



Women in European Cooperation Projects

Results of “Women In European Cooperation Projects” Survey discussing experiences, challenges and obstacles for women working in the EU projects’ ecosystem and how they can be addressed.

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Summary

The purpose of this document is to share the findings of the “Women in European Cooperation Projects Survey” and follow-up workshop conducted by ERNACT in April-June 2021 and to provide recommendations on actions that project leaders, programme management and organisations involved in EU projects can take to improve the experience of women working in this field.

The modest goal of the survey was to gain insight into the real-world experiences of women working in EU projects and determine if there were areas where ERNACT could make adjustments to the projects we lead that would alleviate or address any challenges identified.

The reach of the survey went much further than anticipated and the response was so impactful that it was decided we should share the results with as wide an audience as possible. We conducted an interactive workshop to gain additional insight on the findings before drawing any final conclusions, with the goal of collectively agreeing on real-world steps that could be taken to have a positive impact.

The results of the survey and subsequent workshop were eye-opening in a number of areas. While the overall working experience of most women in this environment was positive, there were some interesting and some quite disconcerting findings in relation to gender balance, discrimination and travel safety.

Here are some examples:



68% of respondents have to make additional family care arrangements when traveling for EU projects, but only **13%** always get time before or after travel to deal with domestic matters; this is likely a contributor to the **50%** who reported that domestic concerns sometimes discourage them from participating in EU project meetings.

48% of respondents have experienced language or behaviour that is rude, unprofessional or offensive at project meetings.



Opinion is divided on whether there should be mandatory targets for the ratio of men to women on project committees, with **51% in favour** and **49% saying No**.

Safety while traveling is a major concern; approximately **1/2** of women reported having felt unsafe while traveling for EU project meetings.



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Introduction

Inspired by International Women’s Day and our 30th Anniversary, the staff and management of ERNACT made the decision in March 2021 to carry out a survey to develop a better understanding of women’s experiences in this ecosystem and to reflect any findings into ERNACT’s own projects, work practices and policies.

With a 75% female workforce, and a 30-year history in EU projects, ERNACT realised there had been little or no discussion within EU projects on the experiences or needs of female staff in this interregional, transnational and cross-border project ecosystem. So, we decided to take on the challenge of asking questions and identifying where we could take practical steps to enhance the working lives of women in EU projects.

The short questionnaire, released in April 2021, was aimed at women working in fields such as digital transformation, decarbonisation, innovation and entrepreneurship within EU funded projects. The survey was sent to ERNACT’s female colleagues in all roles within current and past projects, with a request to pass the survey on to their co-workers. It was also shared with managing authorities and secretariats, and other stakeholders through ERNACT’s social media channels.

Interest in the survey and feedback in response to it was incredibly positive, and so ERNACT organised an online session (open to women and men across Europe working in the EU project environment) to share the findings and interesting issues that came up in the survey and to get input on potential recommendations to address these shared concerns.

The workshop was hosted by female members of ERNACT’s Interregional Member Committee (IMC) and ERNACT staff members, and the importance of its subject was underlined by a keynote speech from Ms. Irena Reyes, a Member of Cabinet within Commissioner Mariya Gabriel’s Cabinet for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education, and Youth. Ms. Reyes, who has expertise in industrial policy, ethics and artificial intelligence, gender equality and the wellbeing economy, spoke to the participants about gender in the context of Horizon Europe and the efforts being made within the commission to address gender equality.

The comments shared by participants during and after the workshop confirmed its success and the appetite for this type of conversation to continue.

This report is the culmination of the efforts involved in creating and disseminating the survey, reviewing the findings with ERNACT’s staff and female members of its Interregional Management Committee, and discussing the findings and potential recommendations with participants on the Women in EU Projects Workshop.

Some comments received from those who completed the survey.

“Fascinating and long overdue questionnaire. Am eagerly awaiting the results.”

“This is a fantastic survey, well done!”

“Thank you for the invitation to this questionnaire. Good initiative! I am curious about the overall result.”

“There are excellent issues/questions raised in this questionnaire.”

“The creation of this questionnaire is very much welcomed and needed, and I support any further work on this. It was about time to be done something in this respect.”

“Very useful survey, thank you for raising a lot of topics that are often overlooked when working in EU projects and especially when travelling to lesser-known regions.”

“Thank you for organising this questionnaire, which is about an important subject when organising international projects.”

“Thank you for taking this topic into consideration, it feels nice to feel heard and share our experiences.”

“Thank you for conducting this survey. It is the first time my opinion has ever been garnered on EU project engagement as a woman and mother.”

“I never really thought about these issues before completing this survey. These issues are very important, and I am glad they are being discussed. Thanks for asking these questions.”

Findings

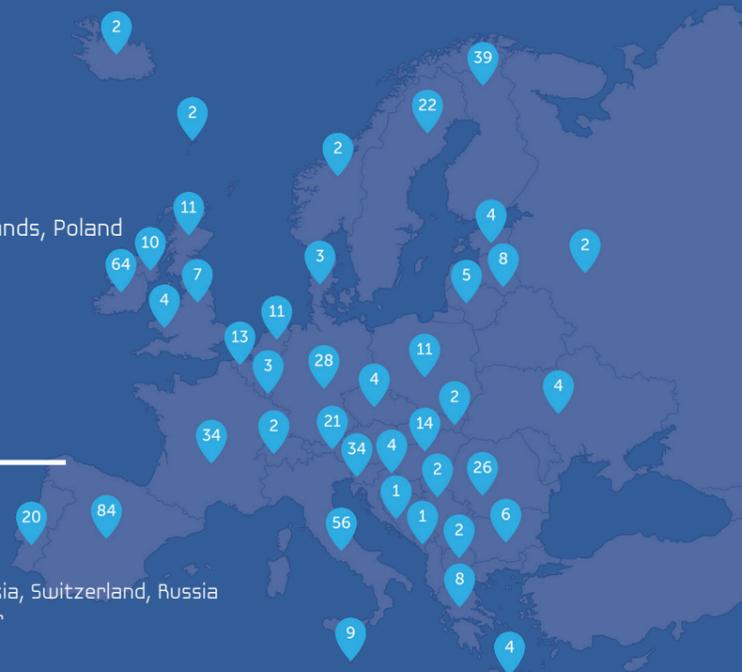
The reach and impact of the Women in EU Projects survey went far beyond expectations. A total of **592** people responded from **44** countries.

The level of response, along with the findings and the comments received, highlighted that this was a timely survey containing questions that needed to be asked.

The survey was directed at women in EU cooperation projects; **586** of the respondents were female, with **5** males and **1** whose gender was not indicated.

Responses by country: 592

84	Spain	20	Portugal
64	Republic of Ireland	14	Hungary
56	Italy	13	Belgium
39	Finland	11	Scotland, Netherlands, Poland
34	France, Slovenia	10	Northern Ireland
28	Germany	9	Malta
26	Romania	8	Greece, Latvia
22	Sweden	7	England
21	Austria	6	Bulgaria



- 5 Lithuania
- 4 Croatia, Crete Island, Czech Republic, Estonia, Ukraine, Wales
- 3 Denmark, Luxembourg
- 2 Faroe Islands, Iceland, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Russia
- 1 Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greenland, Mexico, Montenegro, Other

This geographic diversity was also reflected in their work organisations. As indicated below, **44%** work in public authority organisations, **29%** in universities and research centres, **14%** in community organisations and NGOs, with **13%** indicating "other".

The questions, responses and comments were divided into three main categories, which were then used as the main themes for discussion on the workshop. They are:

- Gender Balance
- Gender Discrimination and Professional Conduct
- Travel Support and Safety

For each theme, we share here the findings, the discussion related to the findings on our workshop, some of the comments on the theme that were shared by respondents and participants, and our recommendations for addressing the issues that were highlighted.

Gender Balance

The Gender Balance findings from the survey give a clear indication that, while the numbers of women working within European cooperation projects is high, there is still work to be done to achieve more balance in terms of position and influence.

96% of respondents believe that it is likely or very likely that the project manager for a project will be female. However, that figure drops to **77%** if the project manager is taking on the "Lead Partner Project Manager" role.

Roles such as Communications Officer and those involving Cost Claim preparation appear to be assumed to be "female" roles, with the expectation of women in those positions being **99%** and **94%** respectively.

These findings appear to confirm the expectation that the higher the level of importance or influence attributed to a role, the higher the likelihood that it will be performed by a male member of staff. Women are expected to be found in "traditionally" female roles, but when it comes to leading or management positions the expectation is that men will perform those roles.

That expectation is borne out also in the results related to senior management representation in EU projects - only **11%** believe it very likely that a women would be in that position, with **46%** indicating that a woman in that role would be unlikely.

How likely are women to have the following roles in EU cooperation projects?			
	Unlikely	Likely	Very Likely
Project Manager (Lead Partner)	23%	55%	22%
Project Manager (Partner)	4%	57%	39%
Project Communications	1%	26%	73%
Cost Claim Preparation	6%	38%	57%
Technical Experts	42%	49%	9%
Political Representative	47%	45%	8%
Senior Management Representative	46%	43%	11%

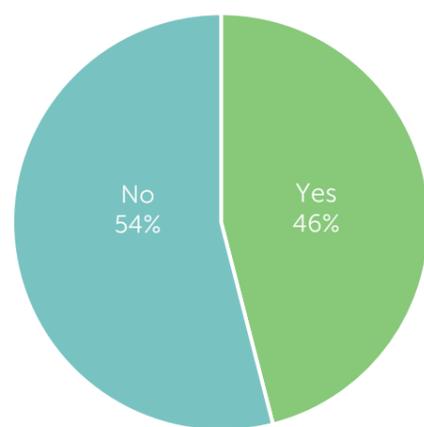
Figure 2: Expectations for women's roles in EU projects

In relation to technical expert positions within European projects, **42%** believe it unlikely for women to be in those roles, and while a slightly larger percentage (**49%**) believe it likely women will be in these roles, only **9%** believe that it is very likely.

In the area of political representation, over **50%** of respondents expect to find a female political representative working in or with their project, although only **8%** find that very likely. As discussed in the workshop, this response most likely points to the diversity of countries represented by the survey respondents, since there are some countries involved in EU projects where gender balance is well on its way to being achieved, while others have a lot of work to do in this area.

When asked whether there is balance between the genders on project committees and whether mandatory targets should be introduced, the findings were essentially split almost equally.

Should there be mandatory targets for the ratio of women and men on project committees?



Do you think there is an equal balance of men and women on project committees?

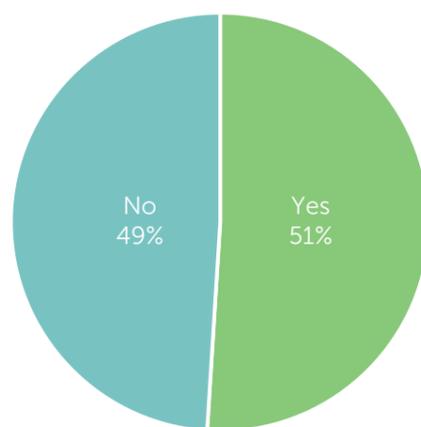


Figure 3: Gender Balance and Targets

Comments submitted by respondents to the survey confirmed the strong feelings on either side of the mandatory target question, while many also felt conflicted or “torn” on the topic of targets. They accept that mandatory targets go against the concept of attaining senior roles through skill and experience alone. However, they also understand that, where there are clear examples of bias or discrimination, having just one individual in a senior management or higher political role who implicitly understands the issues and how they can be addressed, means they can use the influence of their position to increase visibility and push for changes more quickly.

As stated during the workshop, in some settings, where awareness or acceptance of gender bias and discrimination is not widespread, or where the pace of change is unacceptably slow, a gradual evolution towards eliminating the problem will not work; what is required is that people with experience of the bias are put in decision-making positions where they can empower others to address the inequalities.



“Women are often involved for project management and reporting but not for the decision-making process. Steering Committee members are mostly men. But its more national inequality in the body structures.”

“If you develop specific guidelines or forum, it should focus more on equality and respect of people as humans, rather than on women.”

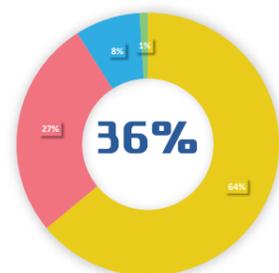
“Women are part of the system so, it is important that men are also aware of the issues and also stand and support those topics.”

“I don’t believe in quotas or specific gender-based boards (whether only for women or men).”

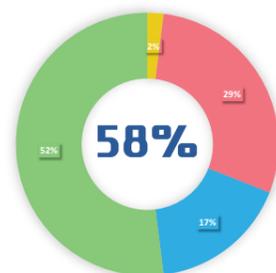
Gender Discrimination & Professional Conduct

Responses to the questions asked under this theme - and some of the comments shared by women who participated in the survey - have confirmed that there is much work to be done in this area and that there are many instances of unacceptable behaviour, both in workplace settings and at "after work" events.

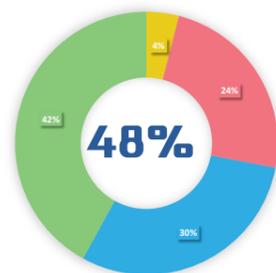
I feel encouraged to participate in meeting discussion and decision making:



I have experienced sexism/gender discrimination during meetings:



I have experienced language or behaviour which is rude, unprofessional or offensive:



■ Mostly/Often
 ■ Sometimes
 ■ Not Often
 ■ Never

36% of respondents **do not** always feel encouraged to participate in meeting discussions and decision-making. This figure on its own might indicate poor meeting management rather than a gender-related issue. However, the response to the two subsequent questions would indicate that there is a gender-based problem within the EU projects' workplace setting.

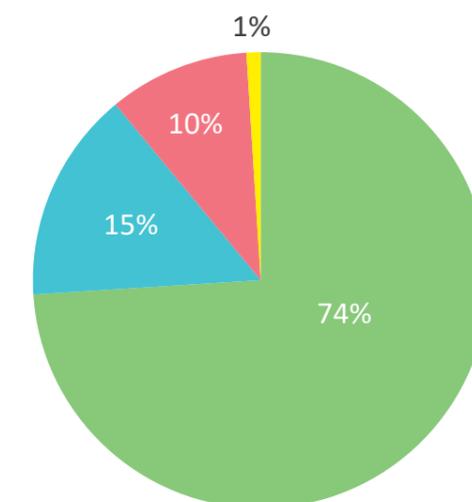
58% of respondents report having some experience of sexism or gender bias/discrimination during EU project meetings. **48%** have experienced rude, unprofessional or offensive language or behaviour in our working environment.

Participants in the workshop discussed the topics of: training needed to prevent harassment in the workplace; teaching everyone the basics of professional etiquette; how to run meetings; how to communicate professionally and effectively, etc. It is up to individual organisations to make this type of training available to their employees and to encourage active participation.

ERNACT's suggestion of a **Code of Conduct** that partners would agree to at the beginning of a project was widely welcomed as a means to generate open conversation regarding the behaviour expected from all members during and outside of meetings and events and to ensure that there is a clear set of guidelines to which all parties must adhere. There was also some discussion around the fact that there are horizontal principles related to equality between men and women laid out in EU funding programmes, but no clear guidelines or requirements as to how those principles should be implemented, with general agreement that a partner-focused code of conduct could be a good first step towards meeting the goal of those principles.

The response to one question in particular stood out. The question was "have you experienced behaviour from partner colleagues that made you feel uncomfortable or unsafe during or after project social events (e.g., project dinners)?" Although **74%** reported that they had never experienced this type of behaviour, an unacceptably high percentage of **26%** have been made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe through the behaviour of their colleagues.

Question: Have you experienced behaviour from partner colleagues that made you uncomfortable or unsafe during or after project social events (e.g., project dinners?)



■ Never
 ■ Once
 ■ More than once
 ■ Often

74% have never had this experience - but over a quarter of women who responded have !

In ERNACT's internal discussions, and in the workshop, there was repeated acknowledgement that there are societal issues at play here and this is not an "EU Projects" issue alone. However, in line with the overall goal of the survey itself, we focused on the practical steps that could be taken to reduce or eliminate instances of this behaviour within our project environment.

Within ERNACT, we decided that establishing a **Code of Conduct** that partners would agree could go some way towards highlighting the issues, ensuring that everyone has the same information as to what is expected of them as they work together, and making it understood what is considered acceptable behaviour.

There was overwhelming agreement on the idea of a **Code of Conduct** on the workshop, with comments such as...

“Yes, there should be a code of conduct to remind everyone of the issues highlighted in the results of the survey and to ensure they can be addressed.”

“It’s a good idea but sad that it’s needed! Content: Respect for all participants. Behave professionally throughout the project (even after official parts of meetings, etc.)”

“Yes. [The Code of Conduct] ... should be inclusive to address respectful behaviour to all partners including gender issues.”

“Absolutely. It should include a section on being respectful over all forms of communication (e.g., email). I, for one, have experienced shocking sexism over email during project management.”

“Yes, it needs to be made clear that micro-aggressions, sexist/homophobic/racist jokes and so on are not appropriate. Also, there should be guidance around making sure that women feel able to speak out in meetings.”

Ideally, there should be a standard code of conduct adopted across all projects and within all programmes, but in the meantime, those of us who are leading or participating in EU projects can start making improvements on the ground within our own projects to change the work culture, so these types of incidents no longer occur. A suggested **Code of Conduct** will be discussed further in the **Recommendations** section.

“Need to empower females & males in senior positions to take an active role in promoting good practice.”

“I can only commend every individual I have ever worked with in regard to their professionalism and enthusiasm for the work they do within the EU project framework.”

“There should be training on business protocols and EU standards on effectively managing instances of sexist comments or behaviour.”

“In my experience the working climate in EU projects is generally respectful and friendly.”

“Social behaviour rules should be discussed to increase awareness toward gender balance in project teams”

“I have never felt different from men during my participation in European projects.”

“Sexism is a cultural issue not specific to EU projects - organisational cultures need to be changed.”

Travel Support and Safety

The questions asked in the survey under this theme related to the practical issues facing women working in the EU projects environment, which, by its very nature, requires a significant amount of travel to project meetings, seminars, and events. We acknowledge that it is not within our power to change organisational or programme policies regarding travel arrangements or considerations, but we can focus on identifying areas of challenge or difficulty and determining practical steps we can take to alleviate them.

The first questions related to the practicalities of dealing with childcare and other carer-based arrangements before, during and after travel. The responses indicated that not having support in this area can often be a barrier or deterrent to women participating or advancing their careers in European projects.

68% of respondents must (sometimes, often or always) make carer arrangements in order to travel.

Regarding employers giving additional time to deal with domestic/family matters before or after trips:



50% of women report that domestic/family duties sometimes, always or often discourage them from participating in EU project meetings.

One of the alarming results here was that only 27% often or always have support in the form of additional time from their employers to deal with domestic matters before or after trips, which means that almost three quarters of those responding either never or only sometimes have that support and are therefore under pressure both at home and at work before and after traveling. We believe that we can safely assume that this lack, or inadequate level, of support contributes to the figure of 50% of respondents indicating that domestic duties discourage them from participating in EU projects.

While accepting that we cannot directly impact organisational policies, we can, as a collective group, raise awareness of the issue of travel support by sharing these survey results and the subsequent discussion outcomes. Also, as lead partners, managing authorities and meeting organisers, we can make practical changes to how we plan, organise, communicate and conduct EU project meetings so that they place as little burden as possible on the participants who need to travel to attend them. These practical steps in alleviating travel support issues will be discussed further at the end of this section and in the **Recommendations** section.

The next set of questions related to respondents' preferences in relation to the type of information provided, and arrangements made, by those organising EU project meetings.

When traveling for EU project meetings, how important is it that the host party provides the following?

- Comprehensive travel and hotel information in advance – **90% agree**
- Outside of capital cities, hosting party organises transport from airport to hotel – **71% agree**

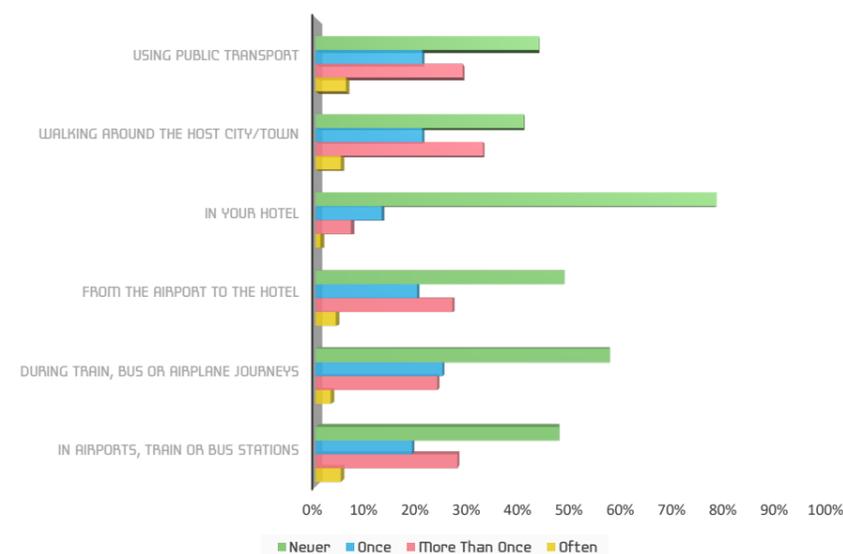
For hotel bookings, what are your preferences?

- **58%** prefer getting recommendations and making their own booking
- **22%** prefer the host specify/reserve a single hotel for meeting/staying
- **20%** prefer to make their own booking

The vast majority agree that having comprehensive travel and hotel information in advance is very important, both from a practical arrangement perspective and in terms of feeling safe while traveling. One "hot topic", which came up multiple times in the comments, was transportation from the airport to the hotel, especially for those whose only choice is to arrive late in the evening, due to their starting location and travel options. In the comments submitted with the survey, there were a few examples given where women paid at their own personal expense for taxis to the hotel because they were concerned about the safety of using public transport at night.

Choice appeared to be the main focus in relation to hotel bookings, since many may wish to stay in the hotel in which the meeting is held (if that is an option) but there may be others who would prefer not to. Those findings may, in some cases, relate to the safety topics that were the addressed in the next set of questions.

While travelling for EU projects, have you ever felt unsafe in these situations?



- **52%** have felt unsafe in airports, bus or train stations
- **51%** have felt unsafe when traveling from the airport to the hotel
- **59%** have felt unsafe when walking around the host city or town
- **56%** have felt unsafe using public transport in or traveling to the host city

One of the most alarming findings from the survey was that approximately half of all women who responded have felt unsafe at some point during travel for EU project meetings.

While we cannot control societal impacts on safety, we can, as managing authorities and lead partners, and hosting partners, raise awareness among organisations of the travel safety concerns their employees face, and we can establish practical support in the form of guidelines and recommendations as to the types of information and/or services host cities should provide to their guests in advance and while traveling.

Participants on the workshop were in overwhelming agreement with the idea of creating and sharing a set of travel guidelines and offered their suggestions on the contents, including those listed below.



"Travel should only occur Monday to Friday, so this should be considered within the planning of agendas for project meetings."

"Clearly, the host should provide recommendations for accommodation and transport, and if possible, arrange some group transport. Perhaps they could also help participants to get in touch with each other, so they can travel together, share a taxi, etc."

"I strongly believe the host should organise transport for women traveling from the airport to their hotel."

"EU Project work was not included in my employer's Health & Safety Policy. The employer insisted "travel time doesn't count".

"Limits placed on international travel within any given period (e.g., per 2 months?)."

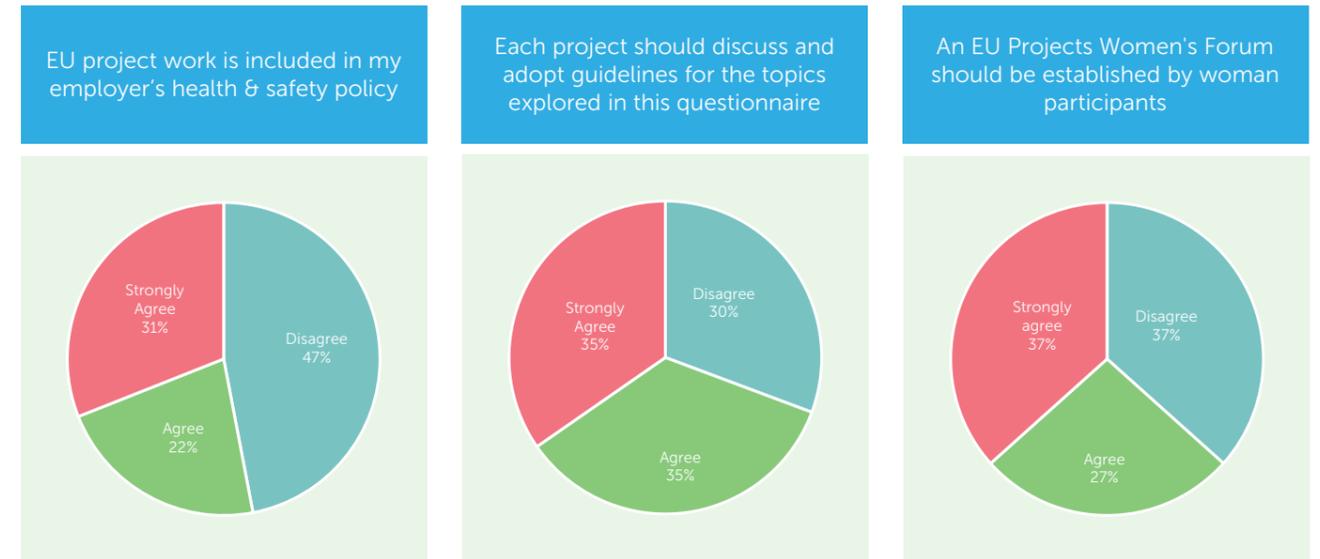
"I believe safety should be the priority and the cost should not be put on the individual whilst carrying out EU work."

"While I have taken public transport in the past at times such as very early mornings and late evenings I prefer, and have paid for at my own expense, the cost of a taxi so that I feel safer."

"Ask hosts to book travel to and from the airport automatically. Also, ask them to provide any relevant information about potentially unsafe areas/spaces the visitor may encounter."

"Learning from travel restrictions must include the opportunity to meet virtually... not all the time, as personal connections are important... but if a meeting location is not easily accessible, then virtual attendance needs to be offered as an option."

At the end of the survey, three broad questions were asked to determine the respondents' opinions on how the topics raised in the questionnaire are handled by their employers and their project teams, and what should be done with the information gathered in the results.



These "larger picture" questions identified that close to half of all respondents' employers do not address the issues related to EU project travel in their health and safety policies, that **70%** of respondents would like to see the topics explored in the questionnaire discussed and guidelines adopted within their projects, and that **73%** would like to see a Women's Forum established.

Again, while we cannot directly make policy changes within organisations or programmes, having these discussions and sharing the recommendations should help push the issues higher on the agenda, for organisations and for projects and programmes.

On the topic of a Women's Forum, while there are outstanding questions related to the exact structure of such a forum, and whether it should be specifically for women's issues or a more general Equality Forum, the concept of having a place where people working in EU Projects could share their ideas, questions and concerns and receive comments, suggestions, and assistance from their peers was agreed upon. As raised on the workshop, the question of which organisation or group would host such a forum remains outstanding and will be followed up by ERNACT through contact with relevant organisations within the EU projects' ecosystem.

The participants on the workshop were asked what they would like to be achieved from these efforts. Some of their responses are listed below.

"Present the findings to the EU-funding Authorities. This would be in hope that eventually organisations that participate in EU projects would sign a commitment to consider the guidelines within their project management and implementation."

"Establish a way of being able to report on how policies have been actioned throughout the lifetime of an EU project."

"Organisations participating in EU projects should have to address all these issues as part of any application for EU Funding."

"Encourage the use of organisation codes of conduct and care of duty statement are important for all."

"I think the survey report should be send to all EU agencies funding projects and the methodology shared with other similar networks."

"I think an equality forum should be set up across all EU projects with representatives from each level in each country to ensure that safety and equality guidelines are established that all organisations must adhere to be approved for EU funding."

"Regular events like this one; inform the EC and other organizations about the statistics; prepare guidelines for different topics; set up online community to learn from each other."

"Suggest sharing with the funding programmes as can give a top-down practical guide template for implementation to future projects."

It appears that there is a clear appetite for the continuation and expansion of the type of discussion this survey has raised. Several participants suggested, since the EU project funding programmes have requirements in relation to equality built-in, that we, as a group, could work with them to establish recommendations or guidelines that would help organisations that participate in these projects to meet those stated goals.

"To have an equality plan and/or guidelines for the topics explored in the questionnaire by the institutions involved in EU projects, should be compulsory or at least part of the Applications assessment."

"If you develop specific guidelines or forum, it should more focus on equality and respect of people as humans."

"I like the idea of complementing the project policies with guidelines on these issues."

"...I understand the usefulness of an EU Projects Women's Forum, [but] I would not exclude men from this kind of important discussions. I think it should be a whole society issue."

"An EU Projects Women's Forum is an excellent and very practical suggestion and should certainly be adopted and implemented as soon as possible."

"EU Projects Women's Forum should be established by women and men participants with different age range, profession and experience in order to be representative."

"Regarding the 'EU Projects Women's Forum' should be established by woman participants" I believe we will make a difference if there are men included in such events/changes."

Conclusions

Our goal with the Women in EU Projects survey, the workshop and this report, was to identify and highlight the issues and challenges facing women in EU projects, and to collate and share practical advice and recommendations that we believe will alleviate them. While acknowledging that the issues raised are not specific to EU projects but are human and societal issues that are dealt with in all work environments, the scope of this effort was to identify the issues particular to this ecosystem and to take a pragmatic approach in attempting to improve the working lives of women in this environment.

Throughout all stages of this process, the following were identified as the most striking - and in some cases disturbing - findings:

- » **50% of women report that domestic/family duties discourage them from participating in EU project meetings.**
- » **58% report having experienced sexism or gender bias/discrimination during project meetings.**
- » **48% have experienced rude, unprofessional or offensive language or behaviour in our working environment.**
- » **26% have been made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe through the behaviour of their colleagues.**
- » **Over half of the respondents reported having felt unsafe at some point during their travel for EU project meetings.**
- » **70% of respondents would like to see the topics explored in the questionnaire discussed and guidelines adopted within their projects.**
- » **73% would like to see a Women's (Equality) Forum established.**

While there was acknowledgement that women are well represented within EU projects, the findings appeared to confirm the belief that the higher the level of influence or power, the less likely one is to find a woman in that role.

The concept of quotas split opinion almost evenly, with people on both sides of the argument having concerns about loss of valuable competency and experience with and without quotas, depending on their perspective. Among those who chimed in on the subject on the workshop, however, the consensus appeared to be that the potential risk of a marginally less qualified person being put into a decision-making role due to quotas was outweighed by the potential good that would come from that person being in a position where they can influence and address areas of bias or discrimination.

Ms. Irina Reyes with the EU Commission highlighted in her keynote speech that the Commission now requires gender balance in projects, with accompanying additional efforts being made to ensure there is adequate representation of women in senior management. Now that gender balance is a condition that must be met in order to receive some European funding, it is hoped that more of those in positions of power will work to address balance issues in real terms.

In relation to gender bias, discrimination and unprofessional conduct, the responses and comments from those who responded to the survey bear witness to the fact that these issues are not only making working life difficult and uncomfortable for many but are still impeding the progress of women in EU projects. Another major concern is that the potential of the programme is not being fully realised. With the majority of women in this work environment reporting incidences of sexism or gender bias and almost half reporting unprofessional or offensive language or behaviour, it is clear there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure gender equality and respect for all in EU projects.

Travel is a very important component of the work accomplished in EU projects. While online communication means we can "meet" with our partners and colleagues without ever leaving home, there is no denying that the in-person communication generated through meetings, seminars, study visits and conferences, and sometimes more importantly, in those more casual settings in between, are what make our projects successful.

Traveling for work is often seen as a burden. For those who need to make arrangements for others while they are away, that burden can be overwhelming - especially if they are not receiving support in terms of the time needed to make those arrangements in advance and to adjust when returning. And if they have not received adequate information or assistance to ensure their travel experience is safe, that burden is compounded by stress, and in some cases personal cost, which ultimately leads to people (in most cases women) being put off participating in project meetings. At least one participant in the survey reported that the lack of support she received in managing travel and family arrangements led her to turn down opportunities to travel for work, which in turn impacted her ability to progress in her career.

As a group, we cannot change the policies of the employing organisations whose staff attend EU project meetings, but we can raise awareness of the issues so they will hopefully be addressed. We cannot change the fact that sometimes travel is unsafe, but we can provide recommendations that those organising events can follow to ensure that their visitors are as informed and safe as possible.

A Women's Forum - one which would address equality for all and would not exclude men - was seen as an important means to further the efforts to address the gender-related issues discussed in the survey and workshop. The question of what organising should host it, what form it should take, etc. is still outstanding and efforts to progress it to fruition will continue.

Across all the topics covered through the survey and explored further in the workshop, the importance of raising awareness of these issues, and especially with men, was a theme that came up repeatedly. The importance of this factor was reinforced by a male participant on the workshop, Brian Boyle, the Chair of the ERNACT Interregional Management Committee, who commented that he had found the workshop eye-opening; sharing, as an example, that he had been taken aback at the statistics related to travel safety and behaviour concerns and that it had opened his eyes to issues that he had not had to personally consider before.

As a group, we must continue to strive to make the changes that are within our control, and to push the limitations of that control by talking about these issues, addressing the localised occurrences of bias and sharing the outcomes and recommendations arrived at through this effort among our peers and management.

Recommendations

The most fundamental recommendation to come out of this process is that we all need to work to raise and maintain awareness of the survey findings and issues highlighted throughout this process so we can break down the barriers that inhibit the progress of women in EU projects, and allow the full potential of EU cooperation programmes to be realised.

Gender balance issues are more likely to be recognised and addressed if those impacted by them continue to raise their concerns.

Gender bias, discrimination and unprofessional conduct will not be allowed to hinder the progress of women if these issues are brought out into the open and discussed so that those currently perpetuating them are made aware of the impact of their words and actions and can therefore no longer be excused by the concept of unconscious bias. Programme managing authorities and auditors play an important role in addressing these issues.

The issues that women have raised about the lack of support around travel arrangements and the very real safety concerns they face when traveling for project work will hopefully be addressed by employers and hosting organisations once they are made aware of them and provided with recommendations as to how to deal with them.

Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct that identifies how the team members will interact with each other can be shared and agreed upon by everyone in a project, allowing for the conversation to be had as to how everyone should be treated and ensuring that everyone on the team has the same understanding from the outset as to what constitutes acceptable behaviour. A sample Code of Conduct is shared in Appendix 1.

Safe Travel Guidelines

While acknowledging that we cannot change organisational policies or the safety issues that are inherent with any travel, we can, as project leaders, participants and hosts, take steps to provide clear, complete and practical information and advice to support those traveling to project meetings. Guidelines on the type of steps to be taken and information provided when planning events, incorporating the suggestions and recommendations of those who participated in the workshop, are in Appendix 2.

Acknowledgements & Bibliography

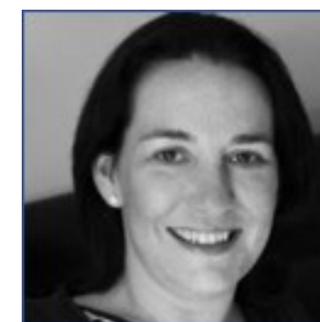
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Irina Reyes, Member of Cabinet, who was gracious in committing her time to share her work on gender equality priorities and actions within the EU Commission. Some links to resources provided by Irina are provided in the **Resources** section.

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Inma Valencia
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Pia Kattelus
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Resources

Links provided by Irina Reyes:

- <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/33b4c99f-2e66-11eb-b27b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>
- https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-citizens-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en
- <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/667d9e3e-2e03-11eb-b27b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>
- <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-budgeting>
- <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-law-and-publications/publication-detail/-/publication/51704c8d-ca5f-11eb-84ce-01aa75ed71a1>

Links provided by URBACT representatives during the workshop:

- <http://www.womarts.eu/upload/01-LI-WOMART-1-20-6.pdf>
- <https://urbact.eu/gender-equal-cities>

Links provided by European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE):

- <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/sexism-at-work-handbook/part-1-understand/sexism-work>
- Gender Toolkit | European Institute for Gender Equality (europa.eu)
- A toolkit, training and an awareness campaign | European Institute for Gender Equality (europa.eu)
- Toolkit on gender-sensitive communication | European Institute for Gender Equality (europa.eu)

Appendix 1 – Code of Conduct

We, the partners participating in [Project Name] agree to the following ground rules in our commitment to making our meetings and interactions enjoyable and productive:



We always treat all team members with respect and courtesy



We communicate respectfully through all means (via email, calls, video conferences, in person, etc.)



We are considerate of each other's time in traveling to and participating in meetings



We think before speaking, listen with open minds and, when necessary, challenge the problem and not the person



We take ownership of the project, participate in discussions and decision-making, offer ideas and solutions, meet our deadlines, and work together to ensure a successful outcome.

Appendix 2 – Safe Travel Guidelines

Hosts:

- Confirm the location and dates for the event with project participants well in advance of the meeting (avoiding the national holidays of all participants and the need for weekend travel, if possible).
- Conduct an assessment to determine the best locations for the event and accommodation, which hotels to recommend and whether transport to the hotel from the station or airport needs to be arranged.
- Provide a comprehensive event programme package that includes:



- Appoint a member of staff to meet the participants on the first day to answer any questions.
- Appoint a member of staff, the **event emergency contact**, that participants can contact in case of emergency during their journey.
- Maintain an up-to-date, real-time register of the participants, their travel plans, hotels, arrival and departure dates and times, and contact details.
- Provide details for travelling from the hotel to event venues and between events.

Participants:

- Communicate with the event host in advance of travel to ensure you have the information needed for a safe trip.
- Discuss “time-in lieu” requirements with your employer before making your plans.
- Allow sufficient time to travel safely from your home to the departure station or airport.
- Plan train or plane journeys to arrive at the event location in the afternoon, if possible.
- Agree with your employer in advance to take a taxi from the station or airport to the hotel, rather than using public transport, if you consider it is safer to do so.
- Provide details of your travel plan (destination, dates, hotel, mobile number, host organisation contact person, etc.) to your employer and to the host **event emergency contact**.
- Obtain contact details for the host organisation’s **event emergency contact** to call in case of emergency while traveling.



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