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D5.4 Report on policy workshop

with policy makers at EU and other governance levels

Grant Agreement n°. 101084234



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the European Union**





VERSION HISTORY

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¹ PU= Public, SEN= Sensitive.



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ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

CO	Project Coordinator
DTC	Direct-to-consumer
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
CoP	Community of Practice
FLIARA	Female-led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas
PPW	Policy practice workshop
SSC	Short supply chain
WP	Work Package(s)

1 PROJECT PARTNERS

Galway	NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND GALWAY
TU Delft	TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITEIT DELFT
TEAGASC	TEAGASC - AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
UNICAL	UNIVERSITA DELLA CALABRIA
LWL	LONGFORD WOMEN'S LINK CLG
UTU	TURUN YLIOPISTO
UL	UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI
CE	CONSULTA EUROPA PROJECTS AND INNOVATION SL
HNEE	HOCHSCHULE FUR NACHHALTIGE ENTWICKLUNG EBERSWALDE
ELARD	ASSOCIATION EUROPEENNE LEADER POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT RURAL
OUULU	OULUN YLIOPISTO
ECOLISE	RESEAU EUROPEEN POUR DES INITIATIVES COMMUNAUTAIRES SUR LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES ET LE DEVELOPPEMENT DURABLE
MENDELU	MENDELOVA UNIVERZITA V BRNE
LNU	LINNEUNIVERSITETET
HLK	HOGSKOLAN FOR LARANDE OCH KOMMUNIKATION I JONKOPING - HLK SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report synthesises the results of an in-depth, policy workshop on improving the infrastructures supporting women-led innovations in rural areas, as convened by the FLIARA project in Brussels, on 17th October 2025. Discussions focused on seven core networks crucial to rural women's empowerment and participation: Social, Financial Security Work-Life Balance, Economic, Advisory, Learning, and Political. Each network's challenges, proposed solutions, and actionable policies were analysed across numerous group sessions.

Key takeaways include the urgent necessity for integrated, holistic policy frameworks that address interconnected challenges, ranging from care responsibilities, financial vulnerability, and access barriers to leadership, to digital skills gaps and structural discrimination. Recommendations emphasize tailored and sustained support for rural women's work-life balance, access to finance and advisory services, empowered mentorship and learning, and true participation in local and national policymaking. Only through robust local empowerment, cross-sector investment, gender-sensitive legislation, and continuous capacity-building can rural women's full contributions to agricultural and rural development be unleashed.

A short 1-page Policy brief: supporting women innovating in rural areas is included.



2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 BACKGROUND AND GOAL OF THE FLIARA POLICY WORKSHOP

During the final FLIARA conference, a multi-actor policy workshop was held at the facilities of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels on October 17th, 2025, as part of the final FLIARA conference. The workshop followed a series of earlier policy workshops organized within the four FLIARA Communities of Practice (CoP) events in Ireland (January 2024), Slovenia (September 2024), Italy (January 2025), and Sweden (May, 2025). During these sessions, participants were invited to elaborate on challenges they had encountered and how they worked around and overcame them. This process aimed to analyse improvements needed in infrastructures supporting women-led innovations in agriculture and rural areas and to identify the need for changes to policy and funding systems at the EU, national, and local levels.

Building on the outcomes of the previous CoP workshops and the policy briefs proposed by FLIARA consortium members as part of Work Package 5 (Policy Design and Assessment) between October 2024 and October 2025, a framework of seven key networks for unlocking women's potential was developed, forming the foundation for this final policy workshop (see Table 1). The idea of the importance of these networks builds on the Foresight and Trend Analysis work package of FLIARA, in which it was established that participation in networks was both an opportunity and a threat for the role of women in innovations towards rural sustainability. While the previous workshops often focused on national or local levels, this final workshop focused on policy issues at the EU level.

2.2 WORKSHOP SET-UP, MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

An introduction to the networks and the workshop structure was provided prior to the session (Figure 1, Table 1).

All participants were divided into 14 groups, each composed of approximately 6–9 people, including a facilitator and/or notetaker from the consortium. In some groups, there were two different individuals. The composition of the groups was carefully managed, prior to the event, to ensure a wide variety of perspectives and backgrounds.

Each group was asked to discuss two networks relevant to female-led innovations in agriculture and rural areas. This methodology meant that each network was analysed by four different groups, allowing for diverse feedback.

During the workshop, information detailing each network was displayed on posters (Figure 2). The discussions incorporated ideas from the drafts of policy briefs being developed within the FLIARA project. Notes were generally captured directly on posters (Figures 2, 4 and 12), though smaller formats were used occasionally (Figure 8).



Network	What is it about	Policy measures to improve infrastructures
Social Network	Care for children, parents and seniors.	Measures improving childcare, care for elderly, school systems.
Safety Network (financial)	Overcoming financial challenges in issues of health, income, divorce, etc.	Improve the social security net, legal status of women, and access to finance
Working/Life network	Enabling a healthy work-life balance	Farmer relief services. Ensure a more equal division of care responsibilities.
Economic network	Networks to trade and marketise products	Support commercializing products, Direct to Consumer and Short Supply Chains.
Advisory network	Access to tailor-made advice	Develop a rural advisory network that meets the needs of innovative women
Learning network	Peer-to-peer contacts with other innovators. Life-long learning.	Provide opportunities to recognize and meet peers. Increase learning opportunities tailored for needs.
Political network	Access to political decision-making power and representation	Organise public participation, meet with (potential) innovators
Source: FLIARA		

Table 1 Networks and policies



2.3 PROCESSING OF WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS

The following sections present a synthesised narrative of the key outcomes from discussions on each network by four different groups. Elaborations by facilitators and notetakers were collected, analysed and merged.

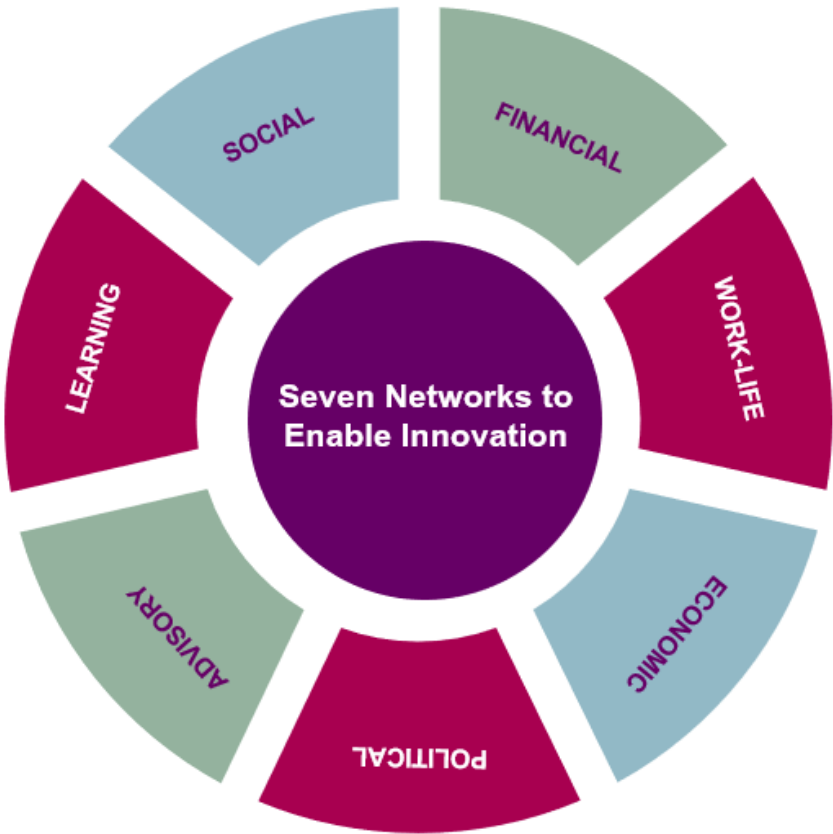


Figure 1: The Seven Networks



Figure 2: Poster Social Network at Policy Workshop - Simon Blackley Photography

3 SOCIAL NETWORK

Social Network refers to the structures, relationships, and support systems that facilitate the organisation of care for children, parents, schooling, and elderly in rural settings. It encompasses policies and practices that help balance family responsibilities with work, enabling women to pursue entrepreneurship and innovation. Essential components include adequate parental leave, high-quality and affordable childcare, and improved care for the elderly, all intended to foster well-being and empowerment for rural women, particularly in agriculture and community settings.

3.1 IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

- **Family and Work-Life Balance:** Many rural women are self-employed or run small businesses, facing barriers to taking time off due to inadequate public support and difficult insurance conditions.
- **Childcare and Elderly Care Demands:** High costs and lack of available childcare or eldercare facilities put pressure on families, making it difficult for women to participate in work or community life.



- **Social Norms and Marginalisation:** Prevailing social norms in rural areas may discourage women and men from making use of available parental leave and social services, reinforcing marginalisation and isolation.
- **Depopulation and Community Fragmentation:** Outmigration from rural areas causes decreased vitality, fewer opportunities, and weakened local social networks.
- **Access to Internet and Connectivity:** Many businesses and social activities require reliable internet, but rural areas often lack adequate broadband infrastructure.
- **Domestic Violence, Poverty, and Social Exclusion:** Women face additional risks due to violence, poverty, and exclusion, which further limit their participation and well-being.

3.2 PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- **Education and Awareness Programmes:** Industry organisations and local governments should provide education on work-life balance, parental benefits, and the importance of maintaining robust social networks, particularly opening agriculture and rural business opportunities to women.
- **Generational Renewal Strategies:** Policy actions should support generational renewal by empowering young women and new families to settle and work in rural areas (both in farming and other sectors), including targeted information campaigns and incentives.
- **Integrated Policy Approaches:** Piecemeal action is not sufficient; holistic integration across agricultural, business, infrastructure, and health sectors is necessary to improve social support networks.
- **Practical Supports for Families:** Expanded practical support, such as meal and income supplements, social prescribing, and stronger professional support networks to address mental health, social isolation, and empowerment.
- **Community-Led Networking Activities:** Municipalities should create part-time paid positions for villagers to manage online and offline community networks, facilitating social platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and organising local events to strengthen connections.
- **Improved Broadband and Infrastructure Investment:** National and local governments should prioritise broadband infrastructure to enable economic activity and online community building.



3.3 POLICY PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE SOCIAL NETWORKS

- **Enhanced Parental Leave and Insurance Schemes:** Design and implement parental leave systems and insurance schemes that are practical and accessible for self-employed women and small business owners in rural areas.
- **Tax Relief and Financial Incentives:** Offer tax incentives and relief for workers and parents engaged in care-related sectors. One of the participants referred to models from Sweden, Japan, Singapore, and Australia but was not certain about the merits of each of these.
- **Cross-Country Comparisons and Evidence-Based Practice:** Leverage best practices from other countries to guide policy improvements, such as free school meals, local decision-making, and inclusivity in care services.
- **Public Funding for Childcare and Afterschool Programmes:** Increase public investment in high-quality childcare and afterschool programmes to reduce cost barriers for rural families.
- **Role of Municipalities:** Encourage decision making at the municipal level to ensure closer alignment with actual community needs and context, facilitating local innovation and leadership in social networking.
- **Improve services to support women's well-being:** One of the ideas was to promote innovative models like social prescribing (based on the idea that social factors determine health and that social support may be helpful to promote women's health) and the development of *women's sheds*, shared spaces offering support, mental health resources, and peer networks.
- **Investments in Rural Development Projects:** Uphold and expand support for LEADER and similar rural development initiatives that build vibrant, attractive communities through local project funding (including to women innovators).
- **Holistic, Long-Term Solutions:** Shift from isolated, short-term interventions to sustained, holistic strategies that address interconnected issues of childcare, eldercare, education, social inclusion, and connectivity.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The workshop outcomes make clear that building a resilient, supportive social network for rural women in agriculture and rural areas requires broad, integrated policy action and local empowerment. The central principles are flexibility, inclusivity, and community-driven solutions enabled by effective public investment and policy adaptation. Emphasising education, generational renewal, infrastructural improvements, and strong support networks will allow rural women both to balance family and work life effectively and to be active leaders in the future of agriculture and rural communities.



Figure 3: Discussion on Social Network - Simon Blackley Photography



Figure 4: Discussion And Note-Taking On The Social Network - Simon Blackley Photography



4 SAFETY NETWORK

Safety Network refers to a comprehensive framework of financial, legal, and social supports designed to ensure the economic security and resilience of rural women, particularly those in agriculture and rural areas. The Safety Network addresses challenges such as health crises, divorce, loss of income, and other vulnerable moments by safeguarding women's financial positions. It also aims to empower women in entrepreneurship, secure legal recognition, and close gender gaps in pay and opportunities through easily accessible policies, targeted funding, and proactive outreach.

4.1 IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

- **Complex Information Landscape:** Vital support information is hard to navigate and is spread across numerous sources, making it difficult for women to access comprehensive help.
- **Financial Barriers for Entrepreneurs:** Rural women starting new businesses often lack credit history or access to flexible loans, with bureaucracy and spatial inequality compounding the issue.
- **Legal and Pension Recognition:** Many women are not recognised as farmers on legal documents, which compromises future entitlements, succession rights, and independent pension coverage.
- **Succession Planning Bias:** Farm succession and inheritance often favour male family members, limiting opportunities for daughters and female partners.
- **Underrepresentation and Visibility:** There is a lack of visibility for women's activities and achievements in rural government structures and data, leading to underrepresentation and ineffective advocacy.
- **Changing Social Mentalities:** Deep-rooted bias and stereotypes slow progress towards gender equality in pay, work recognition, and leadership roles in agriculture.

4.2 PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- **Centralised Information Portal:** Develop a one-stop hub (at a national or even regional level), such as an online portal or a consolidated document, compiling all relevant financial, educational, and entrepreneurial support information for rural women, streamlining access and reducing confusion.



- **Flexible, Supportive Loan Systems:** Governments should create state-supported, low-interest loans with flexible terms, specifically tailored to the needs of female entrepreneurs and atypical farm operations.
- **Legal Registration and Pension Reform:** Mandate that both spouses in a farming family are officially registered farmers, with independent pension contributions, ensuring lifelong work is legally and financially recognised.
- **Proactive Succession Outreach:** Implement consultancy programmes or outreach policies where advisors actively visit farms, encourage early succession planning, and promote equal participation of women in inheritance discussions.
- **Education and Communication:** Increase education and communication about succession planning, legal rights, and entrepreneurship starting with family involvement; promote awareness of opportunities and responsibilities for all genders.
- **Support for Unpaid and Informal Work:** Recognise unpaid work in official accounts and policies for employment, work-life balance, and gender mainstreaming; promote the visibility of informal labour especially in care and agriculture.
- **Data and Visibility Initiatives:** Require gender indicators in all project and policy reporting and robust data collection to quantify and celebrate women's contributions, holding institutions accountable for improving representation.

4.3 POLICY PROPOSALS TO STRENGTHEN THE SAFETY NETWORK

- **Farm Relief Policy Extension:** Expand farm relief policies to cover not just officially registered farmers, but their families, recognising the full spectrum of informal and unpaid labour supporting farm viability.
- **Integrated Funding and Support Structures:** Provide umbrella funding structures for rural development, bridging spatial inequality and simplifying access for innovative women to financial supports across regions.
- **Dedicated Loan Programmes for Female Start-Ups:** Establish government-backed, low-interest loans and grants for women-led start-ups, addressing credit rating and financial history barriers.
- **Mandatory Pension Contributions for All Partners:** Require both farming partners to make independent pension contributions, legally acknowledging the economic contributions of women in agriculture.



- **Cross-sectoral Consistency and Redevelopment:** Promote consistency and redevelopment in rural policy, linking support for women to broader regional development and reducing bureaucratic obstacles.
- **Long-term Awareness Campaigns:** Launch public campaigns to challenge stereotypes, celebrate women's economic roles, and foster a culture of equality in rural communities.
- **Support Programmes for Women's Leadership:** Enhance training, mentoring, and political education to build leadership pipelines from early years and improve representation at all governance levels.
- **EU-level Collaboration and Promotion:** Foster collaboration among institutions, national networks, and EU programs to promote visibility, recognise informal work, and ensure accurate data collection (e.g. CAP, LEADER).

4.4 CONCLUSION

Ensuring the financial and social safety of rural women in agriculture demands a holistic approach. Policies must secure legal, entrepreneurial, and pension rights; streamline support access; and foster a culture of equality. Centralised information tailored financial services, legal reforms, educational initiatives, and visibility actions form the backbone of a robust safety network. By empowering women economically and socially, rural development policies can promote gender equality, resilience, and innovation in Europe's farming and rural sectors.



Figure 5: Discussion at the Policy Workshop - Simon Blackley Photography

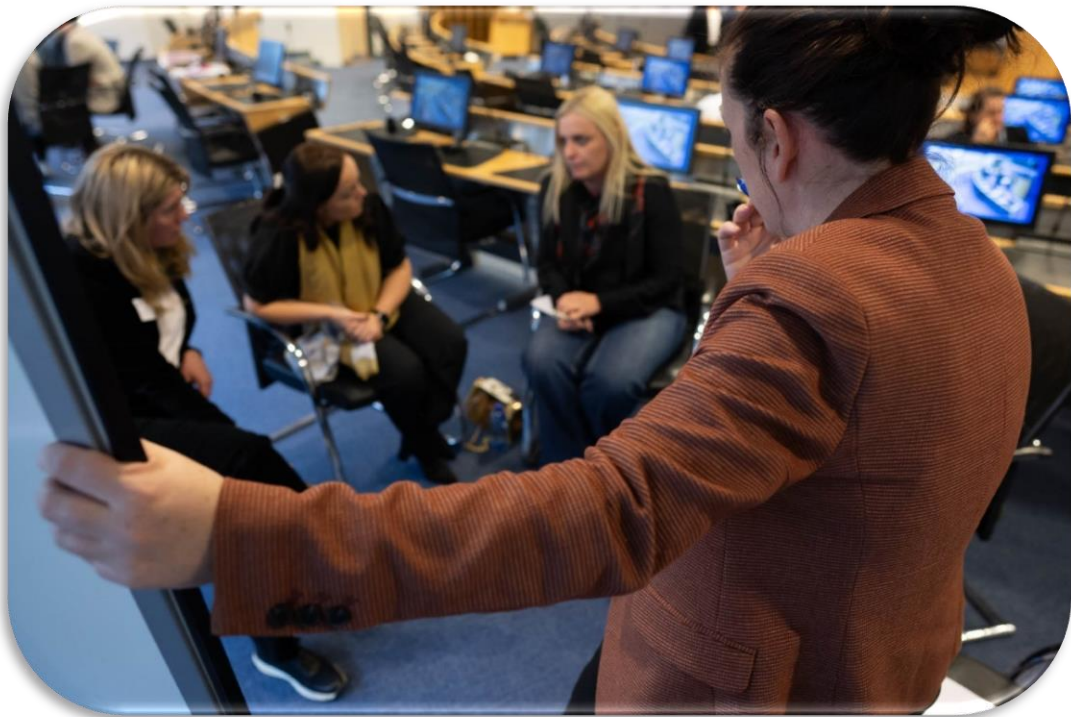


Figure 6: Discussion at policy workshop - Simon Blackley Photography



5 WORK-LIFE BALANCE NETWORK

Work-Life Balance Network refers to the set of systems, supports, and policies that enable rural women, particularly those engaged in agriculture, to achieve a healthy balance between work and family responsibilities. It includes farm relief services, mandated holidays or sick leave for farmers, community support, and access to care and health services. The aim is to strengthen the infrastructure that underpins well-being and gender equality for rural populations.

5.1 IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

- **Insufficient Monitoring and Mobility:** Inadequate monitoring and enforcement of labour law, along with limited mobility and transport infrastructure, restrict rural women's participation in work and community life.
- **Worker Identification Issues:** Many rural women are not listed as farm workers on paper, reducing access to employment rights, social security, and benefits.
- **Transport Poverty:** Poor rural transport options limit access to healthcare, education, and social support, making work-life balance more difficult for women and families.
- **Childcare and Care Duties:** Rural women struggle to access affordable and flexible childcare and care services, increasing their domestic workload and reducing time for economic activities.
- **Bureaucracy and Legal Barriers:** Bureaucratic hurdles for animal welfare, labour laws, and worker contracts negatively affect compliance and recognition of women's contributions.
- **Mental Health and Social Isolation:** Lack of community-level support networks and isolation exacerbate stress and risk mental health problems.
- **Limited Professionalisation:** Rural women's employment can lack formal contracts and professional recognition, leaving them vulnerable and under protected.

5.2 PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- **Optimised Labour and Social Security Systems:** Ensure labour laws are adapted to rural realities, train farmers and local leaders, and facilitate monitoring to guarantee fair treatment and recognition.
- **Flexible Relief Services:** Extend farm relief and holidays to all self-employed rural entrepreneurs, not just farm owners; adapt relief services to match the real, everyday needs of women in homes and farms.



- **Community-Based Support:** Strengthen local-level service provision with paid leave, contracts, and monitoring for vulnerable employees, especially women.
- **Training and Education:** Educate rural communities about women's rights and employment contracts, with tailored outreach and capacity building to ensure women register as formal workers.
- **Sharing Care Responsibilities:** Encourage targeted policies for sharing domestic and care work, including recognition of unpaid labour and improved access to professional support.
- **Health Services and Mental Health:** Develop health checks and mental health programmes with specialists visiting rural communities; create school-based health campaigns and women's support networks.
- **Broader Policy Coverage:** Make sure farm relief service remains in CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) strategic plans but incentivise member states to go beyond minimum requirements using targeted awareness campaigns and flexible systems.

5.3 CONCRETE POLICY PROPOSALS

- **Procurement and Funding Reform:** Reform procurement and service funding to promote the local provision of support, ensuring services reflect the needs identified directly by rural communities and women themselves.
- **Legal Recognition of Women's Labour:** Update contracts and employment law to ensure women's work is recognised on paper, providing full social, health, and employment protections.
- **Paid Leave for All Rural Workers:** Develop policies for paid leave that extend to all types of rural employment, including for entrepreneurs and informal workers.
- **Flexible CAP Funding:** Use CAP funding strategically so that Member States incentivise the inclusion of farm relief services in their rural development plans, with flexibility to adapt to regional differences.
- **School and AKIS Integration:** Leverage education and Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) to improve mental health, training, and access to information for women in rural contexts.
- **Inclusive Contracts and Monitoring:** Implement contracts and monitoring systems for all vulnerable rural employees, especially women, ensuring fair work conditions and compliance with labour standards.



- **Improved Transport and Mobility:** Invest in transport infrastructure and innovative solutions to reduce transport poverty and enable better access to care and work opportunities.
- **Broader Rules for Farm Child Labour:** Establish broader rules and education for preventing child labour on family farms, integrating these efforts into school systems.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The network for work-life balance in rural areas requires integrated reform across transport, labour law, social security, care services, and legal recognition. The workshop participants agreed that advancing gender equality and well-being depends on targeted local supports, clear and enforceable contracts, flexible use of CAP policy levers, awareness campaigns, and community-based innovation. By strengthening these networks, rural and farm women can achieve balance between work and family, maximise their economic and social contributions, and promote the overall resilience of rural communities.



Figure 7: Discussion On Work-Life Balance At Policy Workshop - Simon Blackley Photography



6 ECONOMIC NETWORK

Economic Network refers to the broad infrastructure and collaborative systems needed to enable commercialisation, marketisation, and sustainable business growth for women in agriculture and rural areas. This includes regional and local market channels, supportive funding programmes, cooperative business models, digitalisation of marketing and sales, and the policies to reduce barriers to entry for women in entrepreneurship and innovation. Economic networks are essential for enabling rural women to move from production to successful market participation, scaling their ventures and accessing wider opportunities.

6.1 IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

- **Limited Marketing Insight and Recognition:** It was mentioned that there are rural women who lack insight into market trends and struggle with the recognition of new or innovative local products, which hinders commercialisation and value creation.
- **Funding Barriers and Siloed Supports:** Funding is often fragmented and siloed, making it difficult to integrate financial support for product diversification, local sales, and scaling up new ventures.
- **Weak Regional Export Channels:** Regional networks for export and collaboration are weak, and rural women face hurdles in accessing international, national, and local markets.
- **Cooperative Models Undervalued:** It was mentioned that mainstream economic models can be ineffective in rural areas, cooperative models and supporting systems are needed but not sufficiently promoted or supported.
- **Lack of Structure and Connectivity:** Rural women entrepreneurs are held back by a lack of support networks, fragmented contacts, and policies that do not comprehensively link entrepreneurship with family policies and social support.
- **Scaling Up Challenges:** Support for scaling up businesses is rarely ongoing, often treated as a one-off event rather than a dynamic process responsive to changing needs and contexts.
- **Logistics and Labour Gaps:** Local marketing requires considerable effort, but there is insufficient time available for logistics, distribution, and sustaining supply chains.
- **Competition Over Collaboration:** It was mentioned and considered to be relevant for women that farmers in close proximity may compete rather than collaborate, hampering the emergence of local or regional markets and best practice sharing.



6.2 PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- **Integrated Funding Windows:** Bridge funding silos by integrating CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) also through LEADER and EIP Operational Groups windows for Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) and Short Supply Chain (SSC) initiatives, including dedicated grants for women start-ups and scale-ups.
- **Marketing Research and Support:** Provide targeted marketing research and support to enhance recognition of local products; LEADER and local authorities could aid in market exploration for rural women.
- **Alternative Business Models:** Pilot collaborative and cooperative business models such as revenue-sharing logistics and co-operative marketing networks to address local competition and create economies of scale.
- **Connecting Networks:** Facilitate the connection of rural women across different networks, linking entrepreneurs, policy makers, and support services to foster collaboration and economic activity.
- **Comprehensive Policy Alignment:** Align entrepreneurship policies with family and social networks, ensuring economic activities are built into broader social supports and opportunities for women.
- **Flexible Scaling-Up Support:** Create flexible, long-term support for scaling up businesses that adapt to evolving contexts and needs rather than simply providing a one-off grant.
- **Promoting Cooperative Models:** Use pilot projects and support platforms to foster co-operative activity at the local and regional levels, breaking down barriers to collaboration among farmers.
- **Public Procurement and Local Product Promotion:** Open public procurement frameworks to include local products in schools, offices, and hospitals; clarify and communicate the definition of 'local' to stakeholders.

6.3 POLICY PROPOSALS TO STRENGTHEN THE ECONOMIC NETWORK

- **Support for Market Exploration:** Implement programmes supporting market research and product recognition, especially for new and innovative products by rural women.
- **Expand LEADER and CAP Funding Accessibility:** Make LEADER and CAP funding more accessible and visible to rural entrepreneurs, integrating them with European Social Funds for employment and skills development.



- **Mandatory Gender Criteria in CAP:** Ensure gender criteria are embedded in CAP programming, making it mandatory to consider women's needs when funding business models, direct-to-consumer (DTC) and short supply chain (SSC) projects.
- **Cooperative Critical Mass and Local Markets:** Incentivise and support the formation of co-operative enterprises, critical mass initiatives, and mutual logistics that promote market access for women's products.
- **Quota-Driven Comprehensive Policies:** Build quotas and equalising measures into economic, entrepreneurship, and procurement policies to guarantee women's representation and participation.
- **Digitalisation and Training:** Digitise market channels and offer tools and training for women to market, sell, and manage their products online.
- **Support Platforms for Best-Practice Exchange:** Set up innovation platforms for ongoing best-practice exchange, supporting women in overcoming local competitive barriers through knowledge sharing and expert networks.
- **Flexible Grant Systems for Scaling Up:** Grants should be provided in a flexible way that addresses scaling up as a process, not just a single event, and adapts to changing circumstances for women entrepreneurs.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The workshop emphasised that the economic network for rural women must evolve beyond fragmented supports and competitive barriers toward integrated, flexible, and inclusive policy frameworks. Investment in marketing, cooperative models, public procurement, and digitisation, combined with special attention to women's challenges in scaling up and innovation, can drive commercialisation and sustainable rural development. Building linkages across networks, policies, and communities is essential for rural women to fully realise their economic potential and to reinforce the broader social network in agriculture and rural areas.



Figure 8: Notes On Smaller Form On Economic Network - Simon Blackley Photography



7 ADVISORY NETWORK

Advisory Network refers to tailor-made systems of guidance and support for women innovators in rural areas. This network encompasses advice for business models, social ventures, education, skills development, and community-based activities. Advisory networks must be dynamic, inclusive, and responsive, offering diverse program formats, targeted mentorship, empowerment through confidence building, and facilitating women's representation in decision-making spaces like Local Action Groups (LAGs). It is necessary to train the advisors to be aware of their potential or latent gender bias, and to stimulate their way of thinking and viewing of women to be flexible and creative.

7.1 IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

- **Visibility and Institutional Needs:** Women's visibility in advisory systems remains low, both due to a lack of tailored support and underrepresentation in leadership or LAG action plans. Institutional advisory systems often lack flexibility or understanding of gender-specific needs.
- **Fragmented and Stage-Dependent Support:** Advisory services are often fragmented, vary by entrepreneurial stage, and lack sign-posting or clear pathways for women to enter and progress through advisory support.
- **Dependence on Location and Approach:** A unified system across the EU is difficult; successful approaches may differ by region, and advisory support often excludes rural women lacking digital access or situated outside dominant networks.
- **Confidence and Awareness:** Many women face barriers due to low confidence and cultural factors, requiring more than just technical advice, mentoring, peer support, and awareness-raising are essential.
- **Need for Field-Specific Support:** Generic advisors may lack up-to-date training for diverse agricultural models; women in small or atypical farms need specialised, context-sensitive advice.
- **Centralised Information Gaps:** Women innovators struggle to find centralised, easily accessible information about available support, programmes, or networks.

7.2 PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- **Bespoke and Stage-Sensitive Support:** Develop advisory and mentoring programmes that are tailored to women's needs at different stages of the enterprise cycle, from start-up to scaling. Programmes should include signposting for next steps, not just generic advice.



- **Start Small, Grow Locally:** Encourage start-small approaches, small, localised programmes and activities to build confidence, peer networks, and knowledge exchange. Gradual scaling is often more effective than imposing broad unified systems.
- **Hybrid and One-Stop Shop Approaches:** Leverage hybrid solutions that combine digital and face-to-face advisory services, and develop one-stop-shop informational portals linking local and EU-wide opportunities for women.
- **Recognition of Social Dimension:** Foster recognition of voluntary work and social business activities alongside economic innovation, integrating these dimensions into advisory and funding programmes.
- **Awareness-Raising and Empowerment:** Integrate campaigns and mentoring initiatives to raise awareness among advisors about the real needs of rural women and foster women's confidence to take on leadership roles.
- **Specific Advisors and Field Training:** Train and deploy specialised advisors (including women with experience in relevant innovations) for field-specific support, ensuring advice for small, new, or atypical farms is practical and up to date.

7.3 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE ADVISORY NETWORKS

- **Institutionalise Mentoring and Political Leadership:** Encourage policies that embed mentoring (including reverse mentoring and political leadership training) for rural women in all advisory networks.
- **Acknowledge Regional Successes and Diversity:** Policies should build on what is already working at local and regional levels, such as successful LEADER networks, and tailor improvements to the specific regional context.
- **Improve Access for All:** Invest in overcoming digital exclusion and geographic barriers, ensuring that no woman is left out of advisory networks due to lack of access or representation.
- **Link Local and EU Policies:** Connect local advisory efforts to EU-level policies for cross-learning, resource sharing, and amplifying local innovations.
- **Comprehensive Information Platforms:** Develop centralised information platforms at regional, national, or EU levels to guide women to appropriate advisory services, support programmes, funding, and best-practice resources.



- **Recognise and Integrate Social Innovation:** Ensure social business and voluntary endeavours are equally valued and supported by advisory networks and corresponding policy frameworks.

7.4 CONCLUSION

Effective advisory networks for rural women must combine local knowledge, specialised support, inclusive mentoring, centralised information access, and culturally sensitive empowerment. By valuing diversity in approaches, bridging digital divides, and embedding mentoring as a core principle, policies can help women innovators in agriculture and rural areas to overcome barriers, grow confident, and expand their social and economic impact. This, in turn, will reinforce broader social networks and gender equality in rural communities.



Figure 9: Discussion At Policy Workshop - Simon Blackley Photography



8 LEARNING NETWORK

Learning Network refers to systems of peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, co-creation platforms, and shared learning opportunities for rural women innovators and entrepreneurs. Such networks enable women to recognise and meet peers, share experiences, gain technical and business skills, and access mentorship for personal and professional growth. The network leverages digital and physical platforms, formal and informal education, and mentoring to foster inclusive, supportive environments for continuous learning.

8.1 KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- **Access and Engagement:** Many rural women and entrepreneurs cannot prioritise participation in learning networks because they cannot afford to take time off for meetings and mentoring programmes.
- **Bureaucracy and Structure:** Navigating complex support structures and bureaucracy is cited as a barrier, especially for young women and new entrants who may not know how to access available resources and networks.
- **Digitalisation and Financial Management:** Rural women engaged in innovation development may face (practical) challenges in getting access to digital and financial management skills, both vital for developing business and staying competitive in modern agricultural contexts.
- **Cost Barriers:** Expenses for innovation support services, training, and peer learning networks are prohibitive for many, making participation inequitable.
- **Cultural and Literacy Barriers:** Shame, cultural issues, and literacy problems limit networks' accessibility, particularly for marginalised groups such as migrants and women with low literacy.
- **Gender-Blind Policies and Participation:** Existing policies may not be gender-sensitive, potentially limiting women's participation and leadership in learning networks.

8.2 PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- **Early Education and Mentoring:** Focus on education for young women from an early age, connecting schools with local action groups and providing mentoring from experienced entrepreneurs to young women.
- **Compensated Participation:** Consider financial compensation for knowledge transfer groups and mentorship activities, emulating models such as Ireland's



CAP knowledge transfer groups to incentivise broader participation, especially from small businesses and farms. It must, however, be mentioned that, although Ireland in the broader sense have very good knowledge transfer groups, a specific programme for women only knowledge transfer groups was not considered to be successful.

- **Digital Skills Training and Business Development:** Provide targeted trainings in digital technology and business development to grow women's technical capacities and confidence.
- **Peer-to-Peer Platforms:** Establish platforms (both digital and physical) for women to share experiences, access support, and build co-creation networks tailored to their learning and innovation needs.
- **Overcoming Literacy and Cultural Barriers:** Offer literacy support programmes accessible at convenient times, addressing both stigma and practical needs for diverse groups including migrants and young women.
- **Networking and Information Hubs:** Develop centralised hubs or information platforms where all available supports, training options, and funding schemes are clearly mapped, focusing on local contexts and needs.
- **Safe Spaces and Targeted Support:** Policy designs should build safe spaces for women (e.g., women-only training or mentorship when appropriate) and promote quotas to enhance participation.
- **Holistic Inclusion:** Ensure learning networks support women's needs beyond innovation policy, intersecting with health, education, and migrant integration for true inclusivity.

8.3 POLICY PROPOSALS TO STRENGTHEN THE LEARNING NETWORK

- **Incentives for Local Action Groups (LAGs):** Fund LAGs to deliver training programmes tailored to women's needs, specifically in digitalisation, entrepreneurship, and business growth strategies.
- **Progressive Training Structures:** Ensure learning opportunities are sequential—e.g., beginning with basics such as *Start Your Own Business* and advancing to more technical or specialised training with supported progression pathways.
- **Financial Support Integrated into CAP and LEADER:** Attach financial support for participation, training, and mentorship to CAP and LEADER funding streams, making it easier for women (especially those from smaller farms or businesses) to be compensated for attendance and mentoring activities.



- **Scaling Up and Replication:** Scale up and replicate effective local learning models to contexts elsewhere in Europe; ascertain women participation for example by having quotas for participation of different genders included in funding requirements.
- **Health and Literacy Policies:** Embed literacy support and health policy changes within learning networks, promoting accessibility for women with learning barriers or health issues.
- **After-Life for Project Networks:** Create policies and funding that allow project-based networks (e.g., FLIARA) to extend and persist beyond the end of initial funding periods, ensuring lasting impact.
- **Support for Networking the Marginalised:** Provide dedicated support and budgets for projects targeting marginalised groups, such as migrants and low-literacy women, through CAP networks and international collaboration.
- **Information Integration Hubs:** National and EU-level policy should develop integrated information platforms mapping out supports, available networks, and funding for innovation and training.

8.4 CONCLUSION

The workshop demonstrated that effective learning networks for rural women rely on early education, mentorship, peer-to-peer exchange, compensated participation, and removal of financial and cultural barriers. Actionable policy should focus on inclusive design, scaled support for local success stories, integration of digital and physical platforms, and dedicated budgets for knowledge transfer and mentoring. By enhancing access, relevance, and continuity for all women, including the marginalised, these networks will help build a strong social foundation for innovation and resilience in agriculture and rural communities.



Figure 10: Discussion At Policy Workshop - Simon Blackley Photography



9 POLITICAL NETWORK

The Political Network in this workshop context refers to the systems and opportunities that ensure rural women participate in policy-making have access to decision-makers, and are represented in governance, from local to national and EU levels. Political networks involve public participation, gender mainstreaming in all stages of the policy cycle, leadership cultivation, and mechanisms to remove barriers and create opportunities for female entrepreneurship and innovation in rural areas.

9.1 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- **Prioritisation and Bureaucracy:** Policymakers at various levels often deprioritise issues relevant to rural women, with burdensome bureaucracy and complex regulations blocking access to even minimal funding and opportunities.
- **Low Representation in Leadership:** Women are underrepresented in decision-making, leadership, and succession for farms and businesses, with quotas alone often leading to nominal, not substantial, leadership.
- **Transparency and Data Gaps:** Lack of precise gender-disaggregated data makes it difficult to track women's participation and success in leadership or innovation initiatives.
- **Limited Participation and Mentorship:** Fewer women are involved in policy design or public debate, and there is a lack of capacity building and mentorship programs to support pipeline development.
- **Historical and Structural Barriers:** Deep-seated historical norms, power relations, and limited use of EU political structures create persistent obstacles for genuine participation and advancement.
- **Access to Support for Rural Returnees:** Women returning to rural areas face issues around access to funding, housing, and succession, as well as other policy-relevant supports.

9.2 SOLUTIONS PROPOSED

- **Indicators and Data-Driven Accountability:** Implement gender indicators and mandatory reporting in data collection, both at national and EU levels, to make women's leadership and participation visible and measurable, enabling transparent accountability on gender equality.
- **Better Quotas and Substantive Training:** Move beyond mere quotas by creating leadership training, mentoring, and education for girls and women from



a young age, highlighting inspirational rural female leaders to shape a sustainable pipeline for the future.

- **Simplification and Regulation Reform:** Reform funding and regulatory environments to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and make both minimal and larger funding streams more easily accessible for rural women entrepreneurs.
- **Multilevel Co-operation:** Foster cooperation among local, regional, and EU authorities to encourage women's participation, enable benchmarking, and share best practices across countries and regions.
- **Mentorship Networks:** Develop national and EU-level mentorship networks (building on LEADER, WEP, and other proven models), to facilitate women's progression into decision-making places and provide support in farm/business succession.
- **Transparency, Integrity, and Participation:** Establish integrity policies for public information, targeted involvement to ensure diversity, and actions designed to encourage active women's participation in local and EU processes.
- **Showcasing and Public Awareness:** Support sustained public awareness and education campaigns to challenge traditional gender roles, showcase women's leadership, and normalise gender equality in policy and practice.

9.3 POLICY PROPOSALS FOR A STRONG POLITICAL NETWORK

- **Mandate Gender Indicators:** Require gender-specific performance indicators in all policymaking and funding streams for rural/agricultural leadership, CAP projects, and EU initiatives.
- **Embed Leadership in Education:** Integrate leadership and political education, including the presentation of positive female rural role models, across all educational levels to build long-term capacity.
- **Quotas with Substance:** Tie quotas for women's participation to capacity-building and mentorship rather than nominal appointments, ensuring they result in real leadership and representation.
- **EU and National Policy Integration:** Align local initiatives with EU and national policies, using mechanisms such as multilevel cooperation, benchmarking, and policy transfers (e.g. copying effective Irish succession law) to support women in all rural regions.
- **Support for Returnees and Succession:** Establish policies targeted at women returning to rural areas, including funding, business support, and streamlined farm/business transfer processes.



- **Streamline Bureaucracy:** Simplify regulatory access for rural women entrepreneurs, especially for micro and small funding streams, and reduce administrative burdens for innovation, land use, and entrepreneurship.
- **Visibility and Celebratory Policies:** Provide regular public reporting, highlight inspirational women, and celebrate their success stories to increase political engagement and empower the next generation.

9.4 CONCLUSION

The workshop emphasised that meaningful political networks for rural women are built on data-driven accountability, early and ongoing leadership development, integrated policymaking, mentorship, and the removal of bureaucratic and cultural barriers. Participants recognised that gender mainstreaming and substantive support at all levels are critical to closing the participation gap and allowing rural women to fully shape, lead, and benefit from agricultural and rural innovation policies.



Figure 11: Discussion on the political network - Simon Blackley Photography



Figure 12: Note Taking On Political Network - Simon Blackley Photography



10 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The FLIARA policy workshop examined how seven, interlocking networks enable or block female-led innovation in rural areas: social, safety (financial), work–life, economic, advisory, learning, and political. Across 14 facilitated groups, participants converged on four cross-cutting problems: the care burden and gaps in childcare/eldercare that make self-employment and farm work brittle; legal and financial invisibility of women’s labour (registration, pensions, relief services, loans); fragmented supports and information, with bureaucracy and digital divides limiting access; and under-representation in decision-making and data, reinforcing stereotypes and slowing change.

The workshop’s central message distilled from the summary below on each network as infrastructure for innovating women is that the specific rural context matters for women innovators. Innovations thrive when care, safety, capability, markets, and voice are built as one coherent infrastructure, delivered locally, financed predictably, and measured transparently. The proposed measures are not isolated fixes; they are mutually reinforcing gears. Portable leave and relief services make advisory and learning offers usable; advisory and learning translate into stronger enterprises; economic tools open markets; political measures secure representation and accountability; and the social safety net lowers risk so women can innovate.



Figure 13: Reporting On Outcomes At The Conference - Simon Blackley Photography



The following summary of each network highlights key essences.

10.1 SOCIAL NETWORK

The social network encompasses the family, community, and institutional relationships that structure care for children, the elderly, and working adults in rural regions. Persistent barriers include the high cost and limited supply of quality childcare and eldercare, the dominance of social norms discouraging women's use of parental leave or public benefits, and geographic depopulation reducing mutual support. Practical supports, such as subsidised meals, after-school programmes, local initiatives (women's sheds, social prescribing), and strong municipal involvement, were repeatedly stressed. The need for broadband access and modernised information flows is also critical to enable both business and social participation in rural communities.

Building resilient social networks depends on interlinking childcare, eldercare, education, and local innovation efforts via well-funded, community-driven strategies. Flexibility, integration across sectors, and recognition of specific needs (especially for marginalised women) are central to any social support infrastructure.

10.2 SAFETY NETWORK

Ownership of rural and farm innovations is essential, and safety networks must ensure that this is also legally the case, which comes obvious in vulnerable life moments, such as, divorce, health crises, farm succession, or business start-up. Women who are married into a family farm may not have ownership of the farm nor of their own initiatives they have developed as part of the farm, except when they have taken appropriate measures to claim ownership. Policies can support this. The complexity and fragmentation of supports, masculine bias in asset succession, and lack of gender-disaggregated data, around the innovative practices of farm and rural women increase women's disadvantage. Long-term, integrated reforms, centralised information, extended farm relief and pension systems, accessible credit, and formal recognition of unpaid/informal labour are essential. Campaigns to tackle bias, improved data, and inclusive leadership development are also key drivers.

A holistic approach to women's security in rural areas must bridge legal, financial, and sociocultural domains, ensuring practical, ongoing, and visible supports that reduce bureaucracy and proactively address gender gaps.

10.3 WORK-LIFE BALANCE NETWORK

Rural women face compounded challenges in managing paid and unpaid work, often lacking enforceable labour protection, practical leave, accessible transport, and supportive health and social systems. Strategies discussed include extending farm relief and leave entitlements to the self-employed, investing in local/national service delivery,



recognising informal work, and leveraging CAP funding to support family-sensitive innovation. Mental health, social isolation, and community-based professional development are especially urgent matters in the context of women-led rural and farm innovations.

Enhancing work-life balance requires cross-policy action—transport, health, labour, education and strong local ownership. All initiatives should be responsive to rural realities, flexible in design, and enforceable in practice.

10.4 ECONOMIC NETWORK

Rural women remain constrained by siloed funding, weak commercial networks, insufficient market insight, and underdeveloped cooperative models. The scaling-up of innovation often receives one-off, rather than ongoing, support. Policy solutions call for integrating diverse funding sources (e.g., CAP, LEADER), boosting digital skills and logistics, and, importantly, anchoring cooperative, best-practice, and quota-driven models into all forms of economic and commercialisation policy.

Dynamic economic networks can emerge when investment, technical training, and gender criteria are integrated into all forms of rural development funding, entrepreneurship policy, and procurement practice progressing women from production to successful, scaled market participation.

10.5 ADVISORY NETWORK

Tailored, accessible advice remains unevenly available across rural communities, especially for women at early or scaling stages or without strong digital access. Many existing advisory services lack awareness of gendered needs and feature little representation of women in leadership. The most effective solutions emphasise local, hybrid (digital plus face-to-face), and staged mentoring and advisory offerings. They also call for formal recognition of voluntary, caring, and social entrepreneurship alongside traditional business advice.

Advisory networks must shift toward inclusivity, recognizing local differences and fostering continuous mentoring, with user-friendly information and explicit support for women in atypical rural business pathways.

10.6 LEARNING NETWORK

Robust learning networks help rural women develop the skills and peer connections needed for personal and professional growth. However, time, cost, literacy barriers, and lack of visible pathways often block participation, especially among new entrants or



marginalised groups. Workshop participants urged for compensated learning opportunities, sequenced training structures, local mentoring, and the embedding of literacy, health, and cultural programs. Dedicated hubs for mapping training, funding, and networking offers are needed for maximum accessibility.

Progress depends on lowering all barriers to entry, sustaining locally-rooted peer learning and mentoring, and ensuring learning is responsive to community needs and personal circumstances.

10.7 POLITICAL NETWORK

Despite slow, steady improvement, rural women remain dramatically underrepresented in decision-making. Obstacles include policy inertia, data gaps, symbolic rather than substantive quotas, complex bureaucracy, and insufficient mentoring. Effective measures range from gender-indicator mandates, integrated leadership training in education, and benchmarking of best practices, to public recognition and reports that value and showcase women's leadership.

Gender equality in governance, policy design, and rural transformation hinges on early leadership development, strong quotas paired with actual capacity-building, robust data, and multilevel integration of successful local and national innovations.

10.8 SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

The proposed direction is a joined-up, local-first policy architecture: integrate sectoral policies; move resources and decisions closer to local authorities. Solutions are not only financial, but also organisational, including soft tools as working on recognition and empowerment. Financially, a variety of sources can be used, including CAP/LEADER and national funds. Policies must cover a wide range of infrastructures including childcare, relief services, transport, broadband, policies to enhance the legal recognition and safety nets (co-registration, pensions, tailored finance), and capability systems (advisory, learning, mentoring). Concrete levers include portable parental leave for the self-employed; public co-financing of rural childcare and after-school; farm relief and paid leave for all rural workers; government-backed loans for women-led start-ups; digital/broadband investment plus village network coordinators; one-stop information portals; gender indicators in all programmes; quotas with training/mentoring; and long-term funding for domestic-violence and mental-health supports.

If implemented as an integrated package, these measures would (i) increase participation of women and may support the flourishing (and survival) of women-led rural enterprises, (ii) reduce out-migration by improving quality of life and opportunity, and (iii) embed gender-responsive governance that treats care, connectivity, and capability as core rural infrastructure.



Adopting this integrated package will convert today's fragmented supports into a reliable operating system for rural women. The payoff is tangible: resilient local economies, healthier families, innovative farms and businesses, and governance that reflects the people it serves.

The FLIARA conference workshop reveals a clear trajectory for advancing women's roles in rural innovation: all seven network domains demand joined-up, gender-responsive, and future-oriented policymaking. Solutions require a systemic approach, combining legal reforms, investment in human/social capital, and the scaling up of effective local initiatives.

Empowerment and equity are not the products of single policies, but of interlocking, mutually reinforcing changes in social, safety, work, economic, advisory, learning, and political systems. A central feature of all recommendations is the need to listen to and act upon rural women's lived experience, ensuring flexible, inclusive supports that meet real needs and drive sustained, transformative change in rural and agricultural development.



POLICY BRIEF: SUPPORTING WOMEN INNOVATING IN RURAL AREAS

There is not one single measure that will be sufficient to enhance the position of women innovating in rural areas. A range of measures is needed across seven networks. Measures in these networks are not isolated fixes, but these can support each other (Table 2: Networks and policies).

Network	What is it about	Policy measures to improve infrastructures
Social Network	Care for children, parents and seniors.	Measures improving childcare, care for elderly, school systems.
Safety Network (financial)	Overcoming financial challenges in issues of health, income, divorce, etc.	Improve the social security net, legal status of women, and access to finance
Working/Life network	Enabling a healthy work-life balance	Farmer relief services. Ensure a more equal division of care responsibilities.
Economic network	Networks to trade and marketize products	Support commercializing products, Direct to Consumer and Short Supply Chains.
Advisory network	Access to tailor-made advice	Develop a rural advisory network that meets the needs of innovative women
Learning network	Peer-to-peer contacts with other innovators. Life-long learning.	Provide opportunities to recognize and meet peers. Increase learning opportunities tailored for needs.
Political network	Access to political decision-making power and representation	Organise public participation, meet with (potential) innovators

Source: FLIARA

Table 2: Networks and policies

Policies can be seen as infrastructures that allow women in farming and rural areas themselves to engage in innovative action using their own networking capacities. Policies at different levels can each play their role in developing these policies.

Further reading: www.fliara.eu

Here you find a toolkit including a range of policy briefs on how policies can support female-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas.



ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 WORKSHOP MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS

1.1. POSTER USED AT WORKSHOP IN BRUSSELS



Social Network



The social network concerns the organization of care for children, parents, schooling, and others. We call for action to secure flexibility needed to balance family responsibilities with work. A well-functioning social network provides the necessary support for women to pursue innovations and entrepreneurship.

Policies include:

- providing adequate (paid) parental leave, equal payment men/ women (Sweden).
- ensuring affordable, adequate, high-quality childcare, pre school, and after-school activities
- improving care for the elderly

Challenge	Solution	Policy to address





Safety Network



Financial safety network helps to overcome financial challenges in issues of health, divorce, income, or the loss of a partner, safeguarding women's financial positions. It also supports innovators to get access to the finance for their farming, rural projects.

Policies include:

- improve the legal status of women in farming families (divorce, decease, CoP)
- integrating support schemes offering start-up voucher system with startup funding for training, and mentoring (Slovenia).
- improve access to finance for women
- simplifying innovation support systems for atypical business types
- close gender gap in equal payment for similar jobs (CoP)
- fund the softer, community engaged innovations equal to hard technical ones

Challenge	Solution	Policy to address





Economic Network



Economic network concerns the broad infrastructure to commercialize products and services. Local markets can help commercialisations. New initiatives often require novel marketizations and sales channels, and we advocate to strengthen these initiatives.

Policies include

- Strengthening the Commercialisation of local products and services through support networks
- Harnessing regional support networks, and public procurement.
- Promoting collaborative business models like cooperatives, Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) and Short Supply Chain (SSC) models (Netherlands).
- Create CAP and LEADER funding windows for DTC and SSC.
- Supporting digitalization by providing tools, and training (Spain).
- Dedicated grants for starting and scaling up for women

Challenge	Solution	Policy to address





Work-Life Balance Network



Work-life balance network the broader infrastructure needed to enable a healthy work-life balance, essential for the well-being of rural life.

Policies include

- implementing a farmer relief service for healthier women (Finland, Sweden)
- allowing farmers to take mandated holidays or sick leave

Challenge	Solution	Policy to address





Advisory
Network



Advisory network provides access to tailor-made advice for women innovators. Advisory services must broaden their scope to include support for diverse business models, such as socially oriented and community-based ventures.

Policies include:

- Empower rural women through targeted (regional) advisory services, trained to support women (Slovenia)
- Ensuring advisory programs with diverse business formats.
- Promoting confidence-building through mentorship (training).
- Strengthening women's representation in LAG action plans

Challenge	Solution	Policy to address



Learning
Network



Learning network is built on peer-to-peer contacts with other innovators, creating opportunities to recognize and meet peers and we call to action to support and enhance these learning network.

Policies include:

- Establishing co-creation platforms (digital and physical).
- Improving networking support to meet women's needs.
- Create platforms for sharing experiences, peer-to-peer
- Improve training programs on alternative forms of farming (advises, Netherlands)
- Promoting positive images of rural women entrepreneurs across all education curricula.
- Show inspiring role models in education
- Connect schools with LAG's and cooperation hubs (Czech Republic)

Challenge	Solution	Policy to address



Political
Network



Political network ensures access to decision-makers on rules and funding. It involves public participation and representation, creating opportunities for policymakers to meet with innovators.

Policies include:

- Apply gender mainstreaming in all policies and at all stages of the policy cycle —from design to implementation and evaluation.
- Support women's return to rural areas and promoting female entrepreneurship
- Support local authorities to women innovators by improvement of quality of life in rural communities
- Women empowerment and breaking barriers to women led rural and farm innovations.

Challenge	Solution	Policy to address





1.2. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FINAL WORKSHOP IN BRUSSELS

WORKSHOP BRUSSELS: POLICY ADVICE DISCUSSION

Leaders WP5:

Gerdy Verschuure-Stuip, Vitnae Kang, Willem Korthals Altes



1.1 OBJECTIVE OF WORKSHOP BRUSSELS

In aim of the workshop is to get input on:

1. An overview of problems and solutions of the major challenges by initiators/ female innovators during their innovation journey, focusing on the changes needed on European policy level. This will be organised by the seven networks, forming the base of the policy booklet and briefs. We want to break down disciplinary silos and engage users and experts in exploring lessons learned and outcomes, policy, institutional and other challenges encountered across FLIARA.
2. Suggestions for adaptations in European (and national policies) to facilitate solutions and other ways to address these. We hope that the outcome of this task will ensure more end-user-effective policy, in addition to informing recommendations for structural changes of governance frameworks at different levels and informing national policy environments.
3. This is based on a set of problems we analysed/ learned from other female innovators. Every group receives a topics/ themes for discussion, based on D1.1, D1.3 and D1.5, but is free to explore other topics as well.

1.2 CONTENT

Duration: 1.00 h /afternoon

Discussions: approx. 7-9 participants per flip over (practitioners/ambassadors, CSOs/NGOs/international networks, public institutions national or EU, researchers)

1 facilitator (consortium)

1 notetaker (consortium)

You have a standard form to be filled in put on the flip over.

For the FACILITATOR: !!! Make sure all participants are heard and questioned (unless they explicitly say they do not want to), and that the practitioners get space to share their experiences!!! Aim to give everyone equal speaking time.

For the NOTETAKER: Please fill in the form (attached to this document) and use for each solution or problem a separate form and try to work through all questions. You don't have to note who says what. Once the focus group is finished, please take a few minutes to review the notes with the facilitator and give it to Gerdy Verschuure or Vitnae Kang.

Preliminary information on networks

The introduction of the networks (as structure of the policy booklet/ final outcome) will be introduced by Willem Korthals Altes to the entire group just before the lunchbreak and Gerdy Verschuure will introduce the workshop shortly. A summary is placed on top of each poster.

The groups are organized prior to the workshop by Gerdy Verschuure and she will organize the difficulties at the start of the workshop. So, after lunch we start with the workshop and we hope you don't have to introduce the network. It is summarized on top of the poster. Next to it, we mentioned the most important ideas for change on these posters, so we hope that you can steer the discussion.



Network	Where is it about	Policy measures to improve infrastructures
Social Network	Care for children, parents and seniors.	Measures improving childcare, care for elderly, school systems.
Safety Network (financial)	Overcoming financial challenges in issues of health, income, divorce etc..	Improve on social security net, family law for a legal status of women, and access to finance
Working/Life network	Enabling a healthy work-life balance	Farmer relief services. Ensure more equal division of care responsibilities.
Economic network	Networks to trade and marketize products	Support commercializing products, Direct to Consumer and Short Supply Chain.
Advisory network	Access to tailor-made advice	Develop a rural advisory network that meets the needs of innovative women
Learning network	Peer to peer contacts with other innovators. Life-long learning.	Provide opportunities to recognize and meet peers. Increase learning opportunities tailored for needs.
Political network	Access to political decision-making power and representation	Organise public participation, meet with (potential) innovators
Source: FLIARA		

Table PB 1 Networks and policies

Final statement

We ask you to deliver the posters to be filled in and a summary of the discussion in three short statements. Willem Korthals Altes and Gerdy Verschuure will collect it for a wrap up later that day. After that, you are asked to make a bit more elaborated description of the outcome for the deliverables in two weeks after the Brussels meeting.

1.3 ORGANISATION DISCUSSION

Semi structured discussion:

Each table has two networks assigned for as the starting point of the discussion.

The reason behind it:

- more themes/ problems will be discussed- more diversity in answering
- less focus in the problems, more to find the solutions

Negative aspect:

- We might miss obvious cross links to other topics- don't hesitate to explore/ note these as well.
- not all problems are mentioned (to not cause overkill of information)



1.4 PLANNING OF THE DISCUSSION

Introduction

- Introduce the facilitator and the notetaker
- Introduce the participants: Ask/confirm name, country, role/type of participant, name of innovation/institution/ organization (practitioners/ambassadors, CSOs/NGOs/international networks, public institutions national or EU, researchers), since when does the innovation exist and where (geographically)
- Inform that there is an ethics guardian (Milada Šťastná) they can approach should they need to.
- Ask/ appoint someone who can give a very brief summary (one or two statements per group)

Discussion (50 minutes)

- Approx. 25 minutes discussion poster per network

Wrapping up

- 3 main points on paper for the final wrap up.
- Concluding remarks by the facilitator:

Any further comments or questions? Reminder about confidentiality, contacts CoP email (communityofpractice@fliara.eu), ethics. Thank the participants.

Facilitator and notetaker verify notes and consolidate them and gives them to Gerdy Verschuure and/or Willem Korthals Altes



ANNEX 2: FOUR POLICY WORKSHOPS AT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MEETINGS (IRELAND, SLOVENIA, ITALY, SWEDEN)

During all four Community of Practices (CoPs) in Ireland, Slovenia, Italy, and Sweden (Table 3: Dates and locations of policy workshops at CoP meetings), a policy practice workshop was organised as part of Task 5.2 (Work Package 5- FLIARA)

Workshop	Location	Date- time
Ireland	University of Galway (Galway)	02 July 2024
Slovenia	University of Ljubljana (Ljubljana)	24 September 2024
Italy	University of Calabria (Cosenza/Rende)	29 January 2025
Sweden	Linnaeus University (Växjö)	15 May 2025

Table 3: Dates and locations of policy workshops at CoP meetings

This report collects and analyses the main outcomes of these workshops and how it was used in WP5 outcomes like the policy briefs and policy booklet.

MAIN GOAL OF POLICY PRACTICE WORKSHOPS

One of the main ambitions of the FLIARA project is to support the development of more effective policy and governance frameworks and knowledge and innovation systems that will boost women's role in the sustainable development of rural areas and on farms on Europe, national, and local level.

The four *Policy Practice workshops PPW* (T5.2) play an important role in this ambition. During these workshops, female innovators, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders were challenged to give an overview of solutions, workarounds, or practical fixes of the major challenges they experienced during their innovation journey. The *Policy Practice workshops* embraced the multi-actor approach through a policy practice dialogue during all four Community of Practice (CoP) Networking events (WP4).

The hypothesis of this is that to break down disciplinary silos and engage users and experts in exploring lessons learned and outcomes, policy, institutional and other challenges encountered across FLIARA. Therefore, the female innovators, ambassadors, and entrepreneurs were questioned on their innovation as a main outcome. These workshops were meant to provide policy makers tips and tricks that they can use to address these issues. Next to tips and tricks, this process will raise awareness and enhance gender competence of policy makers in creating an enabling environment to achieve policy objectives. This will also contribute to the collection of feedback to ensure that policy makers' needs are covered in the project deliverables and, in this way, facilitate the adoption of policy recommendations within the case study areas and potential replicability in other rural areas in the EU.



FOUR SETTINGS

Exploring the challenges in four macro regional European settings (western, eastern, southern and northern Europe) was to ensure that diverse regional contexts are considered in the policy recommendation. The western regio contained Ireland, Germany, and The Netherlands, the eastern region contained Slovenia, Czech Republic, and Romania, the southern region were Italy and Spain, and the Northern regio Sweden and Finland. Due to the mixed group and number of participants from other macro regions, we cannot conclude that the outcomes per PPW stood for the discussions within the macro region.

The outcome of the workshops forms the base of the policy briefs and the policy booklet as two important outcomes of WP5. All chosen solutions could help to ensure a more end-user-effective policy in addition to informing recommendations for structural changes of governance frameworks at different levels and informing national policy environments.

This will provide policy makers and critics of policies the means to assess whether a certain context meets aspirational levels and what are the gaps between current situation and the benchmark. These suggestions could lead for adaptations in European, national, and local policies to facilitate solutions and other ways to address challenges faced by our female innovators, ambassadors, and entrepreneurs.

MAIN ACTORS

The key actors in these PPW (Figure 14) were firstly, the female ambassadors, innovators, and entrepreneurs in rural landscapes and agriculture. These actors were identified by consortium members during the research in WP2 and WP3, based on the success of their innovations and from the four main sustainability goals. Twenty female innovators and/ or entrepreneurs were identified for all 10 countries. These 200 women were interviewed, and based on this, 20 were selected to become an Ambassador for their country. Although these were targeted, other female innovators and entrepreneurs could join.



Figure 14: Main Actors Involved In The PPW Discussing The Innovation Journeys Of The Female Entrepreneurs Or Innovators



The second group of actors were key stakeholders and policymakers which became engaged at different stages in this WP or just subscribe to learn about the outcomes of this project. These policymakers were crucial in the process to ensure a co-creative approach in policy development. For the final workshop in Brussels, specific contacts will be established with the European Parliament, DG AGRI, DG Employment, DG REGIO and the Committee of Regions.

The third group of actors were the consortium members, who functioned as facilitators (chairpersons) and notetakers of the discussion between the actors involved.

ORGANISATION POLICY PRACTICE WORKSHOPS

The organisation of all four PPW was meant to be similar to make the outcomes comparable. Nevertheless, lessons learned of the first workshop (Galway), was used to improve the workshops in Slovenia, Italy, and Sweden. The Galway workshop was open organised and based on the main questions: what is the challenge? How to overcome this challenge? What policy should change? To organize the notes two forms were given. This process was introduced, and the outcomes were presented at the end of the discussion. The result was a wide range of outcomes.

To organize a differentiated outcome, the workshops in Slovenia, Rende and Växjö were semi structured organized around one of the four major themes: *Rural entrepreneurship, Farming, Female, and Innovations* (Figure 15).

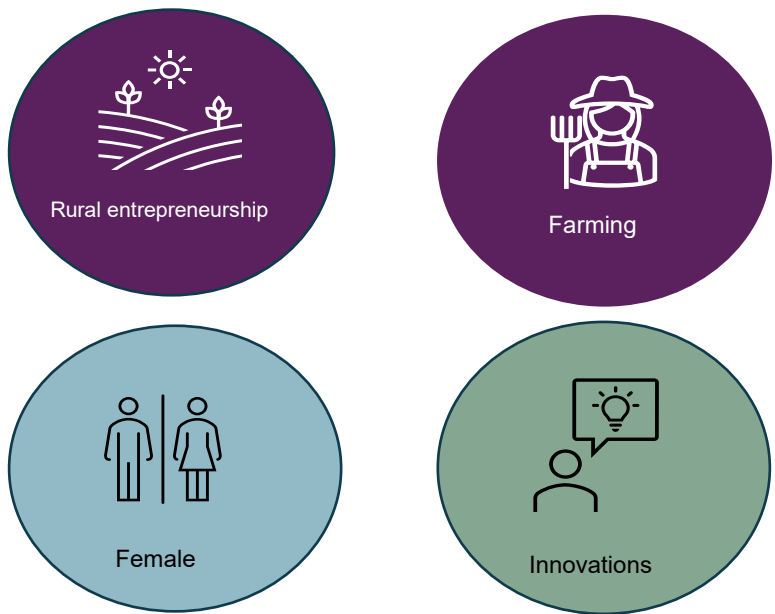


Figure 15: The Four Major Themes Of The FLIARA Project Were Used To Define A Wider Scope In Outcomes Of The PPW



ORGANISATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

To ensure the largest differentiation of actors, all discussion groups were organized similarly. All participants of the CoP were divided in two, because this workshop was organized parallel with the workshop T4.3. During each PPW, a group of approx. 40 participants were divided into four groups, all with a mix of different actors, varying from practitioners, ambassadors, CSOs/NGOs/ international networks, public institutions national or EU, researchers and consortium members. Since some participants left early, not all themes were elaborated similarly.

Consortium members were asked to facilitate the workshop as facilitator (or more or less the chairperson) or note taker. The duration of each workshop varied from 1hrs and 15 mins to 1 hrs and 45 mins. The workshop started with a general introduction of the four themes and questions for discussion. The facilitators were asked to give the floor to the practitioners and their ideas and started with a round of names and privacy statement. Each workshop ended with a short wrap up of the outcomes at the end of the workshop. The major outcomes of these discussions were presented during the plenary meeting. This organisation resulted in tables of 6 to 9 discussants (Figure 16).



Figure 16: PPW in Slovenia – photo Gerdy Verschuure

Although each CoP was organized in a different part of Europe and many of the practitioners came from the organizing country or the country next to it, the results show



differentiation, but not solely from that country, because the ambassadors were asked to join a CoP in another area (macro region).

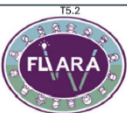
workshop	methodology	
Ireland	Open questions	Generic introduction
Slovenia	Semi structured	Topic related organisation
Italy	Semi structured	Topic related organisation
Sweden	Semi structured	Topic related organisation

Table 4: Organisation of the workshop

WRITTEN OUTCOMES (NOTES)

Name (if you want)

country



Innovation (farming or rural area)

Location: rural village, remote rural areas, rural areas close to city

How did you overcome this challenge?

Solution for the future?

Which regulations needs to change?

What level of policy regulation should change?

Figure 17: Layout Of The Notes



Notes were made on a form given to the note taker (Figure 17), with the most important questions:

The first part was to identify the problem and solutions:

What is the innovation/ challenge? How did you overcome this challenge? What is the solution for the future) for similar what is the problem/ issue/ challenge?

The second part was to identify the policy to change:

Which regulations need to change and what policy should change?

INSTRUCTIONS ON THE FOUR THEMES

During the CoP Ireland, the introduction of the workshop was focusing on the technical and basic ideas of the PPW. In Slovenia, Italy and Sweden, the introduction explained a very general idea on topics, defined the themes and gave some general ideas on topics and themes, based on the four major themes of FLIARA (female, innovation, rural entrepreneurship and farming).

These themes were elaborated in a long list of questions, which were presented and handed (manually) – together with general instructions – to the facilitators and notetakers. The elaboration was based on previous research in the FLIARA project (D1.1, D1.3, D1.5). So, the workshop in Ireland was open, the workshops in Slovenia, Italy and Sweden were semi-structured (Table 4).

The reason for this shift was the idea that it would result in more themes, problems or issues being discussed and we expected more diversity in answers. We hoped with this shift less focus on the problems, and more on finding solutions. We hoped this approach didn't lead to an overkill of information and too much steering from the researchers' perspective (Figure 15).



Figure 18: PPW during the CoP in Sweden- photo Gerdy Verschuure

Definition of the four themes as presented at the start of each workshop

Rural entrepreneurship: all topics concerning entrepreneurship in the rural and remote areas, dealing with community and social issues. Some topics related to this are community service, childcare, availability in digital and physical infrastructure, digitalization, active in local politics, etc.

Agriculture: all topics concerning the start and elaboration of agriculture production, farms and landownership in the urban-rural, rural or remote areas. The most important problems we witnessed are ownership on farmland, inheritance, availability of land, etc.

Female: all topics concerning the empowerment of women in agriculture and rural entrepreneurship. These are for example networking, gender data missing, size machinery, etc.

Innovation(s): all topics concerning creating an atmosphere for developing and implementing innovation(s), and the implementation as well as education and funding systems. Topics related are education, funding female types of innovations, etc.

These definitions and topics are just the start and form the base for further elaboration and discussion



OUTCOMES OF THE WORKSHOP IN IRELAND



Figure 19 and 20: roundtable discussions during policy practice workshop in Galway- photo Gerdy Verschuure

Communication and networking: learn how to create a craft business by greater communication with local (action) groups. Use your (personal) networks to identify supports and grants to identify intellectual property. Funding is important and regulations need to be easy for micro funds for startups.

Cyber safety: create self-funding for business with grants for the first two years. Funding for patent process and logo (through EU-IPO). Teach cyber safety and mindset at schools and improve cyber safety.

Network and communication: create paid mentoring programs and webinars to improve networking and communication (as an entrepreneur). Hold key providers accountable for good internet access even in remote areas. Internet is crucial for entrepreneurs and their businesses.

Sustainability in local communities: reuse and recycle furniture and identify equipment scheme. All lag's need to support and encourage to become the local rural development agents. Stimulate the right to recycle and stimulate that all manufacturers make goods that have a longer life cycle or could be repaired. Fine the dumping of illegal furniture higher. Get old equipment from a second level school for upgrading, used an old retro-fit van and create a rural social scheme. Stimulate easier planning permission in case of a "public good" social enterprise.

Organic food: respect and finance organic food production as part of European legislation (CAP), adhering to environmental issues and stimulate local solutions as part of environmental responsibility. Put a price tag on what farmers contribute to solutions.

Women representation: indicate indicators to understand gender equality and stimulate more research (data collection) on the role of women in agriculture. Allow data research with a gender dimension and better recording systems. Personal data on innovation and gender is difficult to mine. Gender as mediators.

Training: organize training for integrated development

Land ownership: land lease funding system to rent land in a new system. This requires moving away from rigid thinking/ change and flexibility in planning processes and new



planning approaches. Create pilot projects to test these new approaches. We have to listen to the voice of women in policy programs.

Funding: create long term funding beyond pilot projects. Take trust into account. Create co creation in collaborations.

Local information communication: improve social skills and bring stakeholders together in local information communication (non-violent local communication). Improve co-creation and stimulate to agree on a shared vision

Scale up: engaging on a local and one-to-one level, incorporating and increase soft skills into the business planning and stimulate local and regional trainings.

Land ownership: stimulate new types of collaborations in agriculture and landownership (De Aardveer. DB-Grondbeheer. Het lenteland. Land van ons, Herenboeren beweging). These organisations invented new ways of collective finance for land acquisition. Take care of the fiscal rules and banking policies. Stimulate the use of Crowdfunding, shareholders and other tasks rules for foundations and civic donations. Stimulate Communing agriculture land for organic, bio-diverse and environmental values and stimulate bank lending for organic farming. Make changes in region-based LEADER subsidy rules.

Networking: improve networking with experts, better funding and more accessible Erasmus+ program (and other similar programs)

Funding: searching for opportunities and funding for studying and networking abroad. Make a selection by Brussels, not local or national stakeholders. applying to open calls published, but not always being able to apply

Landownership: improve the access to land and create more control over arable land because no all arable land is being utilized. Fund for landuse and landownership.

Self-education: stimulate courses and supportive networks.

Advisory: stimulate community climate coaches and local climate ambassadors, getting input of national public figures. Stimulate public participation networks. Employment by the government. Provide data with green mapping.

Community: introducing holistic approach to community wellbeing.

Funding: core funding rather project-based or always new innovation and create easily accessible funding schemes for community-led initiatives.

Branding: improve the regional branding of dairy farms and products, with funding programs, reliable support programs, organize meetings with political leaders and strategy development and communication.

Advisory: keep on asking through bureaucracy, discuss environmental and water regulations issues.

Summary:

The main topics were funding, landownership, locality and community, learning schooling, family care, and networking. The specific topic was sustainability.



OUTCOMES OF WORKSHOP IN SLOVENIA



Figure 21-22: roundtable discussions during policy practice workshop in Slovenia- photo Gerdy Verschuure

Table: RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Family care: Service that is provided by public funding. LEADER Post could address this issue! Make childcare facilities flexible service in regulations and facilities. These regulation Ought to defend workers' rights. Pay higher wages for workers of these facilities: both private facilities like farmers or other social enterprises.

Farming: Diversification of farming activities and create additional services within farms (social enterprise). Encouragement to create these additional actions as they are not profitable. Create flexible funding.

Education: organize mandatory farmers course both on campus and online and classes and courses special for women only. Connect to local authorities and build confidence for women locally with 'She Knows': focus on marketing on women farmers. Stimulate the recognition of women in agriculture.

Digitalization: Cooperation for digital solutions for farmers.

Table: WOMEN

Female leadership: Give preferential funding if women on application. Give a tax break to women. Support structures & systems in place and stimulate women to take leadership. Organise childcare.

Law inheritance: Building expertise on how to organize this. Organise national events, education & training (for students in vocational education usually from farm families), and include this in agricultural curriculum. Start conversation on inheritance of farmland earlier (e.g. when owner is 50). Men and women need solid communication, and both partners need to be aware of emotional attachment, difficult to make decisions (mental health). Include all family members from the beginning of the discussion for a mind change. Raise awareness about starting to talk about it. Family farm clinic – workshops for farm families (Ireland). To lead to beginning that process. Farm partnerships / other incentives (Ireland).



Childcare/ elderly care: create more flexible service in local system. More flexible regulation for caregivers. Enable diverse training levels. Stimulate co-living of different generations, daycare locally on farms, experts on board. Two different examples: Home care state-funded but difficult to access and a lack of staff (Ireland). Family support, people continue working longer (Slovenia).

Table: AGRICULTURE

Farming: stimulate diversification of farming activities. Open farm to other activities, like social enterprises, without cutting from the main activity. Social manager on the farm can also revive closed farms.

Education: Male-dominated farm training/courses need another mindset. Confidence built through women-targeted courses. Digital education possible. Local networks. Courses especially for women.

Landownership: Difficult to access land/property, so make this easier. Solve issues on zoning and land value. Improve Living accommodation and services in rural and remote areas. Create flexibility in land planning laws.

Table: INNOVATION

Finance/ funding: organize open-ended grants with wide access

Recycling/ sustainability: All manufacturers should make goods in such a way to allow repair and a longer life cycle so improv

Stimulate local solutions: thinking about the impacts

Summary:

The main topics were childcare, inheritance, education, farming, and landownership, community.



OUTCOMES OF WORKSHOP IN ITALY



Figure 22-23: roundtable discussions during policy practice workshop in Italy- photo Gerdy Verschuure

Table: WOMEN

Social networking: Stimulate mixed networks, not only women's networks, because both men and women should change their working habits/ mindset.

Funding: Stimulate funding targeted for women and make a diversification for entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs working for non-profit organisations. This needs to be paid for by public funding.

Landownership: To get the right to get to your plot and landownership can be challenging; the municipality was asked to intervene. This demands understanding of exclusivity of property rights. This example shows the importance to have a good network in the community and to take leadership in local communities is important for female entrepreneurs or female farmers. This demands a culture change.

Table: INNOVATION

Agricultural association and local communities: Major associations (farming) do not always represent specific companies very well, like for example olive oil companies. Therefore, additional supportive networks are needed to help female entrepreneurs.

Community: it's a challenge to get rural services for locals and not just for tourists. National associations do not work on the level of local politics, so stimulate local communities and involvement of women in local societies.

Table: RURAL ENTREPRENEUR

Funding: funding issues are important and to overcome them is to invest in knowledge and education on finance, invest in bank loans and good relationships. Important is to be



brave. Create a network to share knowledge of funding. Focus on the problems of startups.

Entrepreneurship: sell not only products but knowledge (on entrepreneurship) as well. Stimulate exchange and support. Create more flexibility with applying rules and regulations.

Scale of regulations: regulations should work from top down as well as from bottom up (community as a start).

Empowerment: stimulate communication and to speak bravely and this means to learn to strengthen communication skills like empathy, understanding, listening, kindness, networking in not women only but in mixed gender groups. It's important to create local hubs and co-create platforms and work together.

Education: 'normal' knowledge is enough, but stimulate knowledge on business, leadership in education, motivation, competition, informal education, specialism, entrepreneurial issues, and mentoring. To stimulate education can be to make education tax free (Sweden), Enhance peer review policies, and give more financial relief for start-ups.

Table: AGRICULTURE

Finance: to get access to funding you need a specific skillset and if you don't have it, you can hire someone with these competences. Stimulate good business plans, which can make it. Organize more guaranteed funding. Teach rural regeneration schemes and peer to peer learning, education and local entrepreneur hubs. To stimulate policy to support female ownership and succession, reform ownership culture and reform the management culture.

Female representation: state mandatory quotas for women is women are under representative. Support groups and regulate change.

Climate change: climate change is a major challenge. Laws and regulations don't stimulate/ allow innovation- these rules need more flexibility, because these aren't. The tools are rebalancing nature and built water retention and other support for experimental solutions for water management.

Empowerment: we need more role models to overcome the lack of confidence as part of soft measurements. Showcase role models. Introduce safety nets. Introduce peer to peer learning and networking and more informal societal

Summary:

The main topics were funding, locality and community, female empowerment, family care, and networking. While in Ireland and Slovenia the focus was on women only networks, shifted the focus towards mixed networks during this workshop to stimulate emancipation of men.



OUTCOMES OF WORKSHOP IN SWEDEN



Figure 24-25: roundtable discussions during policy practice workshop in Sweden- photo Gerdy Verschuure

Table: WOMEN

Mind set: Change the mindset of both men and women that women can be innovator or entrepreneur. Negative stereotypes about successful women depend on the country's culture. Work on stereotyping gender expectations and define strategical approaches to overcome them. Stimulate women to take an active role. Activism can be very helpful. To organize this is a timely evolution: shape a new norm, create a law and create momentum in the media. This longtime process depends on different speeds.

Education: Encourage women to enter farming courses and learn practical skill sets, because education is essential.

Family care: Organise better caring system- children, elderly, disabled people.

Income: Organize equality in income; organize the same salary for equal jobs for men and women (country level).

Stimulate innovation: Grassroot project for women to establish their own company communication and create a company communication.

Table: FARMING

Access to land: Stimulate the access to land and stimulate women to grow their farm or combine it with other jobs. But on the other hand, keep micro farming alive and stimulate CSA. Change the mindset from profit driven to future interest and stimulate consumer awareness and diversification instead of specialization.

Funding: Stimulate with government subsidies specific products within various regions (make a risk analysis)

Law: change legislation so that farms can be split to stimulate small scale farming (some countries)

Underrepresentation in executive bodies (farming organisations): stimulate women and set a gender quota, prevent bullying, discuss emotional intelligence. Get data on the



results and efficiency of women in organisations and describe new models on female leadership.

Funding: stimulate funding related to gender equality

Table: RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP- INNOVATIONS

Stimulate a social rural lifestyle: Representation of women by women associations is too expensive, so they created new and independent one, which functions as a community centre/ social network. This social network provides lectures and a library, empowerment as a goal from the start. These national organisations tend to forget local needs and local context. Local autonomy versus centralism. Stimulate through grass roots projects the foundations of community centres as the heart of a rural life.

Stimulate local knowledge by creating libraries: municipalities have issues identifying local problems and not enough experience with cross-sectoral collaborations. Create local library teams to promote collaboration and local politicians can help in creating political activism. Create public-private partnership. Chose a permanent space and organize self-service access and funding of the foundation. The laws on library should be changed to make room for civil, community libraries.

Summary:

The main topics were community and rural lifestyle, funding, law and family care and community. The specific topic was community and localism.

COMPARISON AND CONCLUSION

10.8.1 SIMILARITIES TOPICS AND FOCUS

In the comparison of these outcomes, we witnessed similar **topics** like the focus on funding/ finance, childcare/ elderly care, education/ networking, and empowerment. These outcomes show a strong **focus** on locality, social enterprise and community, which can be addressed in multiple manners.

Topics: the five similar topics are

1. The need for flexible and guaranteed funding (finance) was addressed in all workshops in multiple sessions. Possible solutions varied from country to country.
2. The need for good family care, like children's care, care for elderly, disabled children, etc. Due to the differences in European countries, there was no common understanding on how long parental leave should be, nor how it is supposed to be organised.
3. The need for good social networks for women for education and peer to peer learning and stimulation of women to go to these courses.



4. The need to empower women and to give them the feeling of control and confidence they can organise a farm or enterprise themselves.

Focus: the **focus** on community was addressed through different topics like importance of local communities, producing local products, and contributing to local developments and stimulating local services, social enterprises and so on.

10.8.2 DIFFERENCES IN SOLUTIONS

1. Should networks be women only or mixed networks? Should women learn in an earlier stage to collaborate with men? And should men learn how to collaborate with the other ideas women have? During the CoP in Ireland and Slovenia, the focus was on women's only networks, the CoP in Italy argued for a mixed network.

2. Should we positively discriminate until women have their equal part? The question arose: when do we speak of equality? During the CoP in Italy, this was put on the table in a discussion about women and inheritance.

3. During the PPW during the CoP in Italy, the focus on the importance on community and bottom-up approaches was emphasised stronger than in other CoPs.

10.8.3 POLICY OR NOT

The comparison showed that not every aspect could be worked out in policy or regulations. Many of the aspects mentioned were grassroots projects, soft measurements, or organised differently in the various European countries on the local level. WP 2 concluded that social and soft measures (e.g. platforms, information, education, empowerment) were considered as the most effective means and traditional hard, administrative and economic means (e.g. finance, subsidies, bureaucracy, development projects, work life) were considered less effective.

OVERALL OUTCOME

Based on these four PPW, we can conclude that the empowerment of women on their innovation journey in agriculture and rural areas is about a wide range of topics- from family care, jurisdictional issues regarding inheritance and divorce, (small scale) funding for startups, equality in payment for similar tasks, social security, networking and influence, landownership, advisory, and so on. To improve the situation for women, the wide range of topics should be addressed in an overarching scheme to create a simple overview or system. This overarching view can help to give some direction in the width of this topic.

These topics are addressed in European policy (like CAP or LEADER), while others are dealt with at a national level and not all European member states are at the same pace with e.g.. childcare, maternity leave and so on. The focus on making European



policy briefs is important but should be accompanied by policy briefs on national level or addressed on regional (provincial/ bundeslaender, etc.) scale, depending on the organization of power within the member states. Therefore, we need to ensure overall European recommendations and policy and specific European member state recommendations and policy.

10.8.4 SYSTEM OF NETWORKS

Based on the ideas of WP2, describing the importance of networks for women, we organized the different topics according to seven networks.

Female empowerment on the innovation journey

The best way to empower women and grow their self-esteem is to ensure that they have enough knowledge on all important topics. Therefore, we address 7 topics or networks which need to be addressed (

Table 1 Networks and policies).

Empowerment by spotlighting

Overall topics which cannot be addressed by women, but by other organisations are not addressed in the networks is the need to empower women (Figure 18).

Role modelling	Role models	Show good role models/ ambassadors
	Visibility campaigns	Stimulate campaigns to envision a female led future': a quote of a female entrepreneur: <i>'If you can see it, you can do it'</i>
	Discuss gender bias	Address the gender bias in all new policy so that men and women become aware of the patriarchal ways of thinking by men and women

Figure 18: Empowerment By Spotlighting



10.8.5 IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD PLACE- COMMUNITY

Topics which are important for all innovators and entrepreneurs, not specifically women are presented in Figure .

Environ- mental hurdles	Healthy, clean environment	For every entrepreneur it's vital to show their farm or enterprise in the best way, with good connection (digital/ physical)
	Digital connections	In rural and remote areas, digital connections are challenging and these are vital.
	Public transportation	
	Water management (climate change)	

Figure 26: Environmental Hurdles



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