and Schools COVID-19 Operational Guidance¹⁰

This policy analysed by UK_NR focuses entirely on the UK education sector and the problems created by the consequences of the pandemic.

'Education recovery programmes were announced including "Recovery premium funding" to help schools to deliver evidence-based approaches to supporting disadvantaged pupils. There was a one-off universal £650 million catch-up premium announced for the 2021 academic year to make up for missed learning. The recovery premium funding is allocated £302 million, which allows schools to get £145 per pupil in mainstream education and £290 per pupil in a special unit for additional educational training. A further £200 million was allocated for funding secondary schools to run summer schools in summer 2021. And £218 million in new funding has been directed to the National Tutoring Programme.' [UK_NR]

In the policy '[t]here is strong acknowledgement that those pupils from poor socioeconomic backgrounds and those who were disadvantaged prior to the pandemic have been disproportionately affected and therefore greater funds and assistance are noted to be allocated for those pupils. This reflects broader discussions of the difficulties in some areas and with vulnerable groups in accessing education remotely or maintaining learning throughout the pandemic in the absence of face-to-face teaching.

In regards to disability, it is also acknowledged that pupils with special educational needs will have been disadvantaged and therefore they have further funds allocated for their educational recovery. However, there is no clear description of what support will look like for either those with SEN or other disadvantaged students. The mental and emotional wellbeing of children is discussed in regards to the importance of maintaining face-to-face education for children's mental health, however no gender differentiation is made.' [UK_NR]

The policy has been criticised by various civil society organisations for the lack of funds allocated compared to other countries (National Association of Headteachers and Education Policy Institute), the lack of funds for extra-curricular activities (National Education Union), the lack of support for families and mental health (NASUWT (The Teachers Union)), the lack of support for low-income students who will become even more disadvantaged than they were during the pandemic (Sutton Trust and Education Endowment Foundation).

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/993053/Education_recovery_support_June-2021.pdf

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Despite being widely present in public debates and being identified as a shadow pandemic, **gender-based violence keeps being neglected in policy initiatives**. As was the case in the first cycle of policy mapping, the data collected from the NRs again show that **gender-based violence is poorly addressed in national recovery plans**.

The absence of actions on GBV

The **majority** of NRRPs analysed (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden) **do not mention gender-based violence** among the issues to be addressed through the recovery policies. Most national researchers point this out with concern, given the increase of gender-based violence during the pandemic and in general and the exacerbation of gender inequality the pandemic caused. Even when gender equality is somehow addressed, this is done with a focus on the labour market, whereas topics like GBV are omitted (Czech Republic, Poland).

Beyond this invisibility, **policies adopted in the recovery plan may also have a negative impact on GBV**, as is the case of the **Italian reform of justice**, which foresees the use of **family mediation**. As the Italian NR points out, this would **expose women victims of violence to additional violence**.

A few countries do mention gender-based violence in their plans with different degrees of depth: from general statements to few concrete measures.

General statements about ending GBV as a goal

Gender-based violence is sometimes addressed only with **general statements** that might be a general reminder of the **importance to comply with international obligations or national gender equality legal frameworks** (Bulgaria). Sometimes these general statements recognise gender-based violence as a compelling issue (Czech Republic, Finland, Latvia, Portugal), even citing the impact of the pandemic on the phenomenon (Italy), and stress that **it is an important issue that needs to be combatted (Slovenia), but adopt no concrete measures to this end**.

In Czech Republic, for instance, the plan explicitly **states that gender-based violence is being tackled by other measures outside the plan**, much like in Italy, where a National Strategic Plan to combat male violence against women 2021-2023 was approved. In Estonia, on the other hand, the plan mentioned that gender-based violence is a symptom of broader gender inequality, but it also points out that no increase was registered during the pandemic crisis.

In other cases, plans mention gender equality strategies or measures adopted in the field of violence prior to the plan itself and therefore not strictly relevant (Bulgaria, Slovenia).

Concrete measures to address GBV

In other countries, the plans articulate specific measures that can be summarised as focusing on **specialised training, awareness raising, support to victims and the reform of the criminal system**. Some countries adopted a combination of (some of) these measures (Spain, Croatia, Denmark).

In two cases, the plans include **reforms of the criminal justice system** in order to strengthen its response against gender-based violence, yet not one of these initiatives appear to be connected to COVID-19 and instead they are meant to fill in the gaps in national legislation in an effort to comply with international obligations:

- In Croatia, the plan intends to establish family departments within courts with specialised judges and licensed lawyers who will provide faster and gender-sensitive legal procedures. It also mentions licensing 750 experts who will specialise in implementing legal measures to provide support to victims of violence. Changes in criminal procedures include the use of modern technologies to prevent victims from having to share spaces and to face the perpetrators during the trial. Such measures would allegedly encourage women to report violent incidents (both sexual violence and domestic violence) to the relevant authorities.
- In Denmark, law reforms have also been adopted to criminalise sex without consent as rape and to increase punishment for honour-related crimes within ethnic minorities' communities. An action plan to combat trafficking was also adopted.
- In Italy, investment in human capital to strengthen the trial office is considered to help counter gender-based violence and overcome disparities between courts (opinion of CSO ASVIS).

Actions directed to **support survivors by offering access to accommodation** (in shelters or private housing) are present:

- The Cypriot plan introduces financial schemes directed to special centres for victims of domestic violence;
- In Portugal, measures focusing on housing will streamline the management of urgent housing responses for victims of domestic and gender-based violence that need an immediate solution to distance themselves physically from their aggressors. The measure envisions supporting ten thousand people per year.
- In Denmark, the government has approved an action plan to combat physical and psychological violence in intimate relationships. It provides for an increased number of spaces for women in shelters, and the right to access psychological support for survivors living in the shelter. Outpatient counselling and treatment for both victims and perpetrators outside of centres is also provided and has become a permanent service.

Few plans include measures directed at the **economic independence** of victims, either by providing direct financial support or by improving survivors' access to the labour market:

- In Croatia, 50% of the Guaranteed Minimum Income Benefit (GMIB) is aimed at homeless people, survivors of violence, and victims of trafficking who are accommodated in shelters during the crisis.
- In Spain, support for survivors of gender-based violence is provided through work reinsertion programmes that increase their employability. In addition, the plan adds to the integrated services already in place a personalised service of socio-labour orientation for all victims of all forms of violence against women.

Only in three plans, **prevention measures** were included to tackle gender-based violence:

- Under the measures to improve the national health system, the Spanish plan includes training actions for healthcare professionals, aimed at the early detection of gender-based violence and child abuse.
- Similarly, in Portugal, under the healthcare domain, the plan reinforces policies connected with palliative care, proximity healthcare for families, and detection of cases of genital mutilation and violence.
- In Denmark, awareness raising campaigns have been launched to provide survivors with information on how to seek help.

Both the Spanish and Danish plans also mention increasing **access to support services** for victims and survivors of gender-based violence (DNK_NR). The plan 'Spain Protects You against Male Violence' extends all support services provided online and by phone (information, legal and psychological counselling, emotional support) also to victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation (ES_NR) and provides for the extension and modernisation of protection devices.

The Spanish plan also foresees the creation of **centres of integrated 24h assistance** to victims of sexual violence that will be located in each province and autonomic city and include in-person, phone, and online assistance.

Overall, **most of the measures listed in the plans do not reflect or respond to concrete issues raised during the pandemic**, especially to the need to **strengthen the resilience of support services**, which were severely affected during the crisis and struggled to provide support to all women in need. Rather, they are **initiatives to comply with pre-existing legal obligations** and in particular to the obligations **arising from the Istanbul Convention** (ES_NR). Thus, the plan serves as an opportunity to speed up long-neglected reforms.

Additionally, **measures** related to gender-based violence are **still either limited to intimate partner violence (IPV) and/or heterosexual relationships**, thus neglecting other forms of violence and **excluding LGBTIQ+ persons and especially youth. No mention is also made of cyberviolence** and how to tackle this growing form of violence, especially in conjunction with the increase of digital activities brought about by the COVID-19 crisis.

The GBV domain in the non-EU 27 countries

- In IS_POL, the '[p]revention of GBV is one of three main governments objectives in the policy field of "Equality Issues" (no.32.2). To reach that objective two main projects are discussed: 1) implementation of an action plan to prevent sexual and gender violence and harassment and 2) follow-up in specific actions in the action plan to prevent sexual and gender violence and harassment' [IS_NR]. In addition, in the area of labour market, prevention of GBV is mentioned also in the plan of designing a website for social work environment and in the development of preventive measures to support a healthy work culture.
- RS_POL, '[...] refers to the financing of the institution of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality. The activity itself relates to the project "Improving Women's Security in Serbia", implemented by the United Nations Agency for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN WOMEN) in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and with the support of the Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade. The project aims to improve the prevention of violence against women living in rural areas by informing and further strengthening the capacity of women and local organisations working to enhance the position of women and girls living in rural areas. In addition, training for women's NGOs and women from rural areas will be provided, including mentoring support and resources to start a business. The goal is to encourage cooperation between all relevant actors to improve women's position in rural areas (national and local institutions, civil society organisations, local communities, media). The allocated budget is approx. 100,000 EUR' [RS_NR]
- In UK2_POL the project 'Safeguarding Children and Young People at Risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)' 'provides up to £270,000 for two regions (a maximum of five local authorities in total), encouraged especially from those areas with the highest number of FGM cases. With COVID-19 restrictions easing and school holidays, there is an increased risk of girls being subjected to FGM as it would have been hard to organise/travel during lockdown. Local authorities are asked to focus on awareness raising and increasing the confidence of social workers to identify, assess, and respond to this harm, including during lockdown periods. The project will develop and share promising local practice to better identify and support young women and girls at risk of or who have experienced FGM, including work with voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, schools, and other partners' [UK_NR].

Health

Figure [1] shows that **62% of the plans contain some measures or considerations related to the need to mitigate gender/sex inequalities in the domain of health**. The documents indicated by the NRs as completely lacking such content are those of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden.

General goals and statements

Some of the plans have **general statements** about making **access to healthcare services more equitable and improving their quality**. From the examples below, we find that many plans describe the intention to undertake **major reforms of the health system** of their countries and that one of the aims of these processes is to offer services that are more accessible to all. As we will see, attention is devoted to inequalities related to **sex or gender in only a few cases, not much information** is offered on how the increased accessibility of services will be possible, and there are **very few concrete measures** in this direction. For instance:

- Among the objectives of the Spanish plan, there is '[...] the need that all citizens access to health on equal footing and enjoy fast, high-quality, safe, and effective health services, regardless of their wages or place of living, gender, origin, or age, ensuring access to the healthcare system. The fight against social and territorial inequality is also an objective of this component' [ES_NR].
- Part of the Irish plan '[...] aims at achieving the European Pillar of Social Rights Healthcare objective that "everyone has the right to timely access to affordable, preventive and curative healthcare of good quality"' [IE_NR].
- The Croatian plan specifies that it is necessary to increase and improve the infrastructures to make the accessibility of healthcare services more equal. The healthcare system, then, will have to be reformed, taking into account variables referring to the '[a]vailability of health care related to the income of women and men, quality of life, the distance of the health care institutions' [HR_NR].
- The Estonian plan contains an extensive section on improving the healthcare system, mentioning the need to improve access to services concerning age and gender. 'Health equity is mentioned as an important goal but not expanded upon' [EE_NR].
- The Lithuanian plan describes the differences in life expectancy (and healthy life expectancy) between men and women: at the moment, life is 9.51 years shorter for men than for women. For the government, increasing life expectancy for both and reducing the gap 'should be achieved by strengthening public health (including better access to mental health services) and improving the quality of personal health care' [LT_NR]. In addition, this plan states that '[i]nvesting in the availability and opening up of health data will ensure the development of equality data - data segregation according to possible grounds of discrimination (gender, age, nationality, disability, etc.). This will significantly contribute to the reduction of discrimination on any grounds in healthcare' [LT_NR].

- Component 5.1 'Excellent Research and Innovation' in the Czech plan 'foresees investments in intersectional research (medical/healthcare research and social science research), which shall be gender-sensitive' [CZ_NR].
- In the Finnish plan, pillar 4 states that "Access to health and social services will be improved and their cost-effectiveness enhanced." This pillar includes, for instance, investments for people with mental health problems' [FI_NR].
- The Polish plan mentions a structural reform of the system aimed at improving its quality and access, building on new finances, a re-organisation of the management system, and creating conditions for new medical staff (training and new rules).

The **experience of the pandemic in relation to health and gender+ issues** is visible in one of the overall objectives of the Italian plan, where it states that '[t]he pandemic crisis is generating some reflections on the importance of gender differences in understanding the effects of pathologies, to which attention should be paid in the future and, where relevant, differentiated paths of prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation should be devised' [IT_NR]. Similarly, the Danish plan builds on the problems encountered during the pandemic and notes the government's intention to make the health system more resilient by considering different aspects: 'a focus on digital solutions to benefit elderly and vulnerable groups in having medical consultations during the pandemic. Another focus is on the shortage of workers within the healthcare system. Other measures include: a clinical study of the COVID-19 vaccines, measures to ensure stocks of critical drugs and emergency management and the monitoring of critical medical products' [DK_NR]. The Estonian plan also mentions the need to increase resilience in the country's healthcare system.

Concrete measures

Given that the COVID-19 crisis is, first of all, a **health crisis** and that, secondly, it has **hit women and already vulnerable groups** the hardest, the **small number of concrete gender+ related measures** in this domain is striking.

One of the **exceptions** in this regard is the **Spanish plan**, which in its Component 18 related to the improvement of the national health system puts 'an explicit emphasis on the inclusion of the gender perspective in all actions related with public health' [ES_NR] through **professional training, prevention actions**, and the **provision of equal access**.

The measures that seem mostly to address issues **connected with the pandemic** are those related to **investments in healthcare** infrastructures, staff, and equipment, and are listed below. However, **they omit any gender+ concerns**.

- In the Dutch plan, there are measures for 'improving the ability and resilience to respond to COVID-19 in the future ("the purchase and distribution of medical equipment for COVID-19 treatment, (new) staff training and building modifications for extra intensive care capacity, COVID-19 research and investments in the availability and retention of health care personnel")' [NL_NR].
- The Polish plan 'proposes several reforms of the healthcare system which include: the creation of health needs map as a basis for investments in the modernisation of healthcare facilities' [PL_NR].

- The Danish plan focuses on '[...] the shortage of workers within the healthcare system' and on '[...] clinical study of the COVID-19 vaccines, measures to ensure stocks of critical drugs and emergency management, and the monitoring of critical medical products' [DK_NR].
- The Portuguese plan contains some specific measures aimed at supporting its health care system: 'strengthening primary healthcare centred on people and proximity; investment in outreach mental health care, namely community teams, namely the creation of 34 new mobile intervention teams for deprived regions; investment in the National Network for Continuing Integrated Care'.
- The French plan specifies the objective of improving the working conditions in the health sector.

Since **digitisation** is, by design, one of the main axes for all the plans, in this case too there are some measures related to this topic that are described as having an **impact on women and vulnerable groups**:

- In Austria: 'the Mother-Child-Pass documents obligatory health screenings during pregnancy and early childhood (up to 5 years) - this documentation is a precondition for receiving childcare benefits. According to the NRRP, the digitisation of the Mother-Child-Pass is intended to increase the participation of disadvantaged groups, improves information supply, and thus strengthens the health literacy of pregnant and breastfeeding women. The attachment clarifies that this can be achieved by providing the pass in different languages and linking it to further social benefits and the "Early Help" programme' [AT_NR].
- In Denmark, '[...] there is a focus on digital solutions to benefit elderly and vulnerable groups in having medical consultations during the pandemic' [DK_NR].
- The Croatian plan underlines that 'in the context of gender-sensitive healthcare protection, sex-disaggregated statistical data will continue to be collected, and attention will be paid to factors such as culturally determined behaviour or habits' [HR_NR].
- In Belgium, 'the health sector (and health data) will be digitised, which could improve the effectiveness of healthcare from a gender perspective: higher quality decisions could be taken based on gender data that charts the differences between men and women more adequately. Digitisation can also offer a veil of anonymity to women in precarious situations who are in need of medical services indicated as such by the Institute for Gender Equality in the NRRP' [BE_NR].
- The Czech plan specifies the intention to 'develop an eHealth portal fostering integrated care practices' [CZ_NR].

Specific **attention to sexual healthcare** is present in three measures related to improving screening for breast and cervical cancer and assisted reproduction.

- In Romania, a measure in the plan 'envisages the provision of medical screening devices for breast and cervical cancer in 10 mobile medical units. These mobile units are destined to operate in disadvantaged areas, with a focus on Roma communities' [RO_NR]. It is worth underscoring the intersectional frame of this measure, which focuses on specific needs related to sex, social class, and ethnic grounds.

- In the Spanish plan, the screening for cervical cancer is also included among the prevention actions. The Romanian document also has a measure for family planning that provides medical equipment for tests and analyses and the training of medical personnel operating in 119 family planning units.
- The Lithuanian plan addresses sexual and reproductive health through the proposal of '[...] legalising more favourable methods, conditions, and procedures for assisted reproduction and implementing and ensuring quality of screening programs for breast, cervical, colon, and oral cancer' [LT_NR].

A few plans focus on **cancer treatment and care**. The Polish plan has specific measures for oncological patients, intending to give every patient equal access and the same services. This reform will take place also through 'investments in infrastructure and equipment for medical entities that make up the National Oncology Network' [PL_NR]. Similarly, the Czech plan 'proposes to reinforce cancer prevention and rehabilitation care' [CZ_NR].

Other measures identified concern **training on gender issues**. In the Spanish plan, some measures focus on training people working in the health sector (the Spanish NR stresses that 72% of healthcare workers are women in the country). Healthcare professionals will be prepared for the early detection of gender-based violence and child abuse. For those involved in clinical research run by the pharmaceutical industry, there will be training on the use of a gender perspective.

The health domain in the non-EU 27 countries

- UK2_POL envisions the provision of funds to address FGM and the sexual health of women and girls (see the box in the GBV section for more info).
- In RS_POL there are activities promoting preventive check-ups for gynaecological cancers or colon cancer. These activities also target Roma and migrant communities. Specific attention is also paid to increasing the sensitivity of paediatricians and parents/guardians to 'the importance of the vaccination with HPV vaccine that prevents ovarian cancer. The vaccine will be available free of charge for all girls and boys'. [RS_NR] There is also a focus on 'education on illnesses caused by the human papillomavirus and the importance and primary prevention years, which would be organised in selective schools and local self-governments. This phase includes managing a media campaign for the general public to increase health education and awareness of the importance of primary and secondary prevention of HPV. The total amount for the programme is 1,500,000 RSD or 13,000 EUR' [RS_NR].

The gender pay and pension gaps

The gender pay and pension gap is addressed in most of the plans analysed (19 out of 26), but it seems that in most cases **the plans make reference to a general goal, without detailing concrete actions.**

In some cases, national recovery plans include in their objectives the aim of reducing the **gender pay gap**, without further developing any measures to do so (Austria, Finland, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg). In this connection, **it is often mentioned that this gender issue will be addressed not through the measures contained in the plan but with other (existing) instruments:**

- In Cyprus, the plan makes a general reference to the gap in paid work. This was identified as a theme to be addressed by the National Equality Action Plan as an area for improvement. There was no mention of any specific measures to address this inequality and no specific mention of the pension gap.
- The Spanish plan mentions reforms adopted outside the plan and at a previous time that have an impact on the gender pay and pension gap: the introduction of equality plans in companies with more than 50 employees and the measure implementing pay transparency in order to facilitate the identification of discriminatory practices.
- The German plan mentions a provision already in force prior to the pandemic: tax exemption for people with low and middle incomes. According to the plan, women and especially single mothers do benefit from this relief.
- In Bulgaria, the plan mentions the National Strategy for Gender Equality for 2021-2023, which aims to tackle the gender pay gap, but no new measures are introduced.

However, concrete measures have been found in other plans. **Improving the transparency of wages** appears in both the Romanian and Estonian plans.

- In Romania, the plan seeks to reform the pension system and to diminish the wage and pension gap between men and women by introducing a **common framework for minimum wage and through wage transparency.** In the public sector, the gender pay gap is addressed through a reform of the salary system to achieve unitary standards and the introduction of a framework for performance management.

Another measure targets **equal opportunities within companies:**

- Building on the existing legal framework, the Portuguese plan introduces the following measures: notifying the obligation to submit and implement a plan for evaluating remuneration differences to companies with more than 50 and 250 workers that have significant differences in wage levels; and the 'drafting of the Portuguese standard on an Equal Pay Management System, based on the Icelandic Standard IST 85:2012' [PT_NR].
- In Italy, a 'Gender Equality Certification for Enterprises' is described in the plan. It would include collecting gender-disaggregated data and register accredited bodies, and a rewarding mechanism. One of the criteria for certification is equal pay.

Other types or measures are also proposed:

- In Portugal, the Reform Agenda for the promotion of decent work takes into account the gender perspective and acknowledges the feminisation of low wages and precariousness. It includes 'specific measures of state support for a wage increase, when the recruited person is from the underrepresented sex in the occupation. This reform is expected to create 30 thousand permanent employment contracts'.
- Surprisingly, the Austrian plan proposes to address the income gap between men and women by promoting 'finance education amongst women, so they can increase their competences in this area', and this in turn 'would boost women's financial independence, especially when they get older' [AUT_NR].

Concrete measures are also indicated to reduce the gender pension gap. These include measures targeting **parental leave and pension reform**. With regard to **parental leave**, the following examples can be mentioned:

- In Estonia, special measures to address the gendered pension gap and gendered poverty gap include the extension of parental leave only available to fathers and not counting unemployment caused by the COVID-19 in the calculation of parental benefits;
- In the Danish plan, the government states its commitment to address the gender pay gap, as urged by the EC. The proposed solution to this is to have shared parental leave.
- In Germany, for children born after 1 January 1992, an additional half year of educational time will be added so that parents gain 2.5 points for their pension. The provision applies to both mothers and fathers and depends on who takes the parental leave.

Other actions focus on broader **pension reform**, which includes specific changes to the pension supplement for raising children, modifications in pensionable age or increase in the amount of the minimum pension amount. Most of these reforms are considered to have positive effects in particular on women and youth, even though they are formulated in gender-neutral terms. Only in one case does the plan address the issue of pension gaps without mentioning gender, which is the Dutch plan, which according to the NR, devotes considerable attention to pension gaps for flexible workers and solo-self-employed [NLD_NR].

- In Estonia, pensions were increased, as was the pension supplement paid to parents raising children.
- In Croatia, the plan includes an action named 'Upgrading of the pension system by increasing pension adequacy' and argues that although the pension system reform does not make a distinction between the sexes, women will benefit most from an increase in the minimum pension as they constitute the majority (more than 68%) of this group. Therefore, this reform is expected to reduce pension disparities between men and women.

- In Spain, the plan acknowledges that the gender pension gap is one of the main structural issues hindering the effective protection of the Social Security System. To address this, it introduces a revision of the procedure that integrates gaps in contribution periods, a growing issue connected to temporary and precarious work, which disproportionately affects young people and women. It also states that the pension supplement connected to raising children has been duly modified, following a ruling from the CJEU that declared the previous provision discriminatory on the grounds of sex.
- In Romania, a provision included in the plan provides for the synchronisation of the retirement ages of women and men, thus increasing women's retirement age by two years, as a way of achieving equal pension standards.
- In Sweden, the reform 'Extended working life - adjusted age limits in the social insurance and tax systems' aims to raise the age limits equally for men and women. This is not an initiative developed to mitigate sex/gender inequalities in the domain, but it is said to especially benefit women. It is stated in the plan that 'the rules of the pension system are gender neutral, despite women living longer than men on average [...] Women therefore receive, on average, more pensions paid out during their lifetime than they have paid into pension contributions [...] which means that the pension system redistributes resources from men to women'. By increasing the pensionable age for both sexes, people will be working longer and thus receiving higher incomes both during their working life and during their time as a pensioner and 'as women on average have a lower pension than men, the increased opportunities for a better financial standard are particularly important for women (p.105)'.
- In Austria, a reform of the pension system ('pension splitting') is mentioned. 'The basis for calculating the pension will combine contributions from both parents (automatically if they are married; voluntarily if they are in other kinds of partnerships). This should - according to the NRRP - reduce the pension gap and poverty amongst elderly women' [AUT_NR].
- In Lithuania, 'the single person benefit, paid to single (unmarried) disabled and elderly people could be considered a measure to close the gender pension gap'. The measure is meant to reduce the poverty level of this group.

In the case of the **German** plan, the improvement of the pension system is pursued **through digitisation**, and this action is presented as positive in terms of gender equality. 'The Digital Pension Overview shall promote more transparency for everyone, from which women benefit especially. Also, people with disabilities will benefit as the Overview will be established in an accessible way' [GER_NR]. Yet, beyond accessibility, it is **not clear how digitisation would be particularly beneficial to women and people with disabilities in terms of pension allowances**.

Other measures that may have an **indirect effect** on this gender gap are mentioned. Reforms adopted in the work-labour market and in the economy domain are considered to

have a positive effect on the gender pay and pension gap [BE_NR].

Very few measures **implicitly mention intersectionality** or justify their impact on some groups at the intersection of multiple inequality grounds. When this occurs, the intersectional issues are superficially addressed, and structural gender barriers are ignored. In Finland, the plan states that '[t]he gender gap in employment may fall when the efforts to harness the skills of immigrant women and thereby improve employment start bearing fruit' [FI_NR]. Here again **inequality is regarded as stemming from an individual lack of skills**, while ignoring fundamental barriers in the public and private sphere that prevent women from a migrant background from accessing the labour market and achieving economic independence.

The pay and pension gap domain in the non-EU 27 countries

- In IS_POL, "Pay equality accomplished - gendered pay gap to be eliminated" is one of three main objectives in the policy field "Equality issues" (no. 32.2). The two main projects are: 1) Secure the implementation of the equal pay certificate; and 2) appoint an action group on pay equality and equality in the labour market that will work until end of 2023' [IS_NR].



Environmental justice

It is well known that among the criteria set out by the EC for drawing up the plans, one concerned the **obligation to allocate at least 37% of the planned budget** to measures that contribute to the **climate transition**, in addition to other objectives linked to the green transition (e.g., biodiversity) (Bisciari et al. 2021). Despite the relevant presence of these topics in the plans, **not many measures identified refer to gender equality+ issues**. In the few cases where gender dynamics are considered, the most **common narrative** identified is about how the **transition** in energy and natural resources access and use **indirectly favours women as the group most at risk of exclusion** from these goods. This is evident in the following cases:

- In Romania, '[t]he plan includes women as the main beneficiaries of an infrastructure project to introduce water and sewage systems. The argument is that providing domestic access to running water will improve women's quality of life, as they are identified as the main ones responsible for domestic and care labour, including providing water for the household. The measure envisages the connection of 88,400 households to the public water and sewage systems' [RO_NR].
- In Belgium, '[f]unds will be provided to renovate public and private buildings in order to improve their energy efficiency' [BE_NR]. As indicated by the Institute for Gender Equality in the NRRP, '[w]omen are overrepresented in Belgian households that struggle with energy poverty, which gives this initiative a gender dimension' [BE_NR].
- In France, the plan foresees '[...] measures against fuel poverty' [FR_NR]. As the NR observes, 'single-parent families are disproportionately affected, and the parents are most often women' [FR_NR].
- In Spain, '[w]omen's role is promoted at all levels of decision-making in the management of the natural environment and forestry, in line with the National Plan to Adapt to Climate Change 2021-2020, which incorporates a gender perspective as a transversal action to respond to the unequal effect of climate change on women and girls (Component 4)'.

In the Slovak and Czech plans, issues of **gender equality** on these topics are only addressed with **general statements**:

- In Slovakia, '[t]he plan acknowledges that women are more at risk of the energy poverty and that it should be considered but no specific measures are envisioned' [SK_NR].
- In the Czech Republic, '[t]he climate-related objectives in the plan account for an amount which represents 41.6% of the plan's total allocation. Those are mainly investments in renewable energy sources, the modernisation of district heating distribution networks, the replacement of coal-fired boilers, and improving the energy efficiency of residential and public buildings. Additionally, there are investments in gas and biomass, sustainable transport (including electro-mobility), nature protection, and water management. None of these measures either includes or mentions the perspective of sex/gender inequalities in relation to the domain of environmental justice. If the word gender is mentioned in this domain, it is usually

mere formality - for example, Component 2.6 Nature Protection and Adaption to the Climate Change states, 'this component is gender-neutral' [CZ_NR].

Finally, in the Austrian plan **the issue of energy poverty is addressed, but without referring to the gender dimension**: 'Measures to combat energy poverty comprises thermal modernisation (e.g., the modernisation of heating systems to work with renewable energy); social housing providers are encouraged to invest in this area, so people living in poverty can afford heating/energy use' [AT_NR].

Another theme that is present in some of the plans is how measures aimed at the **improvement of public and/or sustainable transportation will support women** because they use these means of transport more often than men:

- in Belgium, '[...] new cycling lanes will be constructed so that cyclists can avoid riding on the road (intended for cars) as much as possible. According to the NRRP, a study has shown that distinct and separated cycling lanes motivate more women to take up cycling' [BE_NR]. In addition, '[...] the NRRP also provides for the expansion of public transport (tram and metro networks, buses), which is positive for women, who make more use of these facilities' [BE_NR].
- In Sweden, the investment in the railway system is described in this way in the GIA: 'Women and men use public transport to different extents and have different travel patterns. On average, women choose public transport to a greater extent than men. Investments in railways will generally contribute to an improved standard and increased accessibility to rail transport. This in turn can cause groups that are less inclined to travel collectively to a greater extent choose the train over car and plane.' [SE_NR]
- In the Portuguese plan, the section 'Sustainable Mobility' recognises that women use public transport more than men. However, the only measure proposed is 'The PART programme, which encourages the reduction of the price of a single metropolitan social pass. This measure was previous to PRR and it is only for the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. No specific investment in this area is present in the plan' [PT_NR].
- In the Czech plan, '[g]ender equality is briefly mentioned in the transportation domain - Component 2.1 Sustainable Transportation states that the supported projects and interventions are designed for the specific needs of men and women and vulnerable groups (for example, increasing public transport over private car travel)' [CZ_NR].

Similar topics are addressed in the Austrian and Italian plans but with **no reference to gender issues**:

- in Austria, '[...] the "KlimaTicket" (a pass to use all public transport in Austria or selected regions for a year), as well as investments in emission-free buses, the construction of new railway lines, and the electrification of regional railways will make the use of public transport easier and more affordable' [AT_NR].

- In Italy, '[m]issions 2 and 3 of the NRRP foresee interventions for mobility, local public transport and railway lines and promote the improvement and accessibility of infrastructure and services for all citizens' [IT_NR].

The last theme that has been identified among the plans is related to **measures aimed at supporting the transition to new jobs** related to environmental sustainability:

- in Spain, '[t]he "Strategy for a Just Transition" aims to address the impact of the pandemic and the energetic transition on specific businesses that closed (mines, coal power plants and two nuclear plants). Actions support unemployed people living in these areas (52+), through vocational training in the field of renewable energies and the environment, in order to increase their employment opportunities. Special attention is directed to the participation of women and the youth in the training offered, for their important role in the fight against depopulation in these areas (C10.I1)' [ES_NR].
- In Estonia, '[t]he green turn is an extensive section of the NRRP, but gender+ issues are addressed only indirectly (access to training for the young and the economically marginalised in the deindustrialised areas of Estonia to improve fair transition). Gender is absent' [EE_NR].

This section highlights how **little consideration has been given to the issue of gender+ inequality** in the creation of measures and investments **related to environmental issues**. The plans seem to have already forgotten some of the issues that were at the centre of the debate during the pandemic and that were also signalled by the results of the first cycle of the RESISTIRÉ project,¹¹ such as inequalities in access to green spaces, the need to increase these spaces and make them more accessible to all, and the overcrowding of public transport. The very few responses identified in the plans on these issues refer to some improvements in public transport, which in most cases look more like promises than concrete measures.

The environment domain in the non-EU 27 countries

In RS_POL, 'within the framework of gender-responsive budgeting, the Ministry of Environmental Protection envisages the development of gender analysis and action plans based on that gender analysis. The second gender-responsive goal is to encourage the development of gender equality and women's entrepreneurship in the green and circular economy' [RS_NR]. However, the RS_NR states that it is difficult to determine the amount of funds allocated for these goals.

¹¹ See, for instance the factsheet n. 4 "Green spaces and gentrification" developed during the first cycle of the project <https://resistire-project.eu/download/factsheet-4-green-spaces-and-gentrification/>

Economy

Around 62% of the plans include some content related to gender inequalities in the domain of the economy. In general, this content has to do with the following problems and issues: **labour-market discrimination and segregation and the need to increase the presence of women in STEM areas**; the need to **support specific sectors where there is a higher share of women**; the need to **promote entrepreneurship among women**. The findings below show that even if these are structural problems that require important interventions, the **solutions envisioned** in the plans are **very weak, take little account of the problems that arose during the pandemic** in many economic sectors with a larger share of women workers, and completely **fail to consider interactions with specific inequality grounds**. In addition, while all the plans devote considerable attention to promoting the **transition to digital and environmentally sustainable economies**, as requested by the EC, **only a few countries even mention the interaction** of these process with issues related to **gender+**. With reference to the attempt to **decrease gender discrimination** within specific economic sectors, the majority of the statements identified by the NRs are related to **general observations or recommendations**, as evident in the quotations below:

- In Portugal, '[m]ore gender equality in the economy is addressed in the reform of the Promotion of R&I and innovative investment in companies, included in Component C5 - Capitalisation and Business Innovation, where the guidelines for a technological and business innovation strategy for Portugal are mentioned. The commitment to update these guidelines will be accompanied by the objective of attracting more women to this sector where they are underrepresented' [PT_NR]. In addition, the technological companies supported by the national centres will be 'encouraged to develop organisational practices that promote gender equality, such as plans for equality' [PT_NR].
- In Bulgaria '[t]he NRRP notes that the National Strategy for Gender Equality for 2021-2030 has to be realised and details its measures, but it does not propose new measures. In terms of economy, the mentioned general goals from the National Strategy include: overcoming the gender segregation on the labour market' [BG_NR].
- In Luxembourg, '[t]he plan states that by unleashing women's economic and entrepreneurial potential, recovery efforts will lead to stronger and more resilient economies and societies' [LU_NR].
- In the Estonian plan, gender+ dimensions are mentioned in the general principles in the sections related to the digitisation of enterprises, electronic administration, green transition, and energetic sustainability, and there is a recommendation to encourage gender entrepreneurs.
- In Belgium, '[b]ecause a lot of projects described in the NRRP will also create an increased demand for jobs in male-dominated sectors (i.e., STEM & construction to support the green transition), care will be taken to better integrate these domains into education and to fight harmful gender stereotypes' [BE_NR].

- In Greece, '[g]ender equality and diversity are mainstreamed in principle to Axis 2.3 on the digital transformation of businesses, which includes measures for the creation of a digital ecosystem and tax incentives for the digital transformation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through the financing of digital tools and services, the reinforcement of innovation, and the spread of their digital maturity' [GR_NR].
- In the Croatian plan, 'the section "Resilient, green and digital economy", measure C.1.1.1. R4-11, states that the transition will have no harmful consequences on gender equality and the equal opportunity approach. Projects must comply with minimal legislative conditions related to gender equality. Those who apply MAY [sic] envision activities that will promote gender equality in relation to employment policy. [...] In the section "Energy transition into sustainable economy", horizontal principles will be incorporated and the measures of all groups related to gender equality [will be] included. Especially in the preparation phase, when all information will be delivered to both sexes. Language, both visual and textual, will address women and men.' [HR_NR].

The few measures that contain more **concrete actions** aimed at **attracting women in specific sectors and in entrepreneurship** relate to specific **programmes and campaigns**, together with the **use of contractual and evaluation tools** (e.g., indexes), aimed at pushing companies and organisations to pursue gender equality:

- In Spain, '[a]ctions in the business sectors include programmes to attract female talent (campaign) and to support women's entrepreneurship (Component 13 'Support for SMEs'). The Industrial Policy España 2030 does not contain specific actions on GE (Component 12), even though it is affirmed that the gender perspective will be included in the Action Plan for a Circular Economy 2021-2023 (both as a research domain within Circular Economy and in terms of having a gender balance among employees in this sector)' [ES_NR].
- in Portugal, 'the programme youth impulse STEAM will have a contractualisation model that will bind entities to the pursuit of the objectives of combating professional segregation, particularly by attracting girls and women to areas of engineering and technology' [PT_NR]. In the C5 component mentioned above, '[...] in the investments called Mobilising Agendas for Business Innovation it is established that data disaggregated by sex are subject to annual monitoring, with impact on agendas validation, not only with the goals of the energy and digital transition, but also with the goals of gender equality' [PT_NR].
- In France, 'companies are encouraged to improve their gender performance and obliged to publish a gender equality index if supported under the plan' [FR_NR].
- In Ireland, '[t]he Digital Transformation Plan includes the following statement: "Administration of the fund will incorporate a social sustainability proofing scoreboard to ensure consideration of gender equality and equal rights and opportunities for all in financing decisions". Also gender disaggregated data will be included where possible' [IE_NR].

There are then some measures that are described as having an **indirect impact on gender**

issues. In the examples below, this recognition is made by the GIA contained in the plan in the case of Sweden and by the NRs in the cases of Slovenia and Poland:

- In the Swedish plan, there is a reform aimed at improving the possibility of training during working hours for nurses and other employees in the care sector. This initiative is described in the plan as contributing to a less gender segregated labour market “because it leads to employees in health and care, of which a large majority are women, receiving higher education and thus increased opportunities for permanent employment and a higher salary. About 92 percent of all assistant nurses and nurses who are employed in municipal care are women and about 8 percent are men. The investment can also help to broaden the target group for recruitment and, for example, attract more men [...]”. In addition, in the reform ‘Protected professional title for the profession of assistant nurse’ a transitional provision is proposed, which means that a person who has a permanent employment as an assistant nurse when the policy comes into effect may continue to use the title for ten years from the entry into force, despite the person lacking proof of protected professional title. The transitional provision is believed to lead to more assistant nurses being given permanent employment in connection with the implementation of the reform. Having a permanent job increases the possibility of financial independence. The reform is therefore considered to contribute to the goal of economic equality (p.101-102)” [SE_NR].
- In Slovenia, the ‘[d]evelopment area “Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”, the component “Sustainable development of tourism, including cultural heritage” (overall budget from the plan for the component is 127,000,000.00 EUR) foresees different investments in tourism, that would (among other things) preserve and produce work places’ [SI_NR]. The NR observes that probably this ‘[...]’ component will have an impact on women, since 70% of employees are women’ [SI_NR].
- In Poland, ‘[t]he NRRP does not mention women as the main recipients of measures proposed to strengthen the Polish economy, but the specified sectors of intervention include those ones where women are the majority (tourism, HoReCa [Hotel, Restaurant and Café] sector). It is planned to support investment in small and medium companies in products, services, skills of workers and staff in the above-mentioned sectors’ [PL_NR].

Despite the fact that NRRPs are primarily economic development plans, the above observation highlights the **almost complete lack of attention to gender inequalities+ within this domain**. There are **no measures** that take into account the **macroeconomic disparities between countries**, which are subject to wider resilience factors and welfare regimes, or the **macroeconomic/geopolitical inequalities** within the EU and beyond (e.g., CEE workers recruited to work in western countries during the shutdown to gather crops). The few measures identified a focus on the problem of segregation in specific economic sectors, but the solutions identified seem to be, once again, too soft and unable to address structural problems.

The economy domain in the non-EU 27 countries

- In RS_POL, as already described in the section related to work and the labour market, there is a programme aimed at developing and promoting women's innovative entrepreneurship at the national and local levels, with an allocated budget of around 100 million RSD (approx. 850,000 EUR). Another programme, called 'Planning and implementation of rural development policy', has a specific focus on the development of women's cooperatives in rural areas, but the budget is not specified [RS_NR].
- Through TK_POL, two reports have been produced to understand the conditions of the textile, logistics, food, machinery, and automotive sectors and to create 'a roadmap to recovery to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and to enhance the adaptive capacity of these sectors including the acceleration of the digital transformation, and to make them more resilient to future crises' [TK_NR]. Special attention has been paid to Syrian-owned enterprises and businesses.

Decision-making and politics

Among the analysed plans **the area addressed last after GBV is decision-making and politics** (42% of the 26 plans analysed). Again, looking more deeply at how the theme has been addressed, we realise that the plans have only addressed this issue by proposing **vague general reflections without proposing concrete measures** to mitigate inequalities. The following quotations provide a good illustration of the situation:

- In Lithuania, the plan recognises that the country's [...] indicators in the field of "power", which measures gender equality in political, economic, and social decision-making, are extremely low (Lithuania scored only 34.1 points on EIGE's gender equality index in 2020) and require consistent actions and changes. The plan introduces the aim of assessing the possibilities of drawing up state and municipal budgets on the basis of gender equality' [LT_NR].
- In the Danish plan, '[i]t is mentioned how the government wants to promote women in decision-making' [DK_NR].
- The Romanian plan foresees '[g]ender-balanced representation in the processes of improving the implementation framework of corporate governance in state enterprises and improving women's representation in the decision-making positions of reform enterprises' [RO_NR].
- In the Czech Republic, '[a]lthough the plan acknowledges that low representation of women in decision-making is an issue connected to the existing gender inequalities in the country, it does not propose any measures and states that it is being tackled through other interventions outside of the plan (such as EU funds or the Norwegian funds)' [CZ_NR].
- In Bulgaria, '[t]he NRRP notes that the National Strategy for Gender Equality for 2021-2030 has to be realised and mentions some of its measures, but it does not propose new measures. In terms of decision-making, the mentioned general goals from the National Strategy include: the promotion of gender equality in terms of decision-making processes' [BG_NR].
- In Croatia, '[i]n the section "Strengthening capacities for the tailoring and implementation of public policies and projects" (C 2.1., page 816), the NRRP states that "[w]ith the implementation of the strategy on gender equality and equal opportunities for all, legislation and public policies will become more sensitive and answer to the needs of women and men, thus becoming more efficient too"' [HR_NR].
- In the Belgian plan, the GIA made by the Institute of Gender Equality observes that '[p]rojects, reforms, and investments in government services will offer governmental bodies an opportunity to increase the amount of gender-related data available, which can subsequently be taken into account when implementing gender mainstreaming and designing policy' [BE_NR]. However, the NR underlines that there is no mention in the plan of increasing the number of women in leadership positions and/or decision-making bodies and processes.
- The Portuguese plan states that in the reform of public administration 'training in the area of management should be incorporated in its design and promotion from a

gender perspective' [PT_NR]. However, the NR underlines that these trainings are not mentioned among the indicators contained in the final table of the plan, arguing that the measure may have already been included in a previous law.

- In Italy, '[f]rom a general point of view, women's empowerment and combating gender discrimination are among the plan's transversal objectives. Mission 1 (Digitisation, Innovation, Competitiveness, Culture and Tourism) envisages the definition of new recruitment and career progression mechanisms with the Public Administration Reform' [IT_NR].

It was only possible to identify a **few measures** that try to tackle more **concretely the issues in this domain**. They focus on the theme of **gender balance in decision-making and in the evaluation process**:

- In France, the plan aims at '[i]ncreasing the proportion of women in decision-making positions in the civil service (from 37% to 40%)' [FR_NR].
- In Spain, '[t]he plan addresses the need to improve a gender perspective in decision-making forums as one of the cross-cutting procedures to improve gender equality and equality of opportunities. It is stated that "all forums and consulting bodies involved in the implementation and monitoring of the current plan will aim to include the participation of organisations or experts on the gender aspects of different fields... Additionally, we will seek participation from civil society representatives that will facilitate the consideration of the needs and interests of disabled people or who are at risk of social exclusion (p. 108)'" [ES_NR]. In addition, '[...] the need to ensure a gender balance in decision-making body is reaffirmed in separate components, like this one: "a gender balance will be ensured in the composition of the expert commission in charge of the tax system reform (Component 28: 'Adapting the tax system to 21st century realities')'" [ES_NR].
- In the Croatian plan, the 'Gender Equality Act prescribes in Article 3 that the outcomes of all acts must be evaluated and their consequences on the lives of women and men measured. In these processes of evaluation gender equality coordinators, appointed in each public institution, will be involved' [HR_NR].
- in Portugal, a measure foresees the '[p]reparation of annual reports on the evolution of balanced representation indicators in listed companies, public sector companies, management personnel and Public Administration bodies, including public higher education institutions and public associations' [PT_NR].

There were several situations **during the pandemic in which decision-making processes were entrusted to committees headed mainly by men**, going against the principle of representativeness in decision-making. The measures we have just seen show us that **almost nothing was planned in the recovery and resilience plans to address such issues** and to allow for greater diversity in decision-making.

The decision-making domain in the non-EU 27 countries

- In RS_POL '[a] few activities envisaged in the state budget are increasing the influence of women in decision-making concerns, primarily the prosecutor's office and the highest prosecutorial positions. In addition, some activities aim to increase the number of women on polling stations in the upcoming elections in the spring of 2022. Planned activities of the Ministry of Defence included expanding the participation of women in peacekeeping operations, the Ministry of Defence, and in command positions in the Serbian Army (from 8.6% to 8.8%). Activities to increase the number of women in diplomatic and consular missions are also planned' [RS_NR].
- In IS_POL, [One of the three objectives in the policy field 'regional development issue' (no. 08.2) is 'contribute to sustainable development in regional development around the country'. One objective/action within that objective is 'Equality in local governments by strengthening them and create more awareness of the importance of a diverse perspective within them' [IS_NR].



Policies and inequality grounds

Age

Among the different inequality grounds considered by the RESISTIRÉ project, **'age' is the one mentioned most in the analysed plans**. All the NRs, except for the one focusing on Latvia, indicate that their plans contain some considerations and/or measures that are intended to mitigate inequalities related to this ground.

In general, this inequality ground is addressed through **statements that underline how the pandemic particularly affected elderly and young people**, with a general **lack of attention to specificities related to sex or gender**. Concerning the **elderly**, for instance, the Hungarian plan describes the importance of improving their **quality of life** through prevention, patient care, and access to care. With the goal of building a **resilient healthcare system**, the Danish plan also targets the elderly. The Spanish document tackles long-term unemployment by proposing **new active employment policies for adults that avoid 'ageism' and discrimination**. In relation to **youth**, many plans mention the need to **reintegrate this category into the labour market**.

Moving from general objectives to **concrete initiatives**, we found that most of the identified measures concern the **training, retraining, empowerment, and provision of infrastructures** and support for young and older people. In many documents we found statements acknowledging the **impact of the pandemic on these categories** and the intention to design actions aimed at **providing new digital skills** to combat one of their main problems, **unemployment**. For instance, regarding young people:

- In Ireland, '[t]he plan acknowledges the negative impact of COVID-19 on youth unemployment (19-24 age group). The programme will thus focus on the work placement programmes and support the existing Youth Employment Support Scheme. The programme will also provide digital infrastructure to schools and target young people through broadband provision and access to digital infrastructure. In addition, the investment to support digital delivery of education in schools will support the development of digital competence throughout the school-age population' [IE_NR].
- In the Finnish plan, '[t]here are measures that help young people to find employment in Pillar 3: P3C1R4 'Employment and labour market - enhancing multiprofessional services for young people' [FI_NR].
- In the Italian plan, 'Mission 4 contains measures in the field of education "that favour women's access to the acquisition of STEM, linguistic and digital skills"' [IT_NR]. The actions deal with improving education services, recruitment, the training of teachers, and the development of skills and infrastructures, etc. There will also be medical scholarships provided to young graduates.
- The Austrian plan underlines that '[y]oung people are more affected by unemployment due to the pandemic. To tackle this issue, youth coaching will be expanded' [AT_NR].

- In France, '[y]outh is one of the main targets of the plan (training, employment). Measures support youth employment, apprenticeships and education, including among drop-outs' [FR_NR].
- In Germany, 'young people in particular are affected by declining recruitment on the labour market, so the NRRP proposes investing in educational measures like the *Nationale Weiterbildungsstrategie* (NWS), the National Strategy for Continuing Education, and support for vocational training' [DE_NR].
- The Spanish plan '[...] tackles youth unemployment through measures directed at capacity building and job-finding, and by modernizing the regulations (especially the apprenticeship contracts and the training contracts) through the adoption of the 2021-2027 Plan for decent work for young people (C23.R5). This plan should also include the gender perspective, since all actions included in the Active Policies Plans (orientation, vocational guidance, vocational training, entrepreneurship, etc.) include gender mainstreaming' [ES_NR].
- In Slovenia, the plan envisions providing 'incentives for employers to employ young people up to and including the age of 25 for an indefinite period and to provide a mentor to young employees to accompany young workers during employment subsidies' [SI_NR]. In addition, there are measures aimed at mitigating the lack of digital skills among students highlighted by the pandemic.
- The Belgian plan contains measures aimed at fighting discrimination in the labour market that also relate to younger people, it also offers training programmes on digital skills.

Looking again at measures aimed at providing **support to combat unemployment**, but this time measures **targeting adults and older people**, we find the following examples:

- In Portugal, '[t]he Adult Incentive investment includes an increase in the National Adult Literacy Plan that will promote an increase in the skills of adults with low levels of literacy and numeracy' [PT_NR].
- In Greece, 'there is a special training programme for the enhancement of digital skills of elderly people (Axis 3)'.
- The Estonian plan '[...] stresses the need to integrate the elderly into society and the labour force and to make the state more efficient' [EE_NR] and it includes measures aimed at improving access to digital skills.
- The Slovenian plan contains measures addressing the labour market that should contribute 'to increasing the employment opportunities of people over 50' [SI_NR].
- In the Luxembourg plan, '[a]ge is mentioned as an inequality factor in relation to digitisation (access and retention in the labour market). The 'Future Skills' initiative creates a framework of encouragement and support for the labour market participation of older people, enabling them to acquire the skills necessary to adapt to the demands of business' [LU_NR].
- In the Slovak plan, '[t]he digital component includes digital education for seniors and the distribution of senior tablet computers' [SK_NR].
- In the Dutch plan, '[...] there is a budget for individuals for lifelong learning programmes and healthy lifestyle programmes' [NL_NR]. However, the NR

underlines that ‘the responsibility for using these programmes is left to vulnerable groups themselves, which as has been shown in the past does not work well’ [NL_NR].

Youth are also considered in a few measures that offer **support to students in building their careers**. In Finland, for instance, the plan envisions providing funds to add 600 new positions in higher education. In the Swedish plan, there is an investment to **support rental housing and housing for students**. This measure is described as having an indirect positive impact on young women because women move out of the parental home earlier than young men. The Belgian plan contains actions from Wallonia and the Brussels Capital Region aimed at **preventing young people from dropping out of school**.

There are also some **measures that concern children**. In Cyprus, **free compulsory pre-primary education is extended** from the age of four. The Spanish reform on equal access to mobility and transport for all includes also children.

As we saw above, the age ground refers not only to young people but also to the elderly. There are some measures for this category that are aimed at bringing some **modifications to the care system**:

- In the Czech Republic, ‘[t]he challenges faced by older people are addressed in particular through improvements to the quality and accessibility of long-term care and social and health systems’ [CZ_NR].
- In the French plan, ‘[t]he policy for elderly and very elderly people is to be reformed, to enable them to remain at home and become financially independent. Elderly people are also indirectly supported via support for caregiving professions’ [FR_NR].
- In the Slovak plan, ‘[t]he health components address age (particularly seniors) through the development of the long-term social and health community and field services. Similarly, the hospital reform includes measures on long-term healthcare’ [SK_NR].
- In Slovenia, ‘[t]he COVID-19 epidemic highlighted numerous problems with long-term care for elderly and insufficient long-term care for persons younger than 65. Numerous measures are foreseen in the development area “Health care and social security” in the component “Social security and long-term care’. For example, ensuring the integrated treatment of persons in need of higher levels of long-term care and more complex nursing services or continuous nursing care; ensuring a safe living environment of dependent persons’ [SI_NR].
- In Croatia, ‘[n]ew centres for elderly will be built and equipped adequately for institutional and non-institutional care’ [HR_NR].
- In the Polish plan there is a reform of long-term care that aims to ‘[...] move away from round-the-clock care in dedicated facilities for the development of various forms of daycare (developing forms of daycare for elderly people who require support in everyday life), and forms of home care (increasing access to long-term care and palliative and hospice care provided at home)’ [PL_NR].
- In the Bulgarian plan, ‘there is mention of budget allocation under the section “Fair Bulgaria”, in the subsection “Social Inclusion”. It mentions the following activities:

“Continued support for the deinstitutionalisation of the care for the elderly and for people with disabilities” [BG_NR].

- In the Italian plan, ‘Mission 5 also contains interventions to promote the autonomy of the elderly, starting with the non-self-sufficient’ [IT_NR].

Specific attention to the elderly can be found in **measures aimed at increasing pensions** in the Croatian and Estonian plans. In Romania, ‘[t]he pension reform is meant to achieve a firmer application of the contributory principle, thus ensuring a fairer pension system. It is also aimed at stimulating active ageing by encouraging persons of the retirement age to postpone retirement (i.e., the policy makers' own understanding of active ageing). A second measure to combat inequality is the extension of women's minimum retirement age from 63 to 65’ [RO_NR].

The Slovenian plan stresses that the **assignment process in public housing** will prioritise older women and young families.

The age inequality ground in the non-EU 27 countries

- Through the TK_POL, ‘[t]rainings and capacity building activities have been carried out for upgrading the digital skills of unemployed young individuals to support the digital economy. The aim is to improve the skills of youth in NEET for their employability in fragile sectors during the pandemic, which will also support the imminent needs of the private sector’ [TK_NR].
- In the RS_POL, ‘[p]rogrammes for the elderly population are formulated by financing social benefits and other social protection services for this category of people’ [RS_NR]. In addition, ‘[...] special measures aimed at older women are within the funding of the institution of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and represent the activities of the Commissioner within the project of support for rural women’ [RS_NR].

UK2 POL: Children’s Social Care COVID-19 Regional Recovery and Building Back Better Fund

This policy analysed by the UK NR focuses on the consequences of the pandemic on children, particularly those in the most disadvantaged circumstances.

‘A new programme aimed at levelling up outcomes for vulnerable children and building back a fairer, more resilient system has been announced, backed by £24 million. The new fund will support projects tackling the issues facing the most vulnerable children in society in 2021-22, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) abuse, care for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, preventing adolescents from being caught up in harms outside the home such as gangs and reducing the pressure on the system by reducing court backlogs or improving technology.’ [UK_NR]

As described above, the policy foresees funding to undertake pre-birth assessments with

expectant mothers: '[a]s research has shown during the pandemic, expectant and new mothers suffered greatly from a lack of familial, social, and medical support and therefore this aspect of the policy could be especially impactful' [UK_NR]. The policy foresees also 'regional arrangements to support the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) National Transfer Scheme (NTS) [...] allocating £50,000 to each region to cover a full-time middle manager for this work' [UK_NR]. The NR also notes some measures contained in the policy that were criticised. For example, there are funds to finance hubs that support disadvantaged families, but the funds do not fully make up for the cuts made before the pandemic. There are funds to address FGM, but these are described as scarce and not guaranteed after 2022. In addition, there is no discussion on the long-term sustainability of these actions. Finally, ethnicity and LGBTQIA+ issues are absent.

The NR found different reactions from the CSOs. Enver Solomon, CEO of the Refugee Council, praised the reform of the National Transfer Scheme. The Association of Directors of Children's Services also commented positively on the modifications to the mentioned Scheme and the improved funding arrangements; however, they also underline that there are several problems that have still not been solved, as 'significant placement sufficiency challenges which continue to exist, current public sector workforce capacity issues, plus resource pressures for older young people who need support post 21' [UK_NR].



Social class and socioeconomic background

From the analysis of the NRs, the only two plans that do not contain projects, actions, or measures aimed at mitigating inequalities for vulnerable groups related to the social class (socioeconomic background) ground are those of Sweden and Finland.

Like what has been stressed in the previous sections, the ways in which these inequality grounds are addressed in the different plans varies significantly, ranging from more general declarations to somewhat more concrete measures. It is important to note that **among the measures identified there is almost a complete absence of concerns about gender dynamics.**

General level

On a **general level**, there are various statements in the plans that focus on the **mitigation of poverty and territorial inequalities and support poor people and areas populated by communities that are vulnerable** from a socioeconomic point of view. For instance:

- A component in the Hungarian plan describes as its specific goal ‘the complex development of the 300 most disadvantaged settlements identified on the basis of objective criteria and the unique, diagnosis-based reduction of their economic, social, and territorial disadvantages’ [HU_NR]. This will be accomplished by increasing access to services, fighting unemployment, and focusing on sustainable transition.
- In Italy, social inclusion is one of the axes of the plan and has a specific focus on territorial cohesion. In particular, the objective is ‘a strengthening of home-based social services; [creating] temporary housing and post stations targeting the homeless; and promoting the autonomy and integration of the homeless (p. 215); overcoming squatter settlements to counteract the illegal recruitment and exploitation of workers (p. 220); urban regeneration and social housing to reduce situations of marginalisation and social degradation, [through measures] implemented by municipalities (the development of social, cultural, educational, and didactic services, integrated and participatory urban plans, the promotion of quality public housing, etc.) and aimed at different groups, including single-parent families; the promotion of territorial cohesion’ [IT_NR].
- In Portugal, there is a specific component in the plan that ‘aims to provide answers for some under-represented territories and communities in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto. These regions contain some of the most severe inequalities recorded in the country’ [PT_NR].
- In Croatia, under the ‘[...] component “Diminishing poverty and social exclusion”, several measures are listed. The overall objective to decrease the percentage of people at risk of poverty from 18.3 per cent to 16.4 per cent by the end of 2024. The plan envisions increasing and continuously adjusting social security benefits, developing a new social service - social mentoring, supporting and increasing employment opportunities, adjusting pensions, securing centres for the elderly, introducing reforms through legislation, modernising the social security system,

developing services in order to prevent institutionalisation, creating vouchers for the education of employed and unemployed people, enabling lifelong education' [HR_NR].

- In Slovenia, '[t]he development area "Health care and social security"', with the component "Social housing", will ensure the safe and permanent rental of housing at a non-profit rent for socially disadvantaged and marginalised groups, such as young people, the elderly, young families, Roma, and persons at risk of poverty. A reform planned in the context of this component is to establish conditions to strengthen the public rental housing fund. The sectoral legislation will be changed in order to bring about the systematic reform of housing policy to make it more sustainable and enable the continuous provision of access to adequate housing. The purchase and construction of non-profit rental housing will be financed. The total budget in the plan for this component is 60,000,000.00 EUR' [SI_NR].
- In Estonia, '[w]hile poverty is mentioned in different sections of the NRRP, it appears in connection with unemployment, family poverty risk, and the care gap, although the text explicitly states that poverty mitigation measures have been less effective in Estonia than in the EU in general. There are measures to mitigate poverty by strengthening unemployment protections. However, the discussion does not rely on the language of social class. Poverty is not addressed as an issue of class or social inequality' [EE_NR].

Concrete measures

Most of the (few) concrete measures identified focus on **supporting poor and unemployed people through protection and social security tools**, mainly through a **revision of the regulations related to minimum income**. Mostly they are the following:

- In Estonia, 'there are measures to mitigate poverty by strengthening unemployment protections' [EE_NR].
- In the Austrian plan there is a reform that focuses on people who are long-term unemployed but fit for employment: '[c]urrently some benefits are provided by the municipality, some by the region, and others by national agencies, some by governmental agencies and others by social/health insurance - the aim [of this reform] is that all these different agencies and institutions collaborate, so that a long-term unemployed person gets all the support they need to re-enter the labour market at this point' [AT_NR].
- The Spanish plan contains measures aimed at improving the Minimum Income Scheme, by combining it with social and labour reinsertion policies. These measures are described as having a positive impact for women since they '[...] are especially vulnerable to poverty and exclusion, with higher rates of unemployment and job precarity' [ES_NR].
- The Romanian plan mentions the update of the minimum guaranteed income.
- In Greece, '[b]eneficiaries of the Minimum Basic Income, which is a programme of monthly allowances given to households with income below the threshold of poverty, and homeless people have priority in active and passive labour market programmes and in training (Axis 3)' [GR_NR].

- In the Bulgarian plan, '[...] it is mentioned that there should be a review of the minimum income in the country to address poverty, especially in vulnerable groups' [BG_NR].
- In the Latvian document, there is the '[p]lan for the Improvement of the Minimum Income Support System 2020-2021 by increasing the various minimum benefits provided by both the state and local governments. An increase in the minimum income will affect the adequacy of social transfers and their impact on reducing the risk of poverty' [LV_NR].
- In Lithuania, 'a study of the minimum income will be carried out, recommendations will be formed, an action plan for their implementation will be prepared, and draft amendments to the relevant legal acts will be adopted' [LT_NR].

As already observed in the section related to 'Work and the Labour Market', some measures tackle **unemployment and poverty through the provision of training** in new skills:

- In the Czech Republic, '[f]or employment, the plan focuses mainly on requalification and long-life education/professional education with a focus on re/upskilling, aimed at increasing the adaptability of disadvantaged groups related to digitisation and industry 4.0' [CZ_NR].
- In Ireland, '[a] significant number of the proposed actions to support socioeconomic background are for example: education, training and lifelong learning, increase of employment opportunities, healthcare and access to essential services' [IE_NR].
- The Croatian plan proposes 'vouchers for education of employed and unemployed people'.
- The Belgian plan proposes training programmes to promote digital skills.

The following measures devote particular attention to fighting the inequalities related to social class and socioeconomic background in **access to education**:

- In Portugal, 'the "Impulso Jovem STEAM investment" encourages students from disadvantaged territories' [PT_NR].
- In Slovakia, 'the main aim of the inclusive education component is to provide equal access to education regardless of socioeconomic background and to mitigate the negative impact of socioeconomic background. The socioeconomic background of children is considered in the reform of early childhood education and care, in the development of the system of prevention of early school drop-outs, and in compensation measures mitigating the pandemic impact on education' [SK_NR].
- In Spain, the '[r]eforms on education specifically target socioeconomic disadvantage by investing in projects that strengthen accessible and affordable educational services in areas where "families with low educational and economic level, single-headed families, minorities, Roma population or migrant families" live. This, in turn, will contribute to promoting social inclusion and equality and equal opportunities of girls and boys in rural areas (Component 21). Moreover, the reforms tackle socioeconomic disadvantage in access to university by

increasing the number of scholarships and reducing the fees in public university curricula' [ES_NR].

- In Austria, funding for remedial lessons (to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on students) will primarily target students from challenging socioeconomic backgrounds.
- The Czech Republic will support schools with children from disadvantage socioeconomic backgrounds [CZ_NR].
- In Cyprus, the 'extension of free compulsory pre-primary education from the age of four' is described by the NR as having a positive impact on inequalities of this kind [CY_NR].
- In Poland, there is a plan 'to introduce standards for equipping schools with digital infrastructure, enabling the use of digital tools at an equal level in each school, which will help in equalising educational opportunities for students throughout Poland. In this regard, guidelines on school equipment standards will be issued (both in terms of multimedia equipment and network infrastructure at school). Adoption of the standards will be in the form of a recommendation to be applied by entities purchasing multimedia equipment for schools' [PL_NR]
- In Germany, the section on 'secure training' in the plan is aimed at the improvement of the 'educational results of socially disadvantaged groups' [DE_NR]

In Ireland and Austria there are plans to distribute **digital devices among disadvantaged students**, with the primary goal of mitigating the obstacles to home schooling for students from low socioeconomic households.

A few reports address also the issues of **energy poverty** and the obstacles for some vulnerable categories to access basic resources:

- In Spain, '[t]he fight against energy poverty (C2) specifically targets women, especially female-headed households, households where a person with disabilities lives, and households where elderly women live alone. Similarly, the reform on accessible mobility for all (C6) specifically includes people with lower wages (see below under 'Disability').
- In the Romanian plan, the '[m]ain measures are established in the fields of infrastructure (extending household access to safe water and sewage connection)' [RO_NR].
- In Greece, '[p]oor households have access to a special allowance for heating, which is aimed at combating energy poverty' [GR_NR].
- In Cyprus, '[o]ne important reform is the creation of the Digital One-Stop Shops to streamline Renewable Energy Sources projects and to facilitate energy renovation in buildings. Vulnerable consumers are eligible for state grants to install net-metering systems and become prosumers to reduce their energy consumption or to stay connected to the grid and avoid cuts due to arrears. These measures are accompanied by the promotion of renewables and individual energy efficiency measures in dwellings and tackling energy poverty in households with disabled people' [CY_NR].

- The French plan proposes '[e]nergy renovation of housing to reduce the energy spending of poor households and provide 'savings on the energy bill of the households concerned and in particular for the most modest households (and a potential gain on their purchasing power)'. The improvement of housing policy will make it fairer (e.g., attribution of council housing)' [FR_NR].

The reforms to healthcare in the plans of Ireland, Cyprus, and Poland are described as increasing the accessibility of healthcare support to people that actually cannot afford it economically. For instance, the Cypriot plan describes the 'gradual shifting of the healthcare provision and reimbursement framework towards value-based models' [CY_NR]

In Austria, the 'Early Help' programme contained in the plan '[...] aims to support women and families with children; preventive measures in early childhood are aimed at promoting health and social equity. Key beneficiaries of this programme are - according to the NRRP - single parents (predominantly women); it remains unclear in the NRRP's main document what kind of specific measures are planned' [AT_NR].

The class inequality ground in the non-EU 27 countries

- In UK1_POL, '[f]ree school meal support will continue to any pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals and those who are learning at home during term time. This will take the pressure off of parents to provide school meals, especially helping single parents and those from poor socioeconomic backgrounds' [UK_NR].
- The IS_POL foresees '[h]igher child benefits (policy field child benefits, no. 29.1), specifically aimed at improving the position of low-income people and lower middle-class groups. The benefits are connected to parents'/guardians' income and their main aim is to "mitigate children's poverty"' [IS_NR].
- In UK2_POL, '[f]unding proposals are especially welcomed for projects that support care leavers, looked after children and children with complex needs. There are also provisions for the acceleration of opening more family hubs to support those from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds'.
- RS_POL '[...] envisages the development of social maps, which includes an analysis of poverty. Measures aimed at the Roma population can also be considered as supporting poor people because most of the Roma population lives below the poverty line, in unhygienic settlements and with a shorter life expectancy than the average in Serbia' [RS_NR].
- UK1_POL 'specifically aims to support disadvantaged students, especially those who struggled to access education throughout the pandemic. The Recovery Premium and school-led tutoring allocations were put in place to reflect disadvantaged funding eligibility, so schools with more disadvantaged students will receive larger allocations and will have more flexibility to direct funding' [UK_NR].

Disability

The disability ground is addressed, with differing levels of consideration, in almost all the plans, with the exception of Austria, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Sweden. **Absolutely no attention is devoted to gender issues in relation to disability.**

Several plans contain **general statements** referring to **efforts to avoid discrimination** based on disability. For example:

- in the Portuguese plan, '[t]he reform "National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2025" was included in Component C3 - Social Responses. The strategy reflects the commitments of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and is aimed at empowerment solutions and inclusive environments that promote equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their physical, sensory, hearing, cognitive, and communication abilities, creating the conditions for and presupposing the participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of life' [PT_NR].
- In Cyprus, '[t]he plan ensures respect for the rights of people with disabilities in conformity with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the rights of other under-represented, disadvantaged and marginalised populations. The plan also ensures disability (and otherwise) inclusive reforms in education, the labour market, and the health sector, the accessibility of buildings, services, and websites, as well as the transition from institutional to community-based services' [CY_NR].

The plans that mention disability do so first of all in relation to the **issue of accessibility in different built environments: the home, public buildings, the city**, etc. For example, the Czech plan mentions a new code for the construction and renovation of buildings that deals with this issue. Mission 5 of the Italian plan contains measures aimed at the adaptation of home spaces on the basis of specific needs, and the development of innovative solutions for different needs. Similar actions can be found in the plans from Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal, Cyprus, Croatia, and Estonia. Some examples of the measures:

- Investment in the construction or renovation of buildings in Croatia is justified in the plan as aimed at 'enabling people with disabilities to access institutions - schools, hospitals, centres of social welfare [...]' [HR_NR].
- In the Slovenian plan, the '[d]evelopment area "Green transition", component "Sustainable building renovation" (the plan's total budget for the component is 86,050,000.00 EUR) will ensure the better accessibility of buildings for all, especially for the disabled. Accessibility will also be ensured, for example, through the renovation of certain hospital facilities (for example, the Department of Infectious Disease, UMC Ljubljana), as foreseen in the Healthcare component' [SI_NR].
- In the Lithuanian plan, '[p]ilot demonstration projects will be implemented during the reform "Accelerated Renovation of Buildings and Sustainable Urban Environment" (part of the component "Green Transformation of Lithuania"), executing solutions based on the principles of universal design in practice. Implementing integrated solutions for improving the living environment will address

the challenges of adapting the environment and buildings to the needs of people with disabilities’ [LT_NR].

- The Cypriot plan includes the goals of ‘promoting renewables and individual energy efficiency measures in dwellings and tackling energy poverty in households with disabled people (Component 2.1 Climate neutrality, Energy efficiency and renewable energy penetration)’ [CZ_NR].

There are some plans focusing specifically also on the **accessibility on public transportation**, for instance:

- In the Slovak plan, ‘barrier-free public transport is prioritised’ [SK_NR].
- In Romania, ‘[a] more accessible public space is expected to be achieved through an increase in the accessibility of public transport services (train and metro)’ [RO_NR].
- In Spain, ‘[t]he “2030 Strategy for a Safe, Sustainable and Connected Mobility” under the “universal accessibility” axis implements measures to ensure equal access to mobility and transport for persons with reduced mobility or any other disability [...]’ [ES_NR].
- In Cyprus the plan foresees investments to increase ‘the accessibility of people with disabilities in urban centres’ (Component 2.2 Sustainable transport)

The third type of access that some plans seek to increase for people with disabilities relates to **services**:

- In the section on education and welfare, the Estonian plan mentions the need to improve services for children and elderly people with special needs.
- The Danish plan states that ‘[...] people with disabilities can receive help and that all individuals have equal access to the healthcare system. Furthermore, it states that [Denmark is] currently working on initiatives to strengthen the inclusion of and lessen the discrimination against people with disabilities’ [DK_NR].
- The Slovak plan focuses also on providing community and field services for disabled and elderly people but also on strengthening the network of mental health services.
- In Spain, the ‘[p]lan Spain Accessible Country includes investments to improve accessibility from an integrated perspective, including communication channels with the PA, and the adaptation of spaces assigned to healthcare services, education centres, public transportation, and historical heritage. Municipalities will receive funding to undertake these renovations and purchase equipment, giving priority to rural areas and vulnerable ones. This includes campaigns to raise awareness and increase investments in research and innovation projects on accessibility (C22.I3)’ [ES_NR].

Some other plans mention the will to increase **access to the labour market** for people with disabilities. These plans **do not directly address the employment gap between disabled women and men** or the gender+ disabled persons employment gap, but they propose measures aimed at **increasing skills** (in particular in the digital area), making **work conditions more affordable**, and **supporting companies in hiring**. For instance:

- In the Greek plan, ‘[m]easures to increase the labour market participation and socioeconomic integration of disabled people include: (1) the Personal Care

Assistant programme (Axis 3), which has the dual purpose of (a) providing support to people with disabilities in finding work and (b) creating jobs for carers of people with disabilities including children on the autism spectrum; (2) adults on the autism spectrum are given priority in active and passive labour market programmes and in training (Axis 3)' [GR_NR].

- The Portuguese plan foresees the creation of '[...] 207 places for disabled people in occupational centres' [PT_NR].
- In Poland, '[c]omprehensive activation programmes are to be implemented, including elements of prevention, the early detection of health problems in labour resources and disability threats, the rehabilitation and retraining of long-term employees working in conditions that have a negative impact on health, facilitating the return to employment, extending professional activity or changing the workplace, psychological support and support in the field of professional development' [PL_NR]. In addition, the plan proposes solutions aimed at 'making people with disabilities more attractive to employers [...and] reducing regulatory burdens for entrepreneurs that employ people with disabilities and reducing contributions to the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of Disabled People' [PL_NR].
- In Finland, 'there are measures that support people with disabilities to get work and employment relationships: in pillar 3, reform 5 "Launching a new intermediate labour market operator offering employment and services for persons with partial work ability"' [FI_NR].
- The Dutch plan mentions disability 'in relation to sustainable employability/life-long learning' and in relation to investments in education and work.
- In Spain, '[t]he improvement of the current Minimum Income Scheme, through insertion policies, will ensure the employability of its beneficiaries, such as people with disabilities C23.I7' [ES_NR].

Training and education, in particular in relation to the digital area, are the focus of some measures that concern people with a disability. For instance:

- In Ireland, '[t]he new Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP) includes Disability Allowance and Blind Person Pension as eligible payments. In practice, this means that those eligible will continue receiving the two payments if they take part in the WPEP programme. This will aim at development of additional options for the vulnerable cohorts and allow them to access new opportunities for career development' [IE_NR].
- In Poland, people with disabilities are one of the target groups of the Digital Competence Development Programme defined in the plan and aimed at improving digital skills and education among citizens.
- In Slovakia, 'the main aim of the component of inclusive education is to provide equal access to education regardless of the special educational or health-related needs of children. Disability is considered in the reform of early childhood education and care, and in the development of the system of support for children with special needs, from early diagnostics to individual educational plans and assistance, including barrier-free schools' [SK_NR].

- In Spain, '[e]xtending child education (to 0-3 years old) will contribute to the early detection of disabilities (C21)' [ES_NR].

The examples listed in this section show how the **treatment of disability in the plans is mostly gender blind** across all of the themes considered.

The disability inequality ground in the non-EU 27 countries

- In RS_POL, there are various programmes that consider the needs of people with disability in areas related to art and culture, employment, sport, health, and education. The only measure that considers gender is the programme 'Strengthening Cultural Production and Artistic Creativity' of the Ministry of Culture and Information. In this case, counting funded projects in the field of the cultural activities of persons with disabilities should be based on a gender responsive indicator. There is a budget of 315,000 EUR for this programme, '[h]owever, the ministry plans to support only three projects with the gender component within the planned budget' [RS_NR].
- In UK2_POL, 'funding is available for mapping local services with a specific focus on bringing Special Educational Needs, Child Disability, and Early Help services into a model of family hubs, which help improve the accessibility of support services for vulnerable families' [UK_NR].
- In IS_POL, '[o]ne of the two objectives in the policy field "Social benefits, rehabilitation pension" (no. 27.2) is to 'improve the support for the most disadvantage individuals in the group of rehabilitation pensioners', and in order to do so the government aims to map the need for support among those who have little or no right to social benefits. Moreover, disability payments and pensioners' rehabilitation benefits will be increased (1%)' [IS_NR].
- In UK1_POL, '[t]he guidance states that schools should work collaboratively with families and put in place reasonable adjustments so that pupils with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) can successfully access remote education. The Recovery Premium Fund offers double the amount of funding per pupil for those who are in special education and the Tuition Funds have earmarked more funds for Special and Alternative Provision schools' [UK_NR].

Ethnicity

About half of the plans analysed mention the issue of inequalities based on the ground of ethnicity. However, if we look in detail at how this is done in the various documents, we realise that there is an **almost total lack of measures to address in a concrete way the problems of related vulnerable groups**, problems that have become even more critical as a result of the effects of the pandemic. The following quotations show how usually there are **just vague references to the importance of the inclusion of vulnerable groups based on ethnicity**, usually expressed in standard sentences that list various vulnerable groups:

- in Ireland, '[t]he plan refers to cross-governmental equality strategies addressing specific groups, including Travellers, Roma, people of African and Asian descent, and migrants. It acknowledges the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on these groups, particularly in relation to housing, health status, and job loss, as these groups were over-represented in sectors impacted by the pandemic. The plan does not list specific actions to tackle inequalities related to these grounds' [IE_NR].
- In the Croatian plan, 'the Roma population is listed when vulnerable groups are mentioned (together with the victims of violence, homeless, youth leaving social welfare care, migrants, former prisoners), but no specific measures are envisioned for them separately' [HR_NR].
- The Danish plan refers to the UN's Strategic Development Goals¹² (SDGs) to reduce inequality within and among countries and states the intention to 'work on promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of everyone across age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic status. It does not include all inequalities in its measures' [DK_NR]. However, in the related actions 'there is a lack of focus on both ethnic, religious, and LGBTQIA minorities. The reference to SDG 10.2 and 10.3 is superficial and only some groups are in focus, when it comes to specific actions to reduce inequalities' [DK_NR].
- In the Estonian plan, '[t]here are but a few indirect references to ethnic minorities (e.g. by reference to North-Eastern Estonia that has a strong non-Estonian minority population)' [EE_NR].
- In the French plan, '[e]thnicity is never explicitly mentioned but "discrimination" or "equality of opportunity" in fact include this dimension. The reform of the civil service aims to make it more open to people of diverse origins' [FR_NR].

Some **concrete measures** have the goal to **support Roma communities**, and, in particular, **in relation to children's education**. The following quotations show that even in these cases the measures described go from general statements to more detailed actions targeting specific groups:

- In the Czech Republic, '[m]easures addressing the situation of ethnic groups, namely the Roma community, are relatively scarce in the Czech NRRP. In the education domain, the plan envisions support for schools with a high proportion of children

¹² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds and heterogeneous student populations in the form of financial assistance, teachers' training, and ICT equipment. As the plan notes, these schools often have a more significant percentage of Roma children. The Roma are also mentioned in the labour market component - as one of the intended recipients of requalification activities and professional education.

- in Hungary, one of the plan's goals is 'providing inclusive education to the Roma children' [HU_NR].
- In the Slovak plan, '[e]thnicity, mainly marginalised Roma communities, is a special focus of the inclusive education component, in which almost all the measures address these communities, e.g., entitlement to early childhood education and care, early development care in marginalised Roma communities, the prevention system of early school drop-outs, the provision of additional education to those without completed basic education, and the desegregation of schools.
- In the Greek plan, 'Greek Roma adults are given priority in active and passive labour market programmes and in training (Axis 3)' [GR_NR].
- in Romania, '[a]t least 300 marginalised communities, including those with a majority Roma population or Roma communities, will have access to medical services through integrated community centres. A network of daycare centres for children is intended to combat the risk of family separation, with at least 10% of the envisaged centres created in communities with a significant Roma population. The number of rural communities without access to a family doctor / general physician will be reduced by 35%, and the number of supported communities will include, where possible, communities with a Roma population' [RO_NR].
- in Spain, '[t]he improvement of the current Minimum Income Scheme, through the adoption of active labour market policies, will promote the employability of its beneficiaries, such as ethnic minorities (C23.17)'.

It is evident that the plans analysed devote almost no attention to vulnerable groups in relation to ethnicity, and the few mentions that are made to this are devoid of any gender awareness, analysis, or actions to address gender/gender+ inequalities. **The more relevant case** seems to be that of the Romanian plan, which attempts to provide a minimal response to the problem of **access to health care for Roma communities**.

The ethnicity inequality ground in the non-EU 27 countries

- RS_POL contains a programme aimed at '[...] better preventive care for Roma children, women, and men, such as mandatory immunisation, regular medical check-ups, reproductive health, protection against the neglect and abuse of children and violence against women, combating trafficking, improving knowledge of healthy lifestyles and protection from infectious and chronic diseases, exercising rights in the field of health insurance. In addition, the programme aims to engage 85 health mediators and support projects implemented in cooperation with Roma citizens' associations to improve the health of Roma men and women. The value of the programme is 49 million RSD (approx. 424.000 EUR)' [RS_NR].

- In UK2_POL, '[w]hile not explicitly stating provisions for those from other ethnicities, the focus on FGM means that additional support is provided for children from ethnically diverse backgrounds that specifically undertake the practice' [UK_NR].
- One of the measures in IS_POL is aimed at the 'formulation of a long-term policy on issues of migrants, refugees, and multiculturalism, with the aim of increasing mutual understanding and participation in all areas of society regardless of origin and ethnicity' [IS_NR].



Nationality

Similar to what was observed in the case of issues related to ethnicity, **most of the plans show little interest in the ground 'nationality'**. The **problems experienced by migrants, asylum seekers and refugees during the pandemic**, such as the difficulty in meeting sanitary standards within the camps, or the increase in cases of discrimination (Axelsson et al. 2021; Cibin et al. 2021; Stovell et al. 2021), **seem not to have been taken into account at all**. Two **exceptions** are **Spain** (in a more structural way) and **Portugal** (in a more temporary way), whose plans contain **references to the problem of providing housing for these groups**. **Italy** indirectly deals with migrants in its **measures to combat undeclared work and the problem of the conditions in the camps** where migrants employed in agriculture live:

- In Spain, the plan continues the reform of the system of humanitarian reception and international protection (IP) started in 2020. The reform '[...] seeks to address several issues (long waiting times; the low rate of acceptance of applications, services not adequate to people's vulnerability profiles). It envisages increasing the reception capacity (by converting public buildings) and adapting it to the current level of demands, as well as tailoring services to the different profiles of IP seekers. This is done through a new system that ensures a "basic level of services" to all IP seekers with no economic resources and "strengthened protections" for the ones with a more vulnerable profile. To this end, a system of objective indicators will be adopted. A gender approach should be included in the evaluation of vulnerabilities, as well as in the planning and design of new places in reception centres (with sectors dedicated to single-headed families and gendered vulnerabilities) and in the integration (socio-labour) programmes offered to them (C22.R4)'.
- In Portugal, the plan aims to create 'urgent and temporary housing solutions for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers' [PT_NR].
- In Italy, some of the measures contained in the NRRP also concern migrants, such as some of those in Mission 5 (the national plan to combat undeclared work, investment in urban regeneration projects, reducing situations of marginalisation and social degradation, and overcoming squatter settlements to combat the exploitation of workers in agriculture)' [IT_NR].

In the plans of Poland, Slovakia, and Finland the inequality ground related to nationality seems to be addressed only in relation to the **need to create the conditions to attract a skilled foreign workforce**:

- In Poland, '[t]he Plan proposes systemic solutions to supplement the shortages on the market by facilitating access to employment for foreigners. It is planned to tidy up the system of employing foreigners. The reform aims to provide a stable framework for the employment of foreigners and the better use of their skills for the needs of the transforming economy. The basic regulatory and organisational activities of the reform will include the development and adoption of a package of new regulations on the labour market and procedures for admitting foreigners to the labour market, which will replace and supplement the current Act of 20 April 2004

on employment promotion and labour market institutions. [...] The new assumptions of the migration policy are to be a practical response to the growing demand to attract highly qualified migrants who decide to stay in the country for the long term' [PL_NR].

- In Slovakia, '[t]he component of a talented workforce envisions the simplification of acceptance of foreign talents and the facilitation of their integration into society' [SK_NR].
- In Finland, 'there are measures that aim to make work-based migration to Finland easier: C1R3 "Streamlining work-based and study-based immigration and easing international recruitment" and C1I1 "World-class digital infrastructure to support migration of skilled labour"'.

As noted in previous sections, some consideration for the nationality ground can be found in relation to **access to education, actions to combat dropping out of school, and training activities** aimed at introducing people into the labour market:

- In the Czech Republic, '[t]he needs of people with different nationalities are being addressed only in relation to education - the plan foresees providing support to schools with a higher percentage of students with a different mother tongue (as well as with a low socioeconomic background)' [CZ_NR].
- In Austria, '[t]o mitigate the negative impact of home schooling during the pandemic, the NRRP introduces additional funding for remedial lessons in schools. The main beneficiaries should be schools with an overrepresentation of students from a challenging socioeconomic background or students who need to improve their language proficiency' [AT_NR].
- In Spain, '[w]ithin the reform of the education system (C21), the plan targets inequalities in school failure and dropout rates. It is stated that the dropout rates are higher among non-Spanish than Spanish citizens. The plan funds educational centres with special educational complexity and that work in rural areas, areas marked by social disadvantage and poor socio-economic conditions' [ES_NR].
- In Greece, '[t]here are provisions for a special training programme in Axis 3 focused on the integration of refugees in the labour market'.
- The Dutch plan mentions migrants (together with the elderly, flexible workers, self-employed, lower educated) as potential targets of an increase in investment in a budget for training and investment.

There are also two measures, from Spain and Sweden, that are presented in the plans as having a potential indirect impact on migrants and foreigners:

- In Spain, 'female-headed families and non-EU families rely on public transport more than the national average. The Plan on Sustainable, safe, and connected mobility maintains that investments in public transport have a positive effect on social cohesion' [ES_NR].
- In Sweden, a measure to improve the energy efficiency of buildings (see also the section related to work and labour market) is described as having a positive impact on workers with a foreign background, who are more at risk of losing their job in the

construction sector, and the measure will help them to keep their position and overcome the decline in the sector's employment rate.

Finally, in the German plan, '[t]he aspect of multiple discrimination is mentioned regarding the labour market and the risk of long-term unemployment. Especially young adults and people with migratory background are mentioned here' [DE_NR]. In addition, the plan mentions previous measures to fight racism and right-wing extremism, with the goal of 'expanding intercultural living and diversity in the public sector, support for the social participation of people with migratory background, and the strengthening of integratory measures in relation to sports. These measures are subject to the availability of budget funds' [DE_NR].

What has just been presented highlights the complete lack of attention in most plans to addressing inequalities based on the nationality ground, inequalities made even more evident by the consequences of the pandemic. **The few measures identified seem to confirm a tendency to support vulnerabilities of this type just by offering unclear educational supports.** It should be noted that some plans consider **migration only as a way to attract a skilled workforce**, and completely avoid reflecting on the complexity of contemporary migration. In this context too, the Spanish plan seems to be the one most concerned with providing structural responses that seek to mitigate the inequalities within this category.

The nationality ground in the non-EU 27 countries

- RS_POL contains '[p]rogrammes to improve the situation of internally displaced persons and refugees from Kosovo and migrants who come from other countries and who remain in Serbia as asylum seekers or are only in transit to European Union countries. The majority of these programmes' activities fall under the regular activities of human rights institutions, such as the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality or the Protector of Citizens - the Ombudsman. Also, programmes related to improving education or health or housing for these social groups are regular programmes implemented by the Government of Serbia's institutions, such as the Commissariat for Refugees, in cooperation with various international organisations (Red Cross, Council of Europe, or the OSCE) and are not explicitly formulated in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it seems that the needs of these social groups have become more visible due to the pandemic' [RS_NR].
- In IS_POL, the area 'Issues of migrants and refugees' (no. 29.7) focuses on policies to increase the integration of migrants and refugees, to remove the wage gap compared to nationals, to coordinate their reception, and to welcome more of them. In addition, some measures have the goal of improving the accessibility of public services for migrants and improve the quality and number of Icelandic courses for adult migrants.

- Through TK_POL, '[d]igitisation support, which aims to facilitate and support the digitisation of Syrian-owned businesses to help them overcome the current challenges in the business environment, has been given to Syrian-owned enterprises via mini-recovery grants, financial consultancy, digital marketing support, digital infrastructure grants and trainings on capacity building related to digital competencies. In total: • 144 enterprises have benefitted from unlimited internet access (16 female and 128 male business owners), • 30 enterprises from digital marketing services (15 female and 15 male business owners) • 34 enterprises from financial consultancy services (30 male business owners and 4 female business owners), • 58 enterprises from mini recovery grant (49 female and 9 male business owners) and • 206 company representatives (79 female business owners and 127 male business owners), from online trainings on 'Digital Communication Practices' and 'Digital Marketing Practices' as of 28 December 2020. • 11 female-led companies and cooperatives attended Demo Day, which aimed to bring together Syrian and Turkish women entrepreneurs within the context of supporting the digitisation of Syrian SMEs. • In digitisation services for Syrian-owned MSMEs, 34% of the beneficiaries are women, and 4 persons with impairments have also benefited from the support' [TK_NR].
- In UK2_POL, 'regional arrangements to support the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) National Transfer Scheme (NTS) are supported by the policy, allocating £50,000 to each region to cover a full-time middle manager for this work' [UK_NR].

Religion, belief, sexual orientation, gender identity and others

As noted in the “General Overview: the Content” section, the analysis of the NRs indicated that there are some **inequality grounds that were not taken into account by any of the EU 27 country plans**. Inequalities experienced by people belonging to vulnerable groups on the basis of **religion/belief, sexual orientation, and gender identity** are not only excluded from reforms and investments in recovery and resilience, but in almost all cases are **not even mentioned at the level of general considerations and objectives**. That happens despite the fact that research has shown that the pandemic has hit communities from more marginalised groups hardest, especially in the case of LGBTQI+ communities (e.g., Kidd et al. 2021; Salerno et al. 2020). The **few exceptions** mainly concern **general statements on the desire not to discriminate**:

Religion/belief

- The Danish plan, ‘[...] refers to Target 10.2 and 10.3 of the SDGs [UN Sustainable Development Goals] and states that they work on promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of everyone across age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic status.’ The NR underlines that in the plan there are no other references on this topic more than this general statement’ [DK_NR].
- In Slovenia, ‘[...] the plan mentions religion/belief in connection with some measures and in accordance with the 3rd principle of European Pillar of Social Rights. For example, all measures of the component ‘Strengthening competences’, especially digital ones and those required in new jobs and green transitions, will ensure equal access to education and public services regardless of sex, race, nationality, religion or belief, disability, age, and sexual orientation. In the same manner the component ‘Social security and long-term care’ would ensure equal access to systems of social protection regardless of sex, race, nationality, religion or belief, disability, age, and sexual orientation’ [SI_NR].

Sexual orientation and gender identity:

- In the Irish plan, ‘[...] LGTBI+ is only mentioned once in the document in a paragraph that emphasises Ireland’s strong commitment to the “advanced gender equality and equal opportunities for all” Several groups are listed as groups whose needs will be addressed, such as women and girls, those with disabilities, Travellers and Roma, migrants, and LGTBI+’ [IE_NR].
- In the Estonian plan, ‘[w]hile there are references to sexual preference throughout the text, these references appear in general policy statements to stress sexual orientation as part of the overall equality protections, but the topic does not come up in any specific analyses or provisions’ [EE_NR].
- In Finland, ‘[i]t is mentioned in the plan that the Finnish Gender Equality Act forbids discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression. However, there are no measures related to this’ [FI_NR].

The **only plans that contain references to more concrete actions** to support inequalities in this area are the Spanish and Portuguese ones:

- The approval of a new Act on the protection and recognition of families and their diversity (C22.R3) is designed to grant legal recognition of different types of families and the determination of services and allowances they have the right to access. This includes the improvement of the legal framework and the protection of families with special needs or in vulnerable situations (like single-headed families, same-sex parents, and families with children at risk of poverty and social exclusion). It is not a reform stemming directly from the COVID situation, although the COVID pandemic negatively impacted vulnerable families and exposed the need to strengthen the resources available to them.
- The Portuguese plan aims to increase the number of fieldwork teams among the communities that will focus on primary healthcare and social problems. 'The support for social problems such as gender identity is mentioned as one of the areas of intervention of the fieldwork teams' [PT_NR].

Others

To conclude, the NRs have included within the category '**others**' some other types of inequality grounds and vulnerable groups. The most frequent one concerns **geographical inequalities**:

- in the Cypriot plan, one of the goals is '[...] providing employment opportunities to people living in rural and remote areas, upskilling the existing farming community, and professionalising the future labour force by investing in human capital (Component 3.1 New Growth Model and diversification of the economy)' [CY_NR].
- In the Portuguese plan, a '[...] set of diverse measures are presented for the Açores region. It is a deprived region and the support is focused mainly on the education system, providing digital resources for students and teachers, computers, connectivity' [PT_NR].
- The French plan focuses also on '[t]erritorial inequalities (particularly with the overseas territories) in fact covers socioeconomic and ethnic inequalities in particular. There are also measures for rural territories' [FR_NR].
- In the Latvian plan, the section '[...] 3.1.1.r. Administrative - territorial reform sets: to provide support for the rehabilitation of the country's regional and local roads; addressing the availability of housing in the regions' [LV_NR].
- In Ireland, the plan states that '[t]he greener economy must be a just transition and all measures incorporate mitigation and climate justice investment to ensure rural communities do not experience further inequality and poverty' [IE_NR].

In the Belgian plan, '[t]o combat high rates of criminal recidivism, the NRRP provides for a digital platform that prisoners can use. This platform will allow prisoners to engage in tele-education, to access prison services, and to benefit from re-integration services, among other things' [BE_NR].

In the Spanish plan, the improvement of the current Minimum Income Scheme is described as beneficial for categories like migrants, the homeless, convicts and ex-convicts, persons with addictions, and others at risk of social exclusion: as beneficiaries of this allowance, the

new Scheme will ensure their employment.

Finally, the Polish plan has a focus on oncological patients: 'The priority of the solutions developed in the reform is to ensure that every patient, regardless of their place of residence, receives oncological care based on the same diagnostic and therapeutic standards, i.e. uniformly defined paths, and that the system flexibly responds to their needs. The implementation of the new structure and new model of oncological care management in Poland will also include investments in infrastructure and equipment for medical entities that make up the National Oncology Network' [PL_NR].

These exceptions just listed further highlight the total absence in the plans of measures to support these vulnerabilities just listed.

The gender identity ground in the non-EU 27 countries

- In IS_POL, "'Legal position and the rights of queer people secured" is one of three government objectives in the policy field "Equality issues" (no. 32.2). The main action related to gender identity: A working group will be formed that will work on further establishing the protection of the physical integrity of children born with atypical sex characteristics' [IS_NR].
- In RS_NR '[w]ithin the budget supporting the Protector of Citizens, activities aiming to enhance the human rights and freedoms of the LGBT are planned. However, these activities are part of the regular work of the Protector, and they are not explicitly orientated to mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 on the LGBT population' [RS_NR].

The religion/belief ground in the non-EU 27 countries

- In UK2_POL, '[...] the specific support for safeguarding against FGM means that the policy engages with religious groups that undertake the practice such as certain Muslim, Christian, and animist societies' [UK_NR].

The Reactions of Civil Society Organisations

The Content

Civil society organisations across Europe reacted to the content of the plan, sometimes explicitly pointing out the absence of a gender+ perspective in the plans. In this section, reactions are analysed first with a view to understanding the main criticisms from a general point of view (not necessarily connected to gender+ issues) and then singling out specifically gender+ reactions. Negative reactions are addressed first, followed by positive remarks.

The empirical material for the following analysis is based on the expert assessments carried out by the NRs. When available, references to sources are provided in a bibliography at the end of this report (Appendix 3).

General appraisal

In terms of general reactions, most of those mapped by NRs could be summarised as **'too much attention is paid to economy, and less to social recovery and to the people'**, particularly to social needs that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. In **Slovenia**, this concern was expressed by the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, said SV_NR. In Latvia, LV_NR reported a concern that the plan is an illustration of 'all for business' thinking, and it lacks an 'all for society' attitude. In Spain, CSOs raised concerns about the procedures, deadlines, and technicalities required to be able to apply for funds under the plan, which makes it difficult for small and grassroots organisations to apply and makes it evident that funds will go to medium/big entities in the private sector. In Ireland, IRL_NR stated that the main opposition party, Sin Fein, was **not satisfied** with the **attention given to workers** who were affected during the pandemic. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), single trade unions, and Social Justice Ireland called for a greater commitment to improve the situation of **precarious workers and low-paid workers** and were critical on the priority given to **business subsidies**, without making them contingent upon the commitment to decent work and to retaining their workforce.

CSOs complained about the imbalance in the allocation of funds, the excessive focus on economic policies and infrastructural reforms, but also the inadequacy of the response to the crisis.

Some of these concerns regard **climate change and sustainability** (see **Latvia and Germany**):

- In Austria, AT_NR stated that 'the NGO Südwind (a human rights NGO campaigning to narrowing the gap between the global South and the global North) detects severe deficiencies with regard to global justice and sustainability, in particular, the lack of funds for supporting climate protection, and the lack of provisions for responsible global supply chains without child labour or exploitation'.

- In Spain, some environmental NGOs (e.g. Greenpeace) criticised the lack of transformation of the agri-food system.

Another issue is the limited attention to **social needs** like housing, healthcare, childcare, and education:

- In Ireland, 'Social Justice Ireland also criticised the overall Economic Recovery Plan for falling short in addressing housing needs, climate change, inequality, and healthcare, as well as the insufficient investment in childcare and education' [IRL_NR].
- In Austria, AT_NR said that the Chamber of Labour and trade unions missed more projects regarding labour policies, education, or social benefits. The think tank Momentum Institute states that 55% of the funds goes to infrastructure projects, 28% to enterprises, and 17% to employees and families.

The lack of **measures on poverty** was also highlighted:

- In France, FR_NR reports that a major trade union, CFDT, regrets that the poorest household are missed out: 'the ones that have few resources and who need a helping hand'.
- In Italy, IT_NR states that 'CSOs [...] have expressed critical comments on specific aspects or significant absences in the NRRP (migrants, food poverty, energy poverty, reform of the prison system, growth in the size of SMEs, citizenship rights, responsible production and consumption, protection of biodiversity, the sea and coastlines, etc.)'. With regard to **poverty**, they pointed out 'the lack of specific measures on absolute poverty, the insufficiency of funds on educational poverty, which will affect only 50,000 people, the need for mechanisms to coordinate the measures on poverty, the absence of objectives and proposals on **housing** (only 'housing first'), food poverty is not addressed and there are no measures on food education (ASVIS-Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development, Osservatorio NRRP, Caritas Italiana, Alliance for Poverty).

Another recurring theme is the **lack of connection between the policies adopted in the plan and the pandemic crisis** that it allegedly aims to address. For many CSOs, it is clear that the plan is not innovative, but rather a collection of old or previously approved reforms. This was affirmed by employee representatives in Austria (think-tank Momentum, Chamber of Labour and trade unions, [AT_NR]) and by the main trade union (OGBL) in Luxembourg [LU_NR]. Similar concerns were reported also in Czech Republic and Germany (by [GER_NR]). Another concern regards the effectiveness of the measures proposed to tackle pandemic-related issues. PL_NR reports that the Polish Teachers Unions stated that reforms proposed in the educational sector (e.g., buying computers to schools) are not adequate to address problems revealed by the pandemic.

The absence of gender-sensitive measures in the plan

With varying degrees, CSOs have highlighted the **lack of a gender-sensitive approach** in the plan, and in some cases, they made suggestions or **proposals to the government** (Portugal, Greece).

In some occasions, this **criticism is general** and not specific to any one issue or measure.

Measures are criticised as **superficial** (AT_NR), **not gender-sensitive**, or **not ambitious** enough (Czech Republic). In Austria, the feminist network Frauering expressed anger about the neglect of women in the NRRP, after they submitted their proposals (AT_NR). In Croatia, the gender equality expert of the World Bank considered the plan as a missed opportunity for gender mainstreaming. Feminist organisations in Hungary were concerned about the lack of disaggregated data by sex [HU_NR].

A common issue seems to be the **excessive focus** and resources allocated to **male-dominated sectors** (digital, environmental) and the inability to mainstream gender in those sectors. In France, this concern is raised by Fondation des Femmes (Women's Foundation), in Italy, by various CSOs that argue that female-dominated sectors (care, catering, tourism, etc.) are not addressed. Women's organisations in Hungary (NANE Women's Rights Association, PATENT - People Opposing Patriarchy - Association, Hungarian Women's Lobby, EMMA Association and Jól-Lét Foundation) raised similar concerns about the lack of attention to professions that are mainly carried out by women and were particularly affected by the pandemic. In Spain, feminist and women's associations expressed concern about the limited funds allocated to social policies and policies on gender equality. The Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights questioned the processes of monitoring, the institutions involved, and also the effective measures and funding for women and gender problems.

In some cases, the **lack of gender perspective** is manifested by **other social actors** (not feminist NGOs). In Greece, the Green Party (Ecologoi Prasinoi - EP) and the political party Syriza voiced this criticism. In Sweden, the NR found brief mention of TCO, a trade union, underlining the lack of concrete gender equality measures in the plan. Similarly, in Slovakia, 'The Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic criticised the lack of gender equality in most of the components of the NRRP. In their view, gender equality should have been included as a condition in several measures (see also Poland). Again, in Slovakia, the 'non-parliamentary political party Progressive Slovakia criticised the overall lack of gender equality in the NRRP and the fact that it does not address the unequal impact of the pandemic on women, such as the increase in gender-based violence, the economic impact on lonely mothers, or access to reproductive health' [SVK_NR].

Polish CSOs even raised concerns about the **harmful impact** that some measures included in the plan can have on gender equality. Since the 'plan does not take into account solutions aimed at mitigating the gender+ inequalities, it will rather deepen the existing gender+ inequalities than mitigate them' [POL_NR].

Gender-sensitive reactions also focused on the absence of measures in **specific sectors** (e.g., work-labour, care services, GBV):

- In Greece, '[t]he General Confederation of Greek Workers - amongst other criticisms - emphasised that the Plan should include as an indicator the gender wage gap. Moreover, the Association of Enterprises also pointed out that the plan did not consider women's entrepreneurship. The Institute of Small Enterprises published an opinion that argued that the plan should consider the gender wage gap, but also how unpaid domestic and care work performed by women as well as gender stereotypes prevent the integration of women in the labour market';

- As reported by PL_NR, the Polish trade union NSZZ Solidarność raised a concern that flexible employment regulations can be dangerous for women as there is no guarantee of adequate protection. It states that 'it is women who will be forced, due to their maternal functions, to take a break in their careers and return to work after this break. Women's maternal function impacts their situation on the labour market, making it worse than that of men, and at the same time women are offered flexible forms of employment'.
- In **Italy**, CSOs (ASVIS, CGIL-trade union, Confindustria-employers' organisation, and others) argued that 'smart working is promoted with a focus on female workers and not with both males and females in mind. It is not clear how the conditionality of gender and youth procurement will be applied in the Plan's calls for proposals. The functioning and possible sanctions of the gender equality certification system are not explained, and it is criticised by Confindustria (which considers it an unnecessary burden for companies) and by CGIL, which also criticises the massive use of incentives' [IT_NR].
- In Luxembourg, LU_NR points out that the main trade union OGBL notes that there is a need to reinforce purchasing power in particular for women pensioners because they are suffering from inequalities in terms of pay, type of contract, sectors, and informal care.
- In Hungary, the initiative 'catching-up settlements', which aims also at involving women in disadvantaged areas to enter the labour market, by producing local products, appears to be superficial and not followed by concrete measures for its implementation (HU_NR based on the opinion of the women's NGOs listed above, p. 2).
- In Hungary, the NR pointed out that the 'plan fails to mention violence against women, and within that specifically domestic violence and intimate partner violence' (HU_NR, based on the opinion of the women's NGOs listed above, p. 2).
- In Ireland, 'The National Women's Council [...] criticised the lack of significant investment in a public childcare model, public services and care economy to tackle the persistent inequalities for women. [...] there are gaps in the provision of the basic services that have not been addressed through the last year's budget, the National Economic Recovery Plan or the Recovery and Resilience Plan, including the absence of a commitment to a public model'.
- In Spain, feminist organisations asserted that the plan deploys a feminist rhetoric, borrowing concepts from feminist economics to pink-wash measures that pursue other goals (the privatisation of public health and care services through public-private collaborations, focus on digitising services instead of improving working conditions in those sectors).
- Also in Spain, Calala Fondo de Mujeres shed light on the lack of an intersectional perspective in the RRP, and especially in the Component on Care, a highly feminised, precarious and racialised sector. A great amount of funding goes to building and renovating infrastructure for such services [ES_NR].
- In Hungary, women's NGOs (see the list above, p. 2) complained that the plan does not address the problem of single parents, the vast majority of whom are women,

who are particularly disadvantaged, and whose paid work has often become impossible to carry out due to the closure of educational institutions.

- In Italy, CSOs (see above) highlighted 'the need to incentivise and extend parental leave, in particular for fathers, make it better distributed and longer; the need for a tax system that does not penalise the second earner in the family; the need for further support for persons with disabilities and for the elderly; there are no measures to promote a culture of sharing the burden of care and to counter stereotypes'. More resources are needed for the expansion and strengthening of social and care facilities to provide qualified proximity assistance and alleviate care work.

Only in the case of Slovakia, the **gender-sensitive measures** contained in the plan were **opposed by the Catholic Church and one conservative NGO** that disagreed on the improvement of childcare facilities (SK_NR).

The absence of vulnerable groups

In some cases, CSOs point to the exclusion of **specific vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, youth, children, and migrants from the plan:**

- In Italy, 'Caritas Migrantes and IDOS complained that the PNRR has ignored the needs of migrants (the word migrant is not there). Discrimination persists regarding access to the nursery school bonus, which still do not properly admit children of immigrants, who only have provisional access. Discriminatory rules over access to the single allowance: only migrants with a residence permit for work and research (but not for family reasons), a residence of at least two years in Italy (or a work contract of at least two years) can access it' [IT_NR].
- In Denmark, the Danish Refugee Council called for the consideration of refugees and migrants to be included in the national recovery plans across the EU countries. They also state the need for a focus on self-reliance and social integration in the crowded refugee camps in Greece (DRC, 2020).
- In Slovenia, SVN_NR stated that trade unions of retired persons stressed that 'the plan does not address elderly persons in a sufficient way (for example, long-term care); it was pointed out that the elderly do not see the plan as having perspective in the sense of ensuring a dignified life for elderly persons. The union also stated that the focal point of the plan is not human beings but buildings and roads. It was also pointed out that, for example, measures to strengthen public health care and public transportation are missing'.
- Again, in Slovenia, SVN_NR reported that 'Trade Union Youth Plus, which represents students, pupils, and unemployed youth (up to 35 years old) criticised the amount of funds (0,27% of all funds) that would be allocated to address the problem of youth unemployment and also the fact that only one measure in the plan is dedicated to youth, and in particular only to first-time job-seekers, and therefore does not address the majority of unemployed youth'. Moreover, the 'Slovenian association of friends of youth pointed out that children are almost not included in the plan; they seem not to be on the political agenda'.

- In Poland, PL_NR found that 'Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego (the Polish Teachers Union) argued that reforms proposed in the education sector are not adequate to the problems revealed by the pandemic. In its opinion, buying computers for schools is of secondary importance. The most important issues are: combating online hate speech against kids, and infrastructure support for pupils with a disadvantaged socioeconomic background or with disabilities who do not have Internet access and computer equipment (or proper computer programs to support the educational process) at home'.
- In Lithuania, 'experts have criticised the so-called "Millennium Gymnasiums", a new generation of schools, which will invite teachers who demonstrate the best educational results and the most talented graduates of pedagogical studies, [and they] will have all the necessary modern infrastructure [and] STEM laboratories. The NRP envisions that most funds planned for education will be allocated to these "Millennium Gymnasiums". Experts warn that by concentrating all the resources in elite schools, social exclusion will only deepen. 'It is not clear how those schools will be set up. Other schools may lose their potential if the best teachers, students and resources are sucked away by those "Millennium Gymnasiums"' [LTU_NR].

As some of the examples above (Italy, Poland, Lithuania) suggest, some CSOs voice their concerns about **educational inequalities** with an intersectional lens, focusing attention on the overlap between socio-economic disadvantages, migration status, and the disability of children accessing school. But gender is not included among these issues.

Positive reactions

Consistent with the general narrative described above, positive reactions to the plans came mainly from **representatives of employers, businesses, and industries** (Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain), which welcomed the plan for its support for the **economy and economic growth** and for **the transition from COVID-19 restrictions**. In some countries, **trade unions** were also satisfied with the content of the recovery plan, as in the case of Denmark, where one of the biggest trade union confederations FH (*Fagbevægelsens Hovedorganisation*), which includes teachers, pedagogues, office workers, and police officers, welcomed the plan for securing employment, investments in the green transition, and the promotion of job opportunities for young people. Similarly, in Spain, the two biggest trade unions (UGT, CCOO) provided positive feedback on the plan, also noting that they were involved in its design and urging that dialogue be maintained in the implementation phase. This satisfaction with the plan should be linked to the fact that in many cases, **employers' organisations and trade unions were formally involved in the design process of the plan**. Their involvement allowed them to voice their priorities and see them materialise. This is the case of Austria, where the Chamber of Commerce was able to anchor several of their priorities within the plan, as the AT_NR reported. In Belgium, the liberal and Catholic unions were somewhat positive about the participatory nature of the drafting process. In the case of Italy, IT_NR affirmed that this dialogue was secured only later (December 2021), when national trade unions signed a memorandum of understanding

with the presidency of the Council of Ministers committing the government to implement forms of permanent consultation with regional and local authorities and social partners (businesses and trade unions).

In Greece, two other sectors expressed their satisfaction with the plan: the pharmaceutical sector and the environmental sector, which took a positive view of the investments on the protection of the environment. WWF in Austria was also positive about the funding allocated to the protection of biodiversity, as AT_NR declared. Similarly, in Spain, Greenpeace was quite positive about the opportunity that the plan offers to reverse the three current crises (economic, social, and environmental) and in particular to move towards the decarbonisation of the economy. However, the organisation also expressed criticism of the plan.

In a few cases **NGOs focused on women's rights and vulnerable groups** gave a positive assessment of (some) measures included in the plan. It should be noted that in Poland and Hungary CSOs were also positive about some measures included in the plan, which were received with surprise, especially considering the anti-gender attitudes spreading in both countries. PL_NR affirmed that the internet portal money.pl reacted positively to measures aimed at increasing the participation of women in the labour market and mitigating gender inequalities in the education sector. Similarly, in Hungary, women's rights organisations pointed out that the plan did partially recognise the gender gap in employment and the difficulty of reconciliation between work and family life that burden especially women with small children. As a result, it proposes measures for the capacity building of nursery institutions.

- In Italy, IT_NR affirmed that measures in the education domain (e.g., expanding kindergartens and education facilities for the 0-6 age group, school canteens, full-time classes, measures against educational poverty, and support for girls' STEM training) were welcomed by different social actors (CRC group on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, CGIL, Confindustria; ASVIS, and the Diversity and Inequalities Forum). Other measures welcomed by civil society were: measures promoting autonomy for the dependent elderly; investment in human capital to strengthen the trial office, which can help counter gender-based violence and overcome disparities between courts; the reduction of gender, generational, and territorial inequalities as a transversal logic (Foundation for the South). Lastly, the National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policies welcomed the inclusion of gender procurement as a condition for participating in the plan's calls for tenders and measures, meaning that 30% of employment linked to the NRRP's implementation must be for women and young people, and the use of the MACGEM-It programme to monitor and evaluate the plan's employment impacts (INAPP-National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policies).
- In Germany, DE_NR specified that 'the Gender Institute for Gender Equality Research published a statement on the National Economic Stimulus Package published by the German Government which considers already political measures as an answer to the COVID-19 pandemic. This package has received more media attention than the NRRP and, as stated by the Institute, has several overlaps with the NRRP'.

The process of participation of CSOs

Most of the CSOs mapped were negative in their assessment of the process of participation in the drafting of the plan. **Lack of involvement** or **ineffective ways of setting up a consultation** process are among the issues raised by social actors. CSOs also complained about the **lack of transparency** in the process of design, including claims about contradictory information between what is stated in the plan and what actually happened, or the lack of public information available on social dialogue.

- In Belgium, according to a non-profit in the climate movement, civil society did not have the opportunity to participate.
- In Bulgaria, BG_NR reported that a list of NGOs issued a statement during the public consultation for the NRRP (November 2020) to inspire citizens and organisations to participate, since they were not consulted during the first drafting of the plan. A similar statement was also issued by the Bulgarian Centre for Non-profit Law (BCNL) urging the government to actively seek direct input and feedback from citizens and CSOs.
- In Slovakia, SVK_NR affirmed that the consultative process has been highly criticised by representatives of the institutions officially involved, as well as those that were not involved such as the NGO platform (which requested increased public participation) or the platform of culture organisations (which complained to the EC about not being involved in the process at all).
- According to SVN_NR, the Slovenian plan also affirmed that 2000 individuals and organisations have been included in the design process, and yet the media reported that stakeholders were involved in one consultation focused on grant opportunities for companies. NGOs (like the umbrella network CNVOS) were completely excluded from the process. The National Council¹³ complained that social partners such as representatives of professions, employers, and trade unions, were not involved in the design process and the Economic and Social Council¹⁴ was still not familiar with the latest version of the draft at the time. Accordingly, it wondered whether it was appropriate to submit to the EC a document that does not meet the basic preconditions for its actual implementation.
- In Romania, the RO_NR reported that during the drafting process, various representatives of civil society (trade unions, employers' organisations, youth representatives, etc.) issued public appeals for more public consultation. More recently, a joint appeal to the government was issued by CSOs asking to include representatives in the Monitoring Commission that oversees the process of consultation.

¹³ The upper chamber of the Slovenian Parliament representing social, economic, professional and local interests

¹⁴ Main consultative and coordinative institution for social dialogue.

- In Spain, CSOs reported that the consultation process was started too late and was not well articulated. Great effort was put into establishing a dialogue with economic actors, while CSOs were almost completely ignored. Organisations report a lack of transparency and information from the government (ES_NR).
- In Ireland, the government was criticised by the main opposition party, Sinn Fein, for not consulting with the Dail (parliament) on the NRRP before the plan was published. No draft was presented to the members of parliament prior to submission.

As the following examples suggest, issues with the consultation process concern both the **late timing and ineffective ways** in which the process took place. In some cases, the draft was shared publicly just a few months (sometimes only weeks) before the submission, leaving a very short period of time for organisations to submit their comments, and thereby hindering the consultation process itself. In other cases, there was what was essentially **token involvement** that did not lead to a concrete discussion about the draft.

- In Austria, AT_NR declared that several stakeholders argued that the consultation process was limited to the existence of one email-address where people/organisations could submit proposals but no discussion of the draft before it was submitted to the EU. The president of the Federation of Trade Unions claimed there was only a phone call between him and the Minister Edstadler; a meeting was scheduled, but for a time after the proposal was submitted. The president of the Chamber of Labour voiced her dismay at having only learned from the news that the NRRP had already been submitted. Both voiced their concerns that employee representatives were not involved in the consultation process. This is mirrored by Attac (NGO), Südwind (NGO), IGO (interest Group of Public Benefit Organisations, an association of several NPOs ranging from human rights, to environmental rights, basically most key NPOs in Austria are members), and the Austria Association of Cities and Towns, which all raised similar concerns in press releases. The Austrian party 'NEOS' criticised the design process for lacking transparency, and claimed that the Austrian parliament was not involved.
- In Bulgaria, a public discussion was organised about CSOs' involvement in the draft of the plan a few days before the submission and it is still unclear if any stakeholders are being consulted and engaged in the intermediary process (BGR_NR).
- In Slovenia, different organisations (employers' organisations, trade unions, NGOs) and media, as well as political bodies and parties claimed they were not involved in the drafting process and a proper draft was not made available for discussion until late. The draft was discussed at closed sessions of the National Assembly (SVN_NR).
- Similarly, in Czech Republic, relevant stakeholders - especially CSOs - were not sufficiently involved in the design process. The Ministry of Industry organised roundtables in December 2020, but the rules for stakeholders' selection remain unclear. CSOs argued that the process was not transparent and managed 'behind closed doors'. The plan was finally opened to formal consultations at a late stage (April 2021), with very little time for significant revisions before submission (June 2021).

- In Croatia, ‘a meeting of the Council for Civil Society Development was held in May 2021 and all CSOs representatives expressed dissatisfaction. They had been completely ignored and excluded from the drafting process and rejected the idea that the one meeting they had where only the abstract was presented qualified as serious consultation’ [HRV_NR].
- In Latvia as well, LV_NR affirmed that employers’ organisations and trade unions criticised the late involvement of social partners in the development of the plan. CSOs noted that this was largely done behind closed doors.
- The Lithuanian Business Confederation (LBC) issued a statement to the government expressing regret they were not able to fully contribute to refining the plan, as the government had set aside only five working days for consultation. Similarly, the Director of the National Coalition of Non-Governmental Organisations and an NGO Expert stated that the plan was presented to the public only two weeks before the scheduled date of submission to the European Commission and was not coordinated with the social partners.
- The former Minister of Finance, Social Democrat Rasa Budbergytė (currently in the opposition) expressed a strong opinion on the government’s unwillingness to publicise the ‘New Generation Lithuania’ plan. She said that even the members of the Seimas are not clear what final document will be submitted to the European Commission.
- In Luxembourg, LUX_NR states that social partners (employers and trade unions) submitted a joint contribution to the European Semester (April 2021), claiming a ‘real consultation process, which cannot be reduced to a single meeting at a relatively advanced stage’.
- The Hungarian plan states that around 500 actors were approached during the drafting process, including women’s organisations, but the most prominent ones (see list above, p. 2) affirmed they were not involved. The government published the plan only later, leaving a very short time (two weeks) for social actors to submit their comments and suggestions, which were not finally considered [HU_NR].
- In Poland, several social actors (NGOs, employers organisation, local authorities) issued a joint appeal to the Prime Minister demanding ‘real dialogue and active involvement’. This was the reaction after a public consultation was held but it was very unclear about what was and was not included in the plan and why, said PL_NR.
- In Slovakia, SVK_NR reports that institutions involved perceived the consultative meetings as more informative than consultative.

In some cases, even when **social actors were involved**, they expressed their dissatisfaction about the fact that their proposals were not taken into account (Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain). Similar to what was underlined regarding the *content*, **negative reactions to the drafting process were rarely addressed from a gender+ perspective**. NRs pointed this out explicitly in some cases (Ireland, Germany). Below are some examples of gender-sensitive comments from CSOs:

- In Spain, some CSOs have urged more participation of women in the decision-making process about recovery policies and stressed the need for more funding in public services, especially in the care sector [ES_NR].

- In Portugal, the Portuguese Platform for Women’s Rights questioned the process of monitoring, the institutions involved in it, and also the effectiveness of measures and funding for women and gender issues [PT_NR].
- The Hungarian plan states that around 500 actors were approached during the drafting process, including women’s organisations, yet the most prominent ones (see list above, p. 2) affirmed they were not involved [HU_NR].
- In Denmark, the Danish Women’s Council asked that women’s rights organisations be included in the process of distributing the EU funds, recommending the use of gender mainstreaming. They call for the representation of women working in frontline jobs and civil society organisations representing women to be included in the process of rolling out the NRRP (headline ‘Don’t Forget the Women!’). New Europe (Nyt Europa), the Youth Representative for EU (EU ungedelegat), the Association for Academics (Akademikerne), and Greenpeace all claim that the government did not include them in the drafting process. According to them, CSOs have knowledge about the inequalities that increased as a result of the pandemic (inequalities connected to gender, generation, class, and ethnicity). They asked the politicians to engage in a dialogue about the drafting process (92-gruppen, 2021).
- In the Netherlands, the political party Volt filed a motion to address gender inequality in the Dutch recovery plan, which was supported by 85 of the 150 parliament members. The new government replied it is in their attention to consult relevant societal organisations to guard principles of gender inequality in the implementation of the plan (January 2022).

In Slovakia and Greece, NRs pointed out that most **feminist organisations and LGBTQ+** **did not react directly to the plan** or they did not speak up during the drafting process **but intervened at a later stage**. In **Slovakia**, it is mentioned that several organisations representing gender+ inequalities participated in the platform ‘The Voice of Civic Organisations’ to request a more participatory and open approach to the consultation process as well as the implementation process (SVK_NR). Similarly, in Greece, feminist and LGBTQ+ organisations demanded more participation in the policy design of the plan during the Greek Forum for the Feminist Strike of 8 May. In March 2021, 83 CSOs, some of which are active in gender equality, published a joint communication denouncing the lack of transparency and the lack of participation of CSOs in the consultation process of the plan. With regard to **vulnerable groups**, in Denmark, the Danish Refugee Council asked that **refugees and migrants** are included in the national recovery plans across EU countries. They also stressed the need for a focus on self-reliance and social integration in the crowded refugee camps in Greece (DRC, 2020).

Requests for participation and bottom-up initiatives to foster civic participation

This general lack of involvement of CSOs has led in many cases to **requests for more transparency and real consultation**, coming from institutional and non-institutional actors as well as grassroots organisations. Organisations have reported a lack of social dialogue in the design process and have asked for more transparency in the next implementation phase.

- In some cases, representatives from different actors (NGOs, employers, trade unions, local authorities) gathered to submit **joint appeals** or letters to the government demanding more active involvement (Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Slovakia), also submitting their own proposals. In the Netherlands, the Scientific Council to the Government (WRR) together with the Dutch Scientific Research Organisation (KNAW) wrote a report with a vision document with strategic policy challenges for society in response to the pandemic and run future scenario analyses. In the documents the gender care gap in the Netherlands (one of the biggest in the EU, and the gap increased during the pandemic) and SES inequality are explicitly discussed.

Below are some examples of initiative from **grassroots organisations** to improve accountability throughout the implementation:

- In Italy, 30 CSOs then set up a NRRP Observatory¹⁵ in order to engage in dialogue with the PNRR's *Tavolo permanente per il partenariato economico, sociale e territoriale* (Technical Roundtable on Economic and Social Partnership), monitor the implementation of the measures, and provide indications and suggestions [IT_NR].
- Also in Italy, the feminist association Period ThinkTank launched the campaign #dataforaccounting, calling on all public institutions to collect and disaggregate data by gender, in an open format and free stereotypes and to carry out a GIA of the actions, policies, and projects to be implemented, stressing the idea that gender statistics is a tool to ensure that the management of recovery plan resources is consistent and effective in tackling gender inequalities. The Emilia-Romagna region co-organised a public conference to promote this campaign in November 2021. Moreover, the Open Polis organisation has made a request to publish data on the plan in a way that is transparent and understandable to citizens so that the implementation of the measures can be followed [IT_NR].
- In Spain, 'a citizenship platform was created to ensure transparency and participation (Open Generation EU), which includes NGOs, journalists, experts and university students). Several other Spanish organisations (including women's network and ecologists) elaborated a guide to analyse the shortcomings of the NRRP and proposing alternative actions ("NextgenerationEU: more shadows than lights") [ES_NR].
- In Slovakia, many NGOS (also representing gender+ inequalities) voiced their request to make the consultation process and the plan's implementation more participatory and open through the platform 'The Voice of Civic Organisations' [SVK_NR].

An assessment of CSOs' responses

From the analysis of **CSOs'** responses mapped in this cycle, it appears that most of them **focus on single issues or vulnerabilities at a time**. There is a **lack of intersectional perspective in their assessment** of the plan, particularly of the gendered implications of policies beyond those traditionally considered to be 'gendered' (e.g., work and the labour

¹⁵ <https://www.osservatoriocivicoPNRR.it/>

market, care, and gender-based violence). Indeed, there are **few CSOs that look into the gendered impact of digitisation and the green transition**, two main pillars of the recovery plans. Gendered impacts are also neglected in the analysis of health reforms and education, two domains where the pandemic crisis has had and is still having major consequences.

In some countries, such as Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Latvia, and Luxembourg, Slovakia, reactions from CSOs to the plan that included a gender perspective (let alone a gender+ one) were either scarce, appeared at a later time, or were not found at all. Later reactions to the content (as well as the absence of any gender+ reaction) could be interpreted as the **result of a lack of information about the plan prior to its submission and a lack of involvement of social partners** (that in fact called for more transparency and social dialogue). As described above, some general trade unions did include a gender analysis in their assessment of the plan, but this still seems to be a limited trend, indicating that these social actors are still adopting a gender-neutral approach and need to be familiarised with the gendered implications of their agendas.



Some initiatives promoted by CSOs

In this section there is space for the description of some initiatives promoted by CSOs in support of problems that arose during the pandemic to people belonging to vulnerable groups. The initiatives have been mapped by UK_NR, RS_NR and TK_NR in conjunction with their policy analysis process.

Children

UK – A fund for vulnerable children and young people adversely impacted by the recent COVID-19 crisis

Buttle UK has established the COVID-19 Direct Emergency Response for Children and Young People Fund with the support of National Lottery funding. It is now working in partnership with the National Lottery Community Fund to deliver £2 million in National Lottery grants to support vulnerable children and young people adversely impacted by the recent COVID-19 crisis. Buttle UK secured this funding during lockdown to help children, who were already very vulnerable and living in crisis, but whose situations have been made even worse by the pandemic and lockdown. The fund will support thousands of children with direct financial assistance up to a maximum of £2,000, and pay for a range of costs and items that will help to overcome the crisis, improve their social and emotional wellbeing, and increase their capacity to engage in education.

Buttle UK is a charity dedicated to helping vulnerable children and young people in the UK who suffer from financial hardship and social issues.

Link to fund details: <https://buddleuk.org/news/news-list/top-charities-come-together-to-support-buddleuks-5m-covid-19-response/>

UK - physical and mental welfare of the most vulnerable children

KidsOut (The fun and happiness charity) announced a new partnership with the Direct Line Group to support the physical and mental welfare of some of society's most vulnerable children during the coronavirus pandemic. The two organisations are coordinating the delivery of £50 worth of food vouchers and over £100 worth of new toys to every family currently living in a Women's Aid Federation (WAFE) refuge in the UK. While KidsOut supports children from a range of backgrounds, it is the only national charity focusing on the needs of children in refuge and works with every WAFE refuge in the UK.

Partnership details: <https://www.kidsout.org.uk/directline/>

Social class and socioeconomic background

TK – a network to support solidarity and defend human rights

Citizens' Solidarity Network (Yurttaş Dayanışma Ağı): Citizens' Solidarity Network was established in April 2021 by people from professions who advocate in different fields such as human rights, children's rights, women's rights, refugee rights, and urban rights. It is a civil initiative that aims to make invisible people, groups, and needs visible and to contribute to the spread of the culture of solidarity. The initiative emerges on the basis of an observation that although various support packages have been announced, most of them economic, they are still far away from covering all people and groups affected by the pandemic. Groups such as peddlers, homeworkers, wage workers, precariats, recycling workers, Roma people, refugees, or homeless people are already living around the poverty line and these segments should be included by both economic and social policies. The initiative therefore came up with the idea of a solidarity network, a new form of social association where citizens look out for each other and stand in solidarity in response to particular needs. Their message is: 'See the need, look out for the citizen, grow the solidarity'.

Based on the data compiled through different ways and methods such as reviewing the websites of the relevant ministries and non-governmental organisations, following the announced circulars and press conferences, exchanging ideas with experts on the Turkish Employment Agency and Foundations of Social Help and Solidarity supports, and media and social media scanning, the initiative prepared the Citizens' Solidarity Network Map, which is open to develop day by day.

The aim is to make needs and different forms of support visible and increase access to them by gathering valuable support and solidarity from across the country by including in the process all citizens who have the opportunity, ability, and capacity to support someone. The Network tries to raise awareness not only with its mapping studies, but also with the findings and demands that it has revealed by interpreting this map and its content. The purpose is not just to list or map needs, but also to interpret the resulting picture and to show neglected areas to decision-makers and to those who want food support, health equipment, psycho-social support, and more. There is also a hotline for survivors of gender-based violence, advocacy for workers' rights, food for stray animals. The target groups of the network are multiple: doctors and other health workers, women, LGBTIQ+, Turkish and migrant children, the disabled, stray animals, construction workers, refugees, people aged 65+.

Website: <https://yurttasdayanismaagi.org/>

LGBTI+

TK - a queer-friendly and safe online platform

Queer Solidarity Network Platform: Pink Life LGBTI+ Solidarity Association established the Queer Solidarity Network Platform where queer artists can come together, build solidarity, and share knowledge and experience under QueerFest. QueerFest was established in 2011 by Pink Life LGBTI+ Solidarity Association and it is the only queer art and film festival in Turkey. It draws attention to discrimination and violence against LGBTI+ individuals and works for giving a voice to queer art and theories.

The QueerFest team is working to protect the already shrunk civic space for freedom of expression and to produce alternative solutions for the queer community affected hard by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Queer Solidarity Network is a step and initiative in this regard.

Queer life, which has been hit hard by the pandemic, is one of the vital components of the LGBTI+ community, not only for socialisation but also as a business and solidarity network where experiences and knowledge are shared. The Queer Artists Solidarity Network Platform is established as a solution not only against the COVID-19 pandemic but also against similar compelling situations that will occur in the future.

The Network is a queer-friendly and safe online platform against 'big data companies' that collect individuals' private and personal data information and use it to tag their users, but do not take any responsibility or action when there is hate speech or any violation of rights.

In addition to advertisements about art projects and related necessary support, online meetings, video tutorials, and articles will be published on the site, where queer artists can transfer their verbal knowledge to each other in a permanent way. The platform aims to strengthen the resilience of the queer art community to deal with current and future bad scenarios, such as pandemics, that endanger safe spaces.

Website: <https://kuirfestka.org>

Ethnicity

RS – Support for the Roma communities

The 'Inclusion of Roma and Other Marginalised Groups in Serbia' programme is a joint action of national and local institutions and civil and private organisations. 'The programme aims to support COVID-19 community information sharing, prevention, and recovery measures for Roma, the most vulnerable group. The measures aim to reduce the susceptibility of the most vulnerable Roma families living in substandard settlements and of other marginalised persons in Serbia (long-term unemployed, persons with disabilities,

single mothers, women victims of violence, members of large families), during and after the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, through the adequate and efficient delivery of support in 18 local self-governments. The measures are to include the following activities:

- Community information, prevention and recovery from the COVID-19 virus;
- Delivery of food, sanitation supplies, and disinfectants to the most vulnerable population in 18 partner towns and municipalities;
- Socioeconomic empowerment of Roma and other marginalised persons through short-term employment;
- Networking and working with various local institutions, supporting capacity building for a more efficient response, and mitigation of pandemic consequences;
- Strengthening local emergency teams to work with marginalised groups and meet their needs in crises.

The 'Inclusion of Roma and Other Marginalized Groups in Serbia's programme aims to support partners, at the national and local level, in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in Serbia for 2016-2025 in the following areas: access to social protection, employment, education, housing, and health care. Specific elements of the programme include the fight against discrimination, stereotypes and gender equality' [RS_NR].

<https://www.ukljucise.org/en/>

Conclusion

The first cycle of the RESISTIRÉ project showed that the initial policy responses addressing the pandemic were rarely gender mainstreamed, and in only a few cases did they seek to mitigate inequalities linked to gender+ dynamics. The policies analysed in this report, mostly the NRRPs, started from different premises: first of all, they were designed with the specific intention of promoting recovery and resilience in relation to the socioeconomic damages resulting from the pandemic dynamics; secondly, they were not designed under high time pressure or in an emergency, which means it was possible for them to be based on a better analysis of the situation and more reliable data; thirdly, they were bound by a regulatory framework that required considerations of gender equality and equal opportunities as a transversal axis in their design. However, despite these premises, the present analysis does not present a much improved picture of policy efforts to mitigate inequalities related to the domains and inequality grounds that RESISTIRE is interested in.

Not just criticism

The conclusions of this analysis are not just critical: the large number of pages in this report along provides an indication that **some efforts in the direction of proposing measures aimed at mitigating gender inequalities+, mostly in the area of work, education, and care, have been identified in the plans.** Two very different examples can be presented to underline the improvements. The first is the Spanish plan and the attention it gives to the most significant struggles in terms of gender equality, while also focusing on different inequality grounds and sometimes to their interactions. The second is the Romanian plan, which is described by RO_NR as one of the first policies of that country that uses the concept of 'gender equality' instead of the traditional 'equal opportunities between women and men'.

Differences between countries were detected. In addition, we should not forget that different countries were not in the same starting situation on these issues (WEF 2021). However, even in plans showcasing a relatively high level of gender sensitivity (e.g., Spain, Portugal, Italy), the **proposed policies are often not very specific when it comes to describing concrete actions and budget lines, and more work needs to be done.**

Gender mainstreaming needs concrete actions, not just rhetoric

In most of the analyses carried out by the NRs, it is stressed that **gender+ issues are mainly relegated to the level of general reflection or a description of the context, without being linked to concrete solutions.** The criticisms made by CSOs in many cases include a lack of a gender-sensitive approach, an **excessive focus on male-dominated sectors**, and the **difficulty of mainstreaming gender in those sectors.**

It cannot be said that issues concerning gender equality are completely absent from all plans. On the contrary, all the plans refer to topics related to this area, and in many cases

they devote special sections to the topic. In several cases, the main problems are described, sometimes with an emphasis on how the pandemic affected these problems, and how important it is to find solutions to them. **What is more difficult to identify are concrete measures, especially ones that would bring about some kind of structural change.** This situation can be partly explained by the framework that regulated the creation of the plans: while the various Member States were obliged to address gender equality issues, the **lack of this theme in the evaluation criteria** (see the section 'The rationale of the NRRPs and the role of gender+'), together with the **lack of an assigned budget**, might have hindered the interest of the MSs to define concrete measures. In many of the measures, the mitigation of inequalities concerning women and other vulnerable groups is not the primary objective but only an indirect result and sometimes also the effect of somewhat far-fetched reasoning (e.g., the digitisation of the pension system in Germany, which should be particularly beneficial to women and people with disabilities in terms of pension allowances). The fact that **more than half of the plans do not contain a gender impact assessment** also indicates a lack of interest in finding concrete solutions to gender inequality issues.

Gender equality is not only about education and work

A large part of the measures identified in the plans and related to the solution of gender issues have to do with activities concerning the **relationship between women, education, and the labour market**. Among those observed, there are many measures that propose education, reskilling, and tutoring in order to combat unemployment and labour market segregation. The pandemic has had a very serious effect on women's participation in the labour market, and any measure aimed at mitigating these problems is important. However, the analysis shows that these solutions appear sometimes to have been driven by **implicit assumptions and stereotypes** that see women's problems in accessing the labour market, lower wages, or difficulties in career progression as **simply the result of a lack of skills and education or the need to learn (male) management skills** and they are not seen as embedded in structural gender+ inequalities.

In addition, it must be stressed that the various lockdowns have had a major impact on the increase in the incidence of GBV and have placed a strain on victim support services. In addition, the pandemic highlighted once again how decision-making processes were mainly led by men. In the plans observed, there are very few, if any, measures dealing with GBV or decision-making and policy gaps. This consideration is also supported by the criticism of many CSOs on how the **plans focus mainly on economic recovery, not on social dynamics**. We believe that the focus on a gender-framed socioeconomic recovery from the pandemic **cannot be limited to considering women only as a workforce** but must also take into account other dynamics regarding **violence and inequalities in the sharing of power**.

An intersectional approach is missing

An **intersectional approach is completely absent in most plans**. We found in the plans

various **references to age** (especially in relation to the education of young people and elderly care), **social class** (support for unemployed and low-income people), and **disability** (general statements against discrimination, care, services). As already noted, however, these **grounds are in most cases considered in isolation**, and intersections with other identity grounds, first and foremost that of sex/gender, are rarely taken into account. At the same time, the **total exclusion of a discussion of inequalities related to religion/belief, gender identity, and sexual orientation** is striking. **Ethnicity and nationality** are somewhat more present within the plans but mostly in general statements against discrimination, while **concrete measures dedicated to these inequality grounds are completely absent**. Worth noting is the focus in the plans of Poland and Slovakia on **attracting qualified migrants**, which indicates once again how much **economic and production concerns outweigh social ones in these documents**. The low level of interest shown in issues related to these types of inequalities is also underscored and, in part, explained by the **low level of involvement of representatives of feminist, immigrant, and LGBTQI+ organisations** in the process of designing the plans. This problem has been highlighted by both the NRs and CSOs. In the case of many plans, CSOs' representatives noted the **lack of involvement** or the absence of **consideration for their proposals; the process of participation is often described as lacking proper time and transparency**. In addition, **for more than half of the plans no public consultation activities were organised**. As pointed out in the previous report, the **participation of civil society in policy-making is crucial** for keeping in touch with the concrete dynamics in society.

Gender-washed economic investments with a weak connection to the pandemic

In most cases, the plans seem to have been designed by mostly **piecing together economic reforms that decision-makers already had in their desk drawers** and that were awaiting funding. The RRF's rules required gender mainstreaming to be taken into account in the creation of plans, but without defining the specific criteria for their evaluation. This regulatory framework seems to have pushed many policy makers just to apply some 'gender makeup' to reforms and investments that were not meant to be gender-sensitive when they were conceived. The result of this process is that there are many vague general reflections on the importance of gender equality and equal opportunities and there is an effort (sometimes using a lot of imagination) to identify ex-post positive indirect effects for women in measures that were not designed to target them.

In addition, even **where measures to mitigate gender inequalities** can be identified, **they are rarely linked to issues that emerged during the pandemic**. For instance, the few measures related to the GBV domain refer to pre-existing legal obligations (Istanbul Convention) and are not responses to the needs and problems that emerged as a result of lockdowns.

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Appendix 1

Grid for the analysis of the NRRPs (for EU27 Member States)

OVERALL INFORMATION	
1. What's the state of the NRRP ("the Plan") in your country at the moment?	Work in progress / submitted / approved / Other
If "Other", please specify	
If not approved by EC yet, please briefly specify the reason:	
2. Number of pages in the Plan:	
3. Number of occurrences for the word "gender" (Please refer to the Guidelines)	
Space for comments (Please refer to the Guidelines)	
THE CONTENT	
GENDER INEQUALITIES	
4. Does the Plan include projects/actions/measures aimed at mitigating sex/gender inequalities in the following domains? Please, highlight explicit mentions of intersecting inequality grounds, if any	
Gender-Based Violence	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Work and Labour Market	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Economy	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Gender pay and pension gaps	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Gender care gap	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Decision-making and politics	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Environmental Justice	Yes/No

If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Health	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Education	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
OTHER INEQUALITY GROUNDS	
5. Does the Plan include projects/actions/measures aimed at mitigating inequalities for other vulnerable groups related to the following grounds? <i>Please, highlight explicit mentions of intersecting inequality grounds, if any</i>	
Social class/socioeconomic background	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Age	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Disability	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Nationality	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Ethnicity	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Religion/belief	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Sexual orientation	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Gender Identity	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Other	Yes/No
If "yes", please specify and summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	

SUMMARY	
6. Please provide a concise description (300 to 500 words) on the overall orientation of the NRRP of your country from a gender+ perspective. If possible, highlight whether the Plan contains actions to mitigate gender+ inequalities taking into account needs that became evident during the pandemic (e.g., the importance of increasing the access to healthcare to socio-economic vulnerable groups, the need to increase support for victims of GBV, the importance of green spaces for people's health, etc.)	
<i>(Optional)</i> Please provide a brief expert assessment on what is missing or is not adequate or sufficient to address gender+ inequalities (Max 600 words)	
EC ANALYSIS ON THE PROPOSED PLAN	
7. In the "Analysis of the NRRP" of your country, does the European Commission identify any weakness in terms of gender+ equality? Please choose among the following options (more than one selection is possible)	
The Plan lacks of gender mainstreaming	Yes/No
The Plan does not address certain gender+ inequalities	Yes/No
Lack of gender+ representation in the design of the Plan	Yes/No
Other	Yes/No
Please specify:	

THE PROCESS	
8. In several countries, for the design of the Plan, policy-makers sought input from civil society organisations and professional organisations through hearings and requests for written advice. Has the policy process actively involved any of the following stakeholders in preparation of the NRRP? (please choose one or more of the following options)	
Local authorities	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Trade unions	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Employers organisations	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Business representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Banks and finance representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Healthcare organisations	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Academics and researchers	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Feminist representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
LGBTQI+ representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Social justice organisations	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Elderly representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess

Youth representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Immigrants representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
People with disabilities representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Religious groups representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Others	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
If "others", please specify	
In case of the stakeholders' involvement, please briefly describe the process: (Max 200 words)	
9. Did the policy-makers conduct a public consultation through a request to the general public for comments on the draft by publishing it online?	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
If yes, please specify how the process took place: (Max 200 words)	
10. Has a Gender Impact Assessment of the Recovery Plan been carried out?	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
If yes, please specify how this assessment has been carried out: (Max 200 words)	
REACTIONS FROM THE CIVIL SOCIETY	
11. Have there been any significant positive reactions to the Plan for how it addresses gender+ inequalities from representatives of the following categories?	
NGOs and associations	Yes/No
Employees organizations (e.g. trade unions)	Yes/No
Employers organizations	Yes/No
Others	Yes/No
If "Others", please specify:	
If present, please briefly describe at least three of these reactions selecting the most relevant from a gender+ perspective (Max 500 words)	
12. Have there been any significant negative reactions to the Plan for how it addresses (or fails to address) gender+ inequalities from representatives of the following categories?	
NGOs and associations	Yes/No
Employees organizations (e.g. trade unions)	Yes/No
Employers organizations	Yes/No
Others	Yes/No
If "Others", please specify:	
If present, please briefly describe at least three of these reactions selecting the most relevant from a gender+ perspective (Max 500 words)	

13. Have there been any significant reactions in relation to the process of stakeholders engagement in the design of the Plan from representatives of the following categories?	
NGOs and associations	Yes/No
Employees organizations (e.g. trade unions)	Yes/No
Employers organizations	Yes/No
Others	Yes/No
If "Others", please specify:	
If present, please briefly describe the main reactions, selecting the most relevant from a gender+ perspective (Max 500 words)	



Appendix 2

Grid for the analysis of equivalent policies (for countries not belonging to EU27)

OVERALL INFORMATION	
1. What's the title of this policy?	
2. Please summarize the main features of the policy (max 500 words)	
3. Number of pages in the policy document:	
4. Number of occurrences for the word "gender" in the policy document (Please refer to the Guidelines)	
Space for comments (Please refer to the Guidelines)	
5. Date of issue (MM/YYYY)	
6. Date of entry into force (MM/YYYY)	
7. Name of the Issuing Authority	
8. Validity (e.g., Dec. 2022, or unlimited)	
9. Is there a budget allocated to the policy?	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
If "yes", please specify the volume of the budget	
10. URL: please specify one or more web links to the policy	
11. Geographical scope: Choose among the options.	National/Subnational
If "Subnational", please specify the area	
THE CONTENT	
GENDER INEQUALITIES	
12. Does the policy include projects/actions/measures aimed at mitigating sex/gender inequalities in the following domains? <i>Please, highlight explicit mentions of intersecting inequality grounds, if any</i>	
Gender-Based Violence	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Work and Labour Market	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Economy	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	

Gender pay and pension gaps	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Gender care gap	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Decision-making and politics	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Environmental Justice	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Health	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Education	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
OTHER INEQUALITY GROUNDS	
13. Does the policy include projects/actions/measures aimed at mitigating inequalities for other vulnerable groups related to the following grounds? Please, highlight explicit mentions of intersecting inequality grounds, if any	
Social class/socioeconomic background	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Age	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Disability	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Nationality	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Ethnicity	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Religion/belief	Yes/No

If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Sexual orientation	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Gender Identity	Yes/No
If "yes", please summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
Other	Yes/No
If "yes", please specify and summarise the main measures proposed (Max 200 words)	
SUMMARY	
14. Please provide a concise description (300-500 words) on the overall orientation of the policy from a gender+ perspective. If possible, highlight whether the policy contains actions to mitigate gender+ inequalities taking into account needs that became evident during the pandemic (e.g. the importance of increasing the access to healthcare to socio-economic vulnerable groups, the need to increase support for victims of GBV, the importance of green spaces for people's health, etc.)	
<i>(Optional)</i> Please provide a brief expert assessment on what is missing or is not adequate or sufficient to address gender+ inequalities (Max 600 words)	

THE PROCESS	
15. Has the policy process actively involved (e.g., through hearings or requests for written advice) any of the following stakeholders in preparation of the policy? (please choose one or more of the following options)	
Local authorities	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Trade unions	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Employers organisations	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Business representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Banks and finance representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Healthcare organisations	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Academics and researchers	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Feminist representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
LGBTQI+ representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Social justice organisations	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Elderly representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess

Youth representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Immigrants representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
People with disabilities representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Religious groups representatives	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
Others	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
If "Others", please specify	
In case of the stakeholders' involvement, please briefly describe the process: (Max 200 words)	
16. Did the policy-makers conduct a public consultation through a request to the general public for comments on the draft by publishing it online?	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
If yes, please specify how the process took place: (Max 200 words)	
17. Has a Gender Impact Assessment of the policy been carried out?	Yes/No/Cannot Assess
If yes, please specify how this assessment has been carried out: (Max 200 words)	
REACTIONS FROM THE CIVIL SOCIETY	
18. Have there been any significant positive reactions in relation to gender+ inequalities to the content of the policy from representatives of the following categories?	
NGOs and associations	Yes/No
Employees organizations (e.g. trade unions)	Yes/No
Employers organizations	Yes/No
Others	Yes/No
If "Others", please specify:	
If present, please briefly describe at least three of these reactions selecting the most relevant from a gender+ perspective: (Max 500 words)	
19. Have there been any significant negative reactions in relation to gender+ inequalities to the content of the policy from representatives of the following categories ?	
NGOs and associations	Yes/No
Employees organizations (e.g. trade unions)	Yes/No
Employers organizations	Yes/No
Others	Yes/No
If "Others", please specify:	

If present, please briefly describe at least three of these reactions selecting the most relevant from a gender+ perspective: (Max 500 words)	
20. Have there been any significant reactions in relation to the process of stakeholders engagement in the design of the policy from representatives of the following categories?	
NGOs and associations	Yes/No
Employees organizations (e.g. trade unions)	Yes/No
Employers organizations	Yes/No
Others	Yes/No
If "Others", please specify:	
If present, please briefly describe at least three of these reactions selecting the most relevant from a gender+ perspective: (Max 500 words)	

21. If it is not possible to identify reactions to the specific policy, please describe at least two civil society initiatives aimed at promoting recovery and resilience from the pandemic in a domain connected to the one of policy described. In addition to the content of the initiative, also describe who the promoter is and if possible provide a link to a website. (Max 600 words)	
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Appendix 3

List of references related to CSOs reactions by country

Austria

- News report in the Austrian Broadcasting Agency: www.orf.at from 14 April 2021
- WWF press release of 15 April 2021

Belgium

- The liberal and catholic union: <https://www.aclvb.be/nl/artikels/het-nationaal-plan-voor-herstel-en-veerkracht-een-goed-startpunt-voor-het-herstelbeleid>; <https://www.hetacv.be/actualiteit/campagnes/heropstartplan>).
- Non-profit of the climate movement: <https://www.bondbeterleefmilieu.be/artikel/de-black-box-van-het-belgische-herstelplan>

Cyprus

- Circular No. 566: Speech by the President of the Republic Mr. Nikos Anastasiadis at the presentation of the National Plan for Recovery and Sustainability (17.5.2021), Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation (OEB): <https://www.oeb.org.cy/egkyklios-ar-566-omilia-toy-proedroy-tis-dimokratias-k-nikoy-anastasiadi-stin-paroysiysi-toy-ethnikoy-schediyo-anakampsis-kai-anthektikotitas/>
- <https://www.kathimerini.com.cy/gr/oikonomiki/oikonomia/ypoblithike-to-prosxedio-toy-sxedioy-anakampsis-1-2-dis>

Czech Republic

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