



**IN  
SITU** place-based **innovation** of  
**cultural and creative** industries  
in **non-urban** areas

(GA Project 101061747)

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## Gender dimension of IN SITU

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## Executive Summary

The findings of this report, *Gender Dimension of IN SITU* (Deliverable 7.4), were developed within the framework of the four-year Horizon Europe project *IN SITU – Place-based Innovation of Cultural and Creative Industries in Non-urban Areas* (Grant Agreement no. 101061747), which incorporates a transversal gender dimension in its research plan. The deliverable comprises two complementary outputs: (1) this report, which provides the full methodological, theoretical, and analytical framework of the gender dimension analysis conducted within the project, and (2) a public-facing booklet that synthesises the main findings in a more accessible and concise format for a broader audience. The gender booklet, entitled “Exploring Gender Roles in Non-urban Cultural and Creative Industries: Insights from the IN SITU Project,” is included as Annex 2.

The current report provides a comprehensive overview of the gender-related data collected and analysed throughout the project, together with practices, perspectives, and tools that were implemented to contribute to a more inclusive and gender-aware approach for researchers and among non-urban CCIs involved in project activities. Within the project, gender is understood as a social construct that shapes identities, roles, behaviours, and opportunities, and is not necessarily linked to biological sex. The project adopts an inclusive understanding of gender that recognises identities beyond the binary categories of women and men while acknowledging the structural inequalities and biases that can emerge through gendered social norms.

The analysis was conducted through a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data gathered across the project’s four-year duration, and structured around three levels of analysis: (1) the CCI sector in non-urban areas (for an overarching view); (2) CCIs at an organisational level (i.e., those organisations participating as case studies, or involved in research or training activities of the IN SITU project); and (3) IN SITU project activities.

**At the sectoral level**, the findings confirm that women are strongly present within cultural and creative occupations, particularly in non-urban areas. However, this presence does not correspond to an equal distribution of roles, responsibilities, or opportunities. Women are more frequently associated with activities related to cultural production, communication, education, and coordination, while men tend to be more represented in technical, digital, and leadership roles. Gender inequalities, including pay gaps, limited access to digital skills, and barriers to career progression, remain embedded within the sector’s structures, often reinforced by the informality and project-based nature of cultural work.

**At the organisational level**, the analysis of cultural mapping data from each IN SITU Lab, case study documentation, the case studies’ reflexive monitoring reports, qualitative interviews with representatives from ten of the IN SITU case studies, and documentation from the IN SITU training sessions reveals a more nuanced picture. While some case studies demonstrate relatively balanced gender representation, the findings highlight persistent patterns in the distribution of labour, visibility,

and recognition. Women's contributions in coordination, community engagement, and relational work are central to how cultural initiatives function, yet are often treated as informal rather than skilled and strategic work.

**At the level of IN SITU project activities,** gendered participation patterns emerged across a wide range of formats, including data collection activities, participatory processes, and capacity-building initiatives involving case study representatives, cultural practitioners, stakeholders, and project participants. Across several activities—such as training sessions, webinars, and collaborative learning initiatives—cis females consistently represented the majority of participants, while lower levels of cis male participation were frequently observed. However, the findings also indicate that participation alone does not necessarily translate into equal influence, visibility, or decision-making power, with gender dynamics within the events varying according to the type and format of activity.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations addressed to EU programmes, policymakers, and cultural and creative sector organisations, highlighting that gender equality within CCIs in non-urban areas requires deliberate and consistent action across multiple levels. These recommendations call for greater consistency between policy commitments and everyday practices, improved gender data collection, broader recognition of diverse forms of cultural work, and more flexible approaches that account for the specific conditions of non-urban territories.

## 1. Introduction

*IN SITU – Place-based Innovation of Cultural and Creative Industries in Non-urban Areas* is a four-year project funded under the Horizon Europe Programme (Grant Agreement no. 101061747) that combines research and experimental actions to advance the innovation-related practices, capacities, and potentials of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) based in non-urban and rural areas of the European Union. The project is structured around six Labs<sup>1</sup>, which function as place-based research and innovation environments in non-urban regions across Europe. These Labs bring together local stakeholders, cultural actors, and researchers to explore and support cultural and creative practices within their specific territorial contexts. Within the Labs, 12 case studies (two per region) were identified in the early stages of the project through a structured process, as creative responses to the place-based challenges identified in each area. Overall, the project aims to challenge dominant urban-centric cultural economy perspectives on non-urban areas; to widen perceptions of the value-added aspects of the work of CCIs in these territories; and analyse new CCI business practices and collaborative governance to achieve transformative arts and culture-based development for community and territorial impact.

This report, *Gender Dimension of IN SITU* (Deliverable 7.4) aims to consolidate and analyse the gender dimension across the data collected throughout the project, bringing together insights from multiple levels of analysis—the CCI sector in non-urban areas, CCIs at an organisational level, and IN SITU project activities—into a transversal perspective. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to a more in-depth understanding of how gender shapes participation, representation, and access to opportunities within Cultural and Creative Industries in non-urban areas.

The analysis presented in this report was developed in line with Task 7.4, *Inclusion of the Cross-cutting Gender Dimension* (M1–M48). This task aimed to integrate gender considerations throughout the project by supporting the implementation of the IN SITU Gender Equality Plan, promoting gender-sensitive research practices, and analysing the gender dimension across project activities and outcomes. In addition, 10% of the time allocated to the project Kick-off Meeting and consortium working meetings was reserved for discussions related to gender equality and the integration of gender perspectives into the project’s methodology, governance, and activities.

Deliverable 7.4 is structured into two complementary components. The first component is the present report, which provides the conceptual, methodological, and analytical framework supporting the gender dimension analysis developed throughout the IN SITU project. The second component is the booklet entitled “Exploring Gender Roles in Non-urban Cultural and Creative Industries: Insights from the IN SITU Project” (included as Annex 2), which is designed as a more accessible and visually oriented

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<sup>1</sup> The six IN SITU Labs are located in the Azores archipelago in the mid-Atlantic Ocean (Portugal); the western coastal periphery (Ireland); the West Region (Iceland); Rauma and Eurajoki on the west coast and the Baltic Sea archipelago (Finland); Valmiera County (Latvia); and Šibenik-Knin County (Croatia).

publication synthesising the project's key findings, insights, and recommendations regarding gender in cultural and creative industries in non-urban areas. From this point forward, the term *report* is used to refer to the present document.

The IN SITU project acknowledges gender as a key sociocultural dimension, essential to understanding the dynamics of cultural and creative activities, participation, and innovation in non-urban contexts. Gendered aspects influence access to opportunities, visibility, leadership roles, working conditions, and participation within the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), while also intersecting with broader territorial and structural inequalities characteristic of non-urban environments. Within this framework, gender considerations are integrated into the project's research and practice-based activities, aligning with the European Commission's commitment to the comprehensive incorporation of gender perspectives in Horizon Europe-funded research.<sup>2</sup> The IN SITU Gender Equality Plan establishes the framework guiding how gender is monitored, analysed, and addressed across the project's research methodology, participatory processes, and organisational practices.

The gender component of the project was addressed as a cross-cutting dimension throughout all activities. In this regard, gender is not approached solely as an analytical tool, but as a dimension that shapes the dynamics of CCIs in non-urban areas by influencing access, participation, visibility, and opportunities within cultural and creative practices and organisations. Gender is considered a relevant dimension for understanding participation, labour dynamics, and access to opportunities within the CCI sector in non-urban areas. Women represent a significant share of those operating in the cultural ecosystems in the IN SITU Lab territories, and account for around half of the workforce in the sector (European Commission, 2024). Yet in some European countries, they are more likely to hold part-time positions, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles, and they face higher levels of job precarity, often linked to family responsibilities (European Commission, 2024; Walther et al., 2023).<sup>3</sup> While women remain prominent in discussions surrounding gender inequalities in CCIs, the gender dimension also involves broader questions of diversity, visibility, and participation, including the experiences of gender-diverse individuals whose representation often remains limited within both

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<sup>2</sup> The European Commission strongly promotes the integration of the gender dimension into research, ensuring that sex and gender considerations are systematically addressed and highlighting differing priorities, structural inequalities, and forms of discrimination.

<sup>3</sup> In the broader European context, Eurostat (2026) data on women indicate that gender inequalities persist across multiple domains, particularly in relation to labour participation and working conditions. Females are more likely to engage in part-time work due to care responsibilities and continue to earn, on average, 12% less than men under comparable working conditions. They are also predominantly represented in fields traditionally associated with women's work, such as the arts and humanities, and health and welfare (40.7%), thus highlighting how structural inequalities and gendered roles continue to shape professional opportunities, even within societies often perceived as progressive.

cultural sectors and available datasets. Altogether, a gender perspective is essential for a more in-depth understanding of CCIs in non-urban regions.

In the *IN SITU Concept Guide*, gender is looked at as a system of social stratification and power, understood as a socially constructed dimension that is shaped by social norms, relations, and structures, while also shaping them within cultural and creative initiatives in non-urban areas (Soares & Walther, 2024). Within dominant social frameworks, gender is predominantly defined in binary terms, assigning specific attributes, roles, and skills as either male or female. This interpretation of bodies and roles shapes social relations at multiple levels, as well as perceptions of behaviour, activities, and social expectations. Within this framework, while *gender* refers to the assignment of socially constructed roles and attributes, *gender identity* refers to an individual's personal identification with a particular gender, which may differ from biological sex or fall outside binary socially constructed categories.

Furthermore, addressing the dynamics noted above requires understanding the structural forces underlying long-standing inequalities. *Gender equity* focuses on addressing and correcting historical and systemic inequalities by recognising different needs and circumstances, and it can be understood as the process through which gender equality can be achieved. *Gender equality*, instead, refers to a state in which all individuals have the same rights, opportunities, and access regardless of their gender. Within CCIs in non-urban areas, these concepts are particularly relevant due to persistent inequalities related to participation, visibility, leadership, access to resources, and the distribution of cultural and creative labour. This report provides a comprehensive overview of how gender-related dynamics emerged across the project's activities, methodologies, and collaborative practices, highlighting actions and experiences that may contribute to promoting gender equity and, ultimately, to advancing gender equality in the context of rural Cultural and Creative Industries in Europe, with an emphasis on locally grounded policies.

Throughout the analytical sections of this report, the terms *cis female* and *cis male*, as well as *female* and *male*, are primarily used when referring to quantitative datasets and predefined gender categories adopted within the IN SITU data collection framework. In this context, terms such as *women* and *men* (when referring to *cis women* and *cis men*) are used in broader analytical, historical, or conceptual discussions, where the focus is placed on social dynamics, lived experiences, and structural gender relations rather than on data classification categories. In contrast, broader analytical and conceptual discussions explicitly acknowledge that gender experiences within CCIs also include trans, non-binary, intersex, queer, and other gender-diverse individuals, even when these groups remain less visible within the collected datasets.

The report is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the existing literature on gender within Cultural and Creative Industries, with particular attention to non-urban contexts and the structural inequalities affecting participation, visibility, and access to opportunities. Section 3 situates the gender dimension

within broader historical perspectives, rural disparities, and European policy frameworks related to gender equality. Section 4 outlines the methodological approach adopted for the analysis, including the three-level analytical framework and the data sources drawn upon. Section 5 presents the findings organised according to the three levels of analysis: the CCI sector in non-urban areas, CCIs at an organisational level, and IN SITU project activities. Closing the report, Section 6 presents a set of recommendations addressed to EU programmes, policymakers, and cultural and creative sector organisations, based on the insights generated throughout the analysis. Annex 1 presents the interview guide, and Annex 2 is the gender booklet that comprises part of Deliverable 7.4.

## 2. Gender research in the CCIs

Cultural and Creative Industries are often framed as drivers of social transformation through the exercise of cultural rights. From a gender perspective, CCIs in non-urban areas may create conditions for more equitable participation, visibility, and access to opportunities across different gender identities, while contributing to the deconstruction of persistent gender stereotypes and the promotion of cultural diversity.

However, several studies highlight persistent gender inequalities within the cultural and creative sectors (European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.; Gill, 2014; UNESCO, 2014). Although many women graduate in cultural education and training, they are often employed in low-paid, part-time, and project-based roles, and are more likely to lose employment during periods of crisis. Gill (2014) argues that the informality characterising much of the sector contributes to these inequalities by enabling subtle forms of sexism to persist beyond formal mechanisms of accountability. This informality shapes the functioning of many small and medium-sized creative organisations, where recruitment and opportunities often rely on informal networks rather than transparent procedures.

These inequalities are embedded in specific cultural and structural dynamics. Although CCIs are frequently framed as open and meritocratic environments, research indicates that leadership, visibility, and access to opportunities often remain unevenly distributed, with white, cisgender, middle-class men continuing to occupy many dominant positions within the sector (Gill, 2014). While CCIs are often positioned as spaces of innovation and social progress, they continue to reproduce traditional power hierarchies and gendered divisions of labour. Research has shown that women are frequently concentrated in roles associated with communication, coordination, and support functions, while creative leadership and decision-making positions remain predominantly occupied by men (Conor et al., 2015; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015). Research further shows that working conditions in CCIs can expose women to additional vulnerabilities, including sexual harassment, informal pressures, and exclusionary networking practices (Jones, 2020; Hennekam & Bennett, 2017). These dynamics are often intensified in temporary or project-based environments, such as festivals, where informal structures can reproduce and amplify gendered power relations.

In rural areas, Esparcia and Serrano (2016) show that, although women in these territories have traditionally held marginal roles in the economic, social, and political life, the integration of a gender perspective in local programmes can enable their participation, influence, and recognition to approach levels comparable to those of men. Similarly, research conducted within the IN SITU project (Walther et al., 2023) highlights that gender inequalities in cultural and creative industries in non-urban areas are often reinforced by traditional stereotypes, limited recognition of women's work, and reduced access to decision-making roles. At the same time, this research emphasises the role of the IN SITU Labs as experimental spaces within an EU-funded project, where gender-related dynamics can be explored and, to some extent, challenged. By fostering networking, awareness-raising, and inclusive forms of participation, the Labs create opportunities for women and other underrepresented gender groups to gain visibility, navigate structural barriers, and engage in different ways of organising cultural and creative work. In this regard, gender is approached not only as a matter of social justice but also as a key dimension of cultural development, positioning Cultural and Creative Industries as spaces that can foster participation, representation, visibility, and access to cultural, social, and economic opportunities. This commitment is reflected in the project's design, which integrates gender perspectives across literature reviews, empirical research, and methodological frameworks. Gender considerations are therefore incorporated into surveys, interviews, and monitoring processes. By embedding gender equality throughout its methods and practices, IN SITU aims to contribute to more inclusive cultural and creative ecosystems through its findings and policy proposals (Walther et al., 2023).

Contemporary cultural studies emphasise the importance of examining how gender intersects with other forms of inequality, such as class, ethnicity, religion, and spatial belonging, including rurality. This perspective is further developed within Black feminist scholarship, particularly through Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) work on intersectionality, which critiques approaches that treat social categories as separate and independent. As Crenshaw (1989) demonstrates, dominant analytical frameworks often rely on a "single-axis" understanding of inequality, which obscures the experiences of those positioned at the intersection of multiple forms of subordination. From this perspective, categories such as gender, race, and class are not discrete variables but interrelated dimensions that shape distinct experiences of discrimination and exclusion. This reinforces the need, highlighted in contemporary cultural studies, to analyse these categories in relation to one another in order to better capture the complexity of social inequalities. As Tuitjer (2022) argues, these categories are not fixed but heterogeneous and reducing rurality to a stable category obscures its internal diversity.

From this intersectional perspective, citizenship is understood as a dynamic process shaped by overlapping systems of inclusion and exclusion. Accordingly, Siim (2009) highlights that analysing gender within CCIs in non-urban areas requires situating it within broader structures of power and identity that determine visibility, participation, and access to opportunities. In this context, Eisenberg and Spinner-Halev (2005) argue that democratic societies are composed of multiple minority groups whose interactions shape social and political dynamics. In non-urban CCIs, women and gender-diverse

individuals exemplify this condition, as they belong to already underrepresented communities, including in decision-making processes, while facing additional barriers related to gender inequalities, territorial constraints, and limited access to resources.

Furthermore, in rural CCIs, gender dynamics are closely linked to the intersection of geography and class. Rural territories often present structural conditions such as geographic isolation, lower infrastructural investment, and more limited access to resources, which shape who can participate in cultural production, under what conditions, and with which means. At the same time, class and socioeconomic status influence access to education, mobility, and professional networks, reinforcing unequal patterns of participation. This intersectional perspective highlights that gender in rural CCIs cannot be understood as an isolated variable, but rather as part of a broader constellation of structural inequalities embedded in place. As Massey (1994) argues, spatial structures are deeply intertwined with wider social relations, making gender inequalities inseparable from territorial and class dynamics.

### 3. Gender equality: Historical context, rural disparities, and policy frameworks

#### 3.1. Brief historical perspective on gender equality in Europe

Throughout European history, gender dynamics have followed a complex path, shaped by legal reforms, social and revolutionary movements, and enduring cultural resistances. Historically, men have occupied positions linked to production and decision-making, whereas women have mostly remained responsible for caregiving and domestic work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015). Although their participation in the public sphere and the formal labour market has increased in the last century, it is still shaped by this tension between the public and private dialectics. Traditional divisions of labour, industrialisation, urbanisation, and broader access to education have all played an essential role in shaping gender relations across both rural and urban contexts.

When we discuss the urban–rural dichotomy, we are operating within an imaginary framework that has been culturally constructed over time. As Williams (1973) demonstrates, British literature and cultural discourse historically represented the countryside and the city in contrasting ways: the countryside was often idealised as natural, traditional, or “innocent,” while the city was portrayed as complex, dynamic, and a centre of social and economic change. These cultural representations became particularly significant during the industrialisation processes that Europe underwent from the mid-eighteenth century onward. Industrialised life centres defined what lay outside them as non-urban or rural, shaping perceptions of these areas as less central to social, economic, and political life. Within this constructed framework, gender dynamics in non-urban areas in Europe also became more clearly differentiated from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Divergences between urban

and non-urban contexts further intensified, driven by industrialisation and its effects on time allocation, types of labour, and broader socio-economic structures.

On European territory, there isn't a unique narrative of women in rural areas; each region and community has its own historical trajectory. In a similar vein, dominant narratives of Cultural and Creative Industries often focus on urban, industrialised, or widely studied regions, while the experiences of rural or peripheral areas follow different patterns. These differences are not only social or cultural but also historical, reflecting long-term variations in gender roles and economic structures. Recognising such situated histories allows for a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics and highlights that the realities of women in non-urban areas cannot be reduced to a single narrative.

In this regard, the notion of place-making offers a useful perspective to understand how gender operates spatially. Place-making refers to the processes through which people collectively shape and give meaning to their environments through cultural, social, and material practices, particularly within locally embedded contexts (Akbar & Edelenbos, 2021; Massey, 1994). These processes are not gender-neutral and vary across contexts; spaces are produced and experienced differently according to gendered norms, roles, and power relations. Within cultural and creative practices, particularly in non-urban areas, these dynamics become visible in how different forms of participation, visibility, and recognition are spatially distributed. For example, women's creative work in rural contexts has often been associated with informal or domestic spaces (e.g., home-based creative practices, craft-related activities, or community-led initiatives), frequently remaining less visible or undervalued, while more formalised or publicly recognised cultural production has tended to occupy institutional or economically valorised spaces. Recognising place-making as a gendered practice highlights how cultural spaces are socially constructed, continuously shaped through social processes, and often politically contested (Akbar & Edelenbos, 2021; Massey, 1994).

In this context, the *IN SITU Concept Guide* emphasises place-based development as an approach that foregrounds the specific characteristics of each territory and moves beyond one-size-fits-all models (Collins, 2024). It acknowledges that social, cultural, political, and institutional contexts shape development outcomes, and aligns with gender-aware place-making by recognising that spaces are shaped by both social and spatial dynamics. Guided by place-based values (those that resonate with people who live, work, or regularly visit a place), planning and policy interventions can build visions of what a place means, sustain human–place relationships, strengthen community bonds, and enhance social resilience. Higher levels of government establish overarching rules, while local actors retain the freedom to implement them in ways that respond to their specific circumstances.

Women have always been involved in creative and artistic practices, even if these did not always fall within what is formally recognised as an “industry.” In rural areas, their contributions often took the form of crafts, artisanal production, and other cultural work connected to the private sphere, far from institutional recognition, as well as roles associated with supporting or assisting in male-dominated

craft or cultural activities, roles which have similarly remained less visible and undervalued. This helps explain why women's presence in formal cultural production has remained under-recognised. Therefore, gender disparities in rural areas have long-standing historical and structural roots, particularly within the cultural and creative industries. Women in rural territories face multiple barriers that limit access to funding, professional networks, and media visibility (Bryant & Piri, 2011). The double burden of domestic and professional responsibilities restricts time and energy for creative work, while persistent gender stereotypes, often linking women primarily to motherhood, further limit recognition of women as full cultural agents (WOMarts, 2020). Traditional gender roles also constrain recognition of cultural practices such as weaving, embroidery, and oral traditions, which are often dismissed as "domestic craft" rather than valued as professional creative work.

Access to professional training and financial resources is unevenly distributed due to geographic isolation, weak digital infrastructure, and seasonal dependence on tourism (Bock, 2010; Cloke et al., 2006), which can disproportionately affect women and other underrepresented groups in accessing professional opportunities. Moreover, rural-to-urban migration has historically reinforced these inequalities. Many women leave rural areas in search of education and professional opportunities, creating gaps in local communities, while those who remain often experience economic precarity and social isolation (Tuitjer, 2022; Araújo Castro, 2014). Gender and sexual diversity issues further compound these inequalities, as queer identities in rural contexts are less visible and socially recognised, limiting inclusion in local projects and cultural initiatives (Thomsen, 2021). Regardless of these constraints, craftspeople and designer-makers have long challenged conventional ideas of entrepreneurial "success," often operating outside dominant models of large-scale industrial production, reflecting a form of creative resistance that has historically characterised women's work in domestic and rural contexts (Luckman, 2018) and, at the same time, has kept a distance from the massive production sphere that are characteristic of industrialisation.

Nowadays, in the Cultural and Creative Industries, gender roles and stereotypes continue to shape patterns of participation, role distribution, and access to opportunities within the sector. Even though women's participation has grown in fields such as visual arts, crafts, dance, and literature, as they constitute the majority of higher education graduates in the arts and humanistic degrees, they remain underrepresented in decision-making positions, experience lower international visibility, and struggle for equitable pay. Women's access to resources and opportunities in creative fields, though, is not only a matter of fairness but also of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2014). Persistent inequalities in the cultural and creative sectors result in the loss of significant cultural and economic capital, particularly in areas where innovation relies on diverse voices. Historically, these dynamics have been analysed predominantly through binary understandings of gender, which has shaped both the focus and the scope of research in the field. As a result, the experiences of gender-diverse individuals have remained largely overlooked, not only in policy and practice but also in academic research, limiting a more comprehensive understanding of how inequalities are structured and experienced across the sector.

In rural contexts where gender dynamics have historically been shaped by specific factors, including limited access to education, selective migration to urban areas, and fewer opportunities for formal employment in creative sectors, Cloke et al. (2006) suggest that these conditions have reinforced the perception of CCIs as predominantly urban spaces. This is mainly due to the fact that cities are considered to be the place of economic transactions, whereas rural areas have historically been associated with the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage.

Overall, historical and contemporary perspectives reveal that the interplay between domestic/private and public/industrial spheres continues to shape women's participation, visibility, and economic recognition in Europe's non-urban areas, and consequently in Cultural and Creative Industries, highlighting the importance of addressing these structural inequalities.

### 3.2. Policy frameworks for gender equality in Europe

The European Union (EU) provides a comprehensive legal and policy framework to promote gender equality, ensuring that women and gender-diverse individuals can participate fully in the social, economic, and cultural life. Key instruments include Horizon Europe, regional development programmes, and other funding schemes that integrate gender perspectives in project design, implementation, and evaluation (European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.). The European Commission's *Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030* (European Commission, 2026) and the *Roadmap for Women's Rights* (European Parliament, 2025) combine targeted measures with systematic gender mainstreaming across all policy areas. The *Roadmap* sets out core priorities including combating gender-based violence, advancing economic empowerment and equal pay, promoting work–life balance and equality in care, ensuring equal participation in the labour market and decision-making, and strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender equality. The strategy adopts an intersectional approach, recognising that gender intersects with other forms of inequality and shapes differentiated experiences and opportunities. Gender mainstreaming thus functions as both a methodological and epistemological principle, guiding policymakers to treat gender as a structuring dimension of knowledge, opportunity, and resource allocation, including in non-urban and creative contexts.

In the cultural and creative industries, measures such as funding criteria, quotas, and mentorship programmes are used to increase women's visibility and leadership opportunities (Menzel, 2021; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2019). For rural areas, EU policies stress the importance of integrating gender considerations into regional and cohesion strategies, ensuring that innovation, creativity, and cultural production are not confined to urban centres. This approach recognises that women in non-urban contexts face unique structural and socio-economic barriers, including geographic isolation, limited access to education and professional networks, and persistent gender norms that undervalue domestic and artisanal cultural practices.

Projects such as IN SITU, GRASS CEILING, and FLIARA exemplify the operationalisation of these frameworks. IN SITU focuses on enabling cultural and creative industries in rural areas, fostering community-driven innovation, and enhancing recognition of rural cultural labour. GRASS CEILING aims to empower women in rural territories, linking creative, socio-ecological, and economic innovation, while FLIARA explores the role of women’s knowledge, leadership, and local engagement in driving sustainable rural development. Together, these projects demonstrate how EU objectives are translated into concrete, locally relevant actions, highlighting both opportunities and persistent challenges.

Despite these efforts, barriers persist. Women remain underrepresented in leadership positions, experience pay gaps, and face obstacles linked to traditional gender roles. Strategies to address these constraints include promoting inclusive language, collecting gender-disaggregated data, preventing harassment, and supporting access to funding, training, and entrepreneurial opportunities. By linking EU-level strategies, particularly the European Commission’s *Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030*, with concrete projects, policy frameworks aim to create more inclusive and sustainable cultural and creative sectors in rural areas.

At the same time, while the strong focus on women across many of these initiatives is essential for addressing historical and structural inequalities, broadening this perspective to include the experiences of gender-diverse individuals would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics within rural CCI, where some perspectives remain less visible in both policy frameworks and project implementation.

These structural, social, and policy dimensions are embedded in broader dynamics that shape participation, recognition, and access to opportunities. Understanding them is essential to contextualise the gender analysis in IN SITU. Within this framework, analysing the gender dimension of the IN SITU project required a methodological approach capable of combining this broader conceptual and policy context with the empirical evidence collected throughout the project. Section 3 therefore outlines the methodological approach adopted to examine how gender was integrated, monitored, and analysed within IN SITU.

#### **4. Methodological approach to the gender dimension analysis of the IN SITU project**

The analysis of the project’s gender dimension was developed through a mixed-methods research approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collected throughout the project. The previous sections provide contextual grounding for the analysis, supporting the interpretation of gender dynamics in Cultural and Creative Industries in non-urban areas. Qualitative data was obtained in two ways. First, gender-related data and insights from IN SITU reports produced by the project partners were closely reviewed. These reports combined literature reviews with original data from the Labs

derived from surveys, interviews, focus groups, and workshops. Second, additional interviews with case study representatives were conducted specifically for this report. Quantitative data was derived from the monitoring of participation across a wide range of project activities implemented throughout the project.

The mixed-methods approach follows established methodological frameworks that combine quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena. Quantitative data allows for the identification of broader patterns and trends, while qualitative data provides depth by capturing participants' experiences and perspectives, with both strands being integrated at the interpretation stage of the research (Creswell, 2009).

The data has been collected and analysed throughout the four-year duration of the project, following a three-level analytical framework: the CCI sector in non-urban areas; CCIs at an organisational level; and IN SITU activities.

The first level focuses on the **Cultural and Creative Industries sector in non-urban areas** across non-urban areas in Europe, where gender is considered a structuring dimension. This includes analysing participation across CCI subsectors, types of activities, and leadership roles, as well as identifying differences between urban and non-urban contexts. It also examines factors influencing gender inequalities, such as pay gaps and segregation patterns, and adopts an intersectional perspective that considers gender alongside other dimensions, including cultural participation and the protection of minorities and threatened identities.

The second level addresses **CCIs at the organisational level**, focusing on gender roles and participation within organisations involved in IN SITU. This includes monitoring gender involvement, analysing how case studies approach gender and equality, and integrating gender as a monitoring dimension within the IN SITU Labs, following existing guidance. It also considers gender balance in training and capacity-building activities and identifies possible imbalances and their underlying causes, while also considering how gender may shape organisational dynamics, visibility, and forms of participation within CCIs.

The third level focuses on **IN SITU project activities**, where gender is treated as a cross-cutting dimension. This includes ensuring equitable access and balanced participation in events, considering gender in the selection of speakers and participants, and monitoring participation by gender. It also ensures that the gender dimension is regularly addressed within project meetings and activities, in line with the IN SITU Gender Equality Plan.

For the initial two levels, the data were obtained from a comprehensive review of pertinent project reports generated by the IN SITU Consortium (see Table 1). Notably, the first dimension, examining gender in the macro context of the Cultural and Creative Industries sector in non-urban areas, was directly addressed by the IN SITU report *Gender Dimension of CCIs in Non-urban Areas* (Walther et al.,

2023). For this report, this approach involved extracting and synthesising all gender-related information that had been collected and analysed, including reflections on these findings in the reports. This allowed for the consolidation of existing knowledge within the project and ensured that the report on Gender Dimension builds upon previously developed insights, while providing a complementary and transversal perspective on gender across different contexts and activities.

Additional interviews with the IN SITU case studies were pivotal in the analysis carried out for this report. Interviews were indeed a central method of data collection all along the project's broader methodological framework. Since case studies were actively involved in the project's activities and monitoring processes, the interviews allowed for an in-depth understanding of their development trajectories and organisational practices through a gender lens. The interviews were conducted online with representatives of the case studies (with one exception in which two members from the same case study were present), covering 10 out of the 12 case study projects. Interviews with two of the case studies could not be conducted due to the unavailability of respondents within the timeframe required to ensure the accuracy of the analysis for this report. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, based on a predefined interview guide (presented in Annex 1), allowing for both consistency across Labs and flexibility to explore context-specific insights. Each interview had an approximate duration of one hour. In line with ethical considerations, the interviews conducted ensured the anonymity of the interviewees, stating nothing more than their gender in order to retain only relevant gender-related information.

For the third level, gender was monitored across a wide range of project activities, including focus groups, surveys, interviews, Speak Out sessions, webinars, conferences, summer school, the case study camp, and Horizontal Network activities. Gender data was collected through self-identification and coded according to a predefined set of gender categories used across the project (presented in Table 2). This gender categorisation was developed within the IN SITU framework and aligned with existing literature and best practices, including guidance from the 2016 report of the Federal Interagency Working Group on Improving Measurement of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Federal Surveys (FWG SOGI, 2016) as well as discussions carried out within the IN SITU Gender Committee.<sup>4</sup> This data was collected by the IN SITU partner organising the activity, often involving a gender question included in a registration form or questionnaires provided to participants. Together, these data sources enable the identification of participation patterns and potential gender imbalances across different formats, scales, and types of engagement.

Table 1 provides an overview of the three levels of analysis and their corresponding sources. This approach supports the analysis of gender data presented in the following sections.

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<sup>4</sup> The IN SITU Gender Committee is composed of members of the IN SITU teams from the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra (CES), the University of the Azores (UAc), and the University of Hildesheim (SUH).

Table 1 - Overview of levels of analysis, data types, and main sources

Level of analysis	Scope of analysis	Type of data	Main sources/IN SITU reports
1. CCI sector (non-urban areas)	Gender as a structuring dimension of CCI; participation, roles, inequalities, and intersectionality	Qualitative + Quantitative	<p>Tessarini, M. S., Cortinovi, N., Castaldi, C., &amp; Boschma, R. (2023). <i>Socioeconomic contributions and spillovers of CCIs in non-urban regions</i> (D1.1).*</p> <p>Tessarini, M. S., Cortinovi, N., Castaldi, C., &amp; Boschma, R. (2024). <i>Gender of cultural and creative occupations in IN SITU Lab areas</i>. Supplemental analysis.*</p> <p>Walther, H., Heinicke, J., &amp; Kegler, B. (2023). <i>Gender dimension of CCIs in non-urban areas</i> (D5.5).</p>
2. Organisational level	Gender roles and participation within organisations and case studies; monitoring within Labs	Qualitative + Quantitative	<p>Fraioli, M. (2023). <i>Case studies</i> (D3.2).</p> <p>Fraioli, M., Rainey, M., &amp; Duxbury, N. (2023). <i>Guidelines for monitoring the development of the case studies</i> (D3.3).</p> <p>Rainey, M. J., &amp; Collins, P. (2023). <i>Local mapping processes and findings</i> (D3.1).</p> <p>Varbanova, L. (2026). <i>Training, coaching and mentoring activities across the six IN SITU Labs</i> (D4.1).</p> <p>+ Original interviews with the case studies</p>
3. IN SITU activities	Gender participation and access across project activities and events	Quantitative	<p>Data collected from focus groups, surveys, interviews, Speak Out sessions, webinars, conferences, summer school, case studies camp, and Horizontal Networks.</p> <p>IN SITU reports:</p> <p>Aldazabal, J., Prieto, J., Berasategi, L., &amp; Fernández, A. (2024). <i>Innovation potential of CCIs located in the IN SITU Labs</i> (D2.3).</p> <p>Fraioli, M. (2023). <i>Case studies</i> (D3.2).</p> <p>Heinicke, J., Kegler, B., &amp; Walther, H. (2024). <i>State of cultural policies for CCIs in non-urban areas</i> (D5.2).</p> <p>Heinicke, J., Ranczakowska, A. M., &amp; Walther, H. (2025). <i>Cultural policy proposals for CCIs in IN SITU Lab areas</i> (D5.4).</p> <p>Rainey, M. (2025). <i>CCI ecosystem changes in IN SITU Lab areas</i> (D3.5).</p> <p>Rainey, M. J., &amp; Collins, P. (2023). <i>Local mapping processes and findings</i> (D3.1).</p> <p>Torre, A., Frey, O., Wang, T., &amp; Filippi, M. (2025). <i>Innovation policy proposals (for KICs) for CCIs in non-urban areas</i> (D5.3).</p>

\* Note: The two reports by Tessarin et al. provided both quantitative analysis and qualitative assessments. For the purposes of this report, emphasis was placed on the qualitative analyses and interpretations.

Table 2 - IN SITU gender categories

Gender category	Definition
Cis Female	<p><i>Cisgender</i> (shortened, <i>cis</i>): “The term <i>cisgender</i> (from the Latin <i>cis</i>-, meaning “on the same side as”) can be used to describe individuals who possess, from birth and into adulthood, the male or female reproductive organs (sex) typical of the social category of man or woman (gender) to which that individual was assigned at birth. Hence a <i>cisgender</i> person's gender is on the same side as their birth-assigned sex, in contrast to which a transgender person's gender is on the other side (<i>trans</i>-) of their birth-assigned sex.” (Source: Aultman, 2014)</p>
Cis Male	
Transgender	<p>“An adjective to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. People who are transgender may also use other terms, in addition to transgender, to describe their gender more specifically. ... It is important to note that being transgender is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures. A person can call themselves transgender the moment they realize that their gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth.” (Source: GLAAD, n.d.-a)</p>
Non-binary/ Genderqueer	<p>People that have “a gender which is neither male nor female and may identify as both male and female at one time, as different genders at different times, as no gender at all, or dispute the very idea of only two genders.” (Source: Richards et al., 2016)</p>
Intersex	<p>“Intersex refers to someone with one or more innate sex characteristics, including genitals, internal reproductive organs, and chromosomes, that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies.” (Source: GLAAD, n.d.-b)</p>
Other Gender (Please, specify)	
I do not wish to disclose	

In the previous sections of this report, broader terms such as *women* and *men* were used mainly in historical, theoretical, and conceptual discussions concerning social dynamics, lived experiences, and structural gender relations within CCIs. However, from this point onwards, and in line with the predefined gender categories adopted within the IN SITU data collection framework, the analysis will primarily refer to the categories *cis female* and *cis male*, as well as the terms *female* and *male*, when discussing quantitative datasets and empirical findings. In this context, the terms *female* and *male* refer specifically to *cis female* and *cis male* categories as defined within the project's data collection framework. At the same time, the project's gender categories and this report recognise that gender extends beyond binary categories and includes trans, non-binary, intersex, queer, and other gender-diverse identities

Although a standardised set of gender codification was defined, the data analysis process revealed variations and inconsistencies in how this information was recorded across activities by partners. These are partly linked to the diversity of methods and contexts in which data was collected, meaning that gender information was not always systematically recorded. In some cases, such as in interviews conducted during informal or spontaneous interactions throughout fieldwork, it was not possible to gather information on participants' gender in a manner that enabled them to self-identify while ensuring anonymity and compliance with ethical standards. In such situations, some Labs chose not to collect this information, considering the sensitive nature of the data. Since variations in data collection practices across partners may affect comparability, these limitations should therefore be considered when interpreting the results.

Due to the range of situations encountered during the data analysis process, these were subsequently grouped into categories such as *missing* and *no response* to enable a more consistent interpretation of the data. The category *missing* refers to situations where gender information was not collected or is absent from the dataset. In contrast, *no response* refers to cases where participants completed the data collection instrument (e.g., questionnaire/form) but did not select any option in the gender question, including the option “*I do not wish to disclose.*” This distinction is important, as *no response* reflects a form of non-selection within an otherwise completed dataset, whereas *missing* indicates a lack of data collection altogether. Both categories were retained in the analysis to ensure transparency and to accurately reflect the variability and limitations of the data collection process. Additionally, and especially in the early stages of the project, there were isolated cases where participants' gender was inferred through observation rather than self-identification. This constitutes a methodological limitation, as it does not fully align with best practices in gender-sensitive data collection and may introduce bias. This issue was subsequently addressed, and all later data collection followed a self-identification approach, in line with ethical and methodological standards.

This methodological framework provides the basis for the analysis presented in the following sections, enabling a structured and transparent examination of gender dynamics across the different levels of the project.

## 5. Gender dimension: Patterns, participation, and analysis

### 5.1. The CCI sector in non-urban areas

Historically, discussions surrounding gender within cultural and creative industries—particularly in non-urban contexts—have tended to centre primarily on women's participation and the structural inequalities affecting their professional trajectories. This focus reflects the persistent gendered barriers that continue to shape access to cultural production, leadership positions, visibility, and economic recognition across the sector. At the same time, reducing gender analysis exclusively to cis

women's experiences risks reproducing binary understandings of gender that fail to account for the diversity of identities and experiences present within contemporary cultural and creative ecosystems.

In this sense, and in line with the broader conceptual approach developed within the IN SITU project, the present analysis adopts a more inclusive understanding of gender, recognising that experiences within CCIs are also shaped by the realities of trans, non-binary, queer, intersex, and other gender-diverse individuals. Rather than treating gender as a fixed or exclusively binary category, this perspective understands it as socially and culturally constructed, intersecting with other dimensions of inequality, such as geography, class, age, ethnicity, and access to resources. This broader framework is particularly relevant in the context of non-urban areas, where traditional gender expectations and heteronormative social structures may remain especially influential in shaping cultural participation, visibility, and professional opportunities.

Building on this perspective, the IN SITU project approaches cultural and creative participation in non-urban areas through a broad understanding of creative work, encompassing traditional practices, locally grounded initiatives, innovative forms of cultural production, and community-driven activities.

By moving beyond a purely traditional understanding of rural cultural engagement, the project highlights how women contribute to new forms of cultural production that intersect with heritage, creativity, collaboration, and social innovation. This includes the dimension explored in key project reports, particularly Tessarin et al. (2023, 2024) and Walther et al. (2023), which provide conceptual, analytical, and empirical insights into gender distributions, inequalities, and participation patterns across non-urban CCIs. Tessarin et al. (2023) provides a conceptual and analytical framework for understanding innovation dynamics across regions, which is complemented by a Supplemental Analysis on the *Gender of Cultural and Creative Occupations in IN SITU Lab Areas* (Tessarin et al., 2024), offering additional insights into gender distributions across the project's Lab territories. Walther et al. (2023), in turn, provides an empirical and qualitative perspective on gender inequalities within CCIs, with a specific focus on non-urban contexts.

Drawing on insights from the report and supplemental analysis produced by Tessarin et al. (2023, 2024), gender emerges as a key structuring dimension of the Cultural and Creative Industries, particularly within non-urban contexts. Across European regions, women are strongly represented in cultural and creative occupations, with this presence being especially visible in non-urban areas where CCIs often play a central role in local development and community. This strong participation, however, does not correspond to an even distribution of roles, responsibilities, or opportunities within the sector. Rather than indicating gender equality, the available data points to differentiated patterns of participation that reflect broader structural dynamics. It should be acknowledged that part of the data available in these reports is primarily structured around binary gender categories (cis female/cis male), which limits the visibility of non-binary, intersex, and other gender-diverse experiences within CCIs. Gender influences not only the overall composition of the workforce, but also the types of activities

performed, the levels of responsibility assumed, and the degree of access to resources and decision-making processes.

Thus, the presence of women within CCIs must be understood alongside the conditions under which this participation takes place. Within the sector, available evidence suggests that women are more frequently associated with activities related to cultural production, communication, education, and coordination. These roles are central to the organisation and delivery of cultural and creative activities, particularly in contexts where projects rely on collaboration, flexibility, and community engagement. At the same time, men tend to be more represented in technical, digital, and managerial roles, as well as in positions that involve strategic direction or control over resources (Tessarini et al., 2023). These patterns are not unique to CCIs, but they take on particular forms within this sector due to its specific characteristics. Cultural and creative work, in fact, often involves project-based employment, hybrid professional roles, and varying degrees of formalisation, which can influence how gender differences are expressed. In non-urban areas, where CCIs frequently operate on smaller scales and with limited resources, these dynamics can be further shaped by local conditions, including the availability of funding, infrastructure, and professional networks.

Furthermore, differences between urban and non-urban contexts play an important role in shaping how gender operates within CCIs. In urban environments, innovation is often associated with high-technology sectors, research-intensive activities, and formalised innovation systems. In contrast, in non-urban areas, innovation is often expressed through cultural, social, and organisational forms, rather than through technological invention alone. These may include the development of cultural initiatives, the adaptation of local traditions, and the creation of new forms of cultural expression that respond to local needs and contexts. This broader understanding of innovation allows for the recognition of activities that are not always visible through conventional indicators.

In this context, Cultural and Creative Occupations (CCOs) play a central role in shaping regional innovation dynamics. The analysis presented in Tessarini et al. (2023) highlights that these occupations contribute to forms of innovation that are not limited to technological outputs but also include organisational and cultural dimensions. As women are strongly represented within CCOs, particularly in non-urban areas, their contribution to these forms of innovation is significant. However, the recognition of these contributions depends largely on how innovation is measured and understood. Conventional indicators of innovation such as patents<sup>5</sup> tend to reflect formal, research-intensive, and technology-driven activities where men are more strongly present and therefore may not fully capture the range of activities present within CCIs. As a result, relying exclusively on such measures can lead to a partial understanding of innovation, particularly in non-urban contexts. Broader indicators, such

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<sup>5</sup> Patents are commonly used as an indicator of innovation, particularly in research-intensive and technology-based sectors, as they reflect formally registered technical inventions.

as trademarks<sup>6</sup>, provide a more inclusive perspective by capturing a wider range of creative and economic activities, including those related to cultural production and services. The use of different indicators, therefore, has implications for how gendered contributions to innovation are recognised and valued.

The supplemental analysis (Tessarini et al., 2024) further contributes to this understanding by examining the distribution of gender across cultural and creative occupations in the six IN SITU Lab regions. While women are widely represented across these occupations, their distribution is not uniform across all types of roles. In particular, differences are observed in relation to the level of digital skills required by different occupations. Women are more frequently present in roles associated with low to medium levels of digital skills, while their representation in occupations requiring higher levels of digital specialisation is more limited. This uneven distribution reflects broader patterns observed in the labour market and has implications for access to certain types of activities and opportunities within CCIs. Access to digital skills is indeed increasingly relevant in the context of cultural and creative work, particularly as digital tools become more integrated into production, distribution, and communication processes. In this regard, differences in access to digital skills can influence not only the types of roles individuals occupy, but also their capacity to engage with new forms of cultural production and innovation. In non-urban areas, where access to training and infrastructure may be more limited, these differences can be more pronounced, reinforcing existing patterns of inequality.

These dynamics are also connected to broader structural factors that shape participation within CCIs. Access to education, training opportunities, funding, and professional networks all play a role in determining how individuals enter and progress within the sector. In contexts where such resources are unevenly distributed, gender differences can be reinforced over time. While CCIs offer important opportunities for participation and expression, they do not operate independently from wider economic and social structures and therefore tend to reflect existing patterns of inequality.

In addition to these structural factors, gender dynamics within CCIs are influenced by the specific cultural and territorial contexts in which they operate. In non-urban areas, cultural and creative activities are often closely linked to local identities, traditions, and community dynamics. These contexts shape not only the types of activities that are developed, but also the ways in which participation is organised and valued. Gender intersects with these local dynamics, influencing both access to opportunities and the recognition of different forms of cultural work.

Overall, the findings from Tessarini et al. (2023) and the supplemental analysis (Tessarini et al., 2024) indicate that while women are strongly present within cultural and creative occupations, their participation is shaped by persistent structural patterns. These include differentiated role distribution, limited access to digital and technical domains, and broader structural conditions influencing

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<sup>6</sup> Trademarks are used to protect names, symbols, or identifiers associated with products and services.

participation across regions. Recognising these dynamics is essential for developing a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of CCIs in non-urban contexts.

Against the structural and data-driven overview of gender patterns within CCIs across European regions provided by Tessarin et al. (2023), Walther et al. (2023) offers a more in-depth perspective by examining how these patterns are experienced and reproduced within specific contexts, particularly in non-urban areas. The analysis approaches gender as a structural factor shaping participation, roles, and opportunities within the sector. Drawing on a combination of literature review and qualitative evidence collected through interviews, the report explores how gender influences participation across different areas of activity, the distribution of roles, and broader working conditions within CCIs. Particular attention is given to differences between urban and non-urban contexts, highlighting how territorial specificities shape gender dynamics in distinct ways. Walther et al. (2023) emphasises that non-urban CCIs often operate with more limited resources, smaller markets, and fewer institutional supports, conditions that can simultaneously create opportunities for more flexible and community-oriented practices while also reinforcing existing inequalities, particularly regarding access to leadership roles, funding, and professional networks. The analysis also addresses patterns of segregation and broader structural conditions influencing inequalities within the sector, including unequal access to education, training opportunities, and the persistence of unpaid or under-recognised forms of cultural work. In addition, it considers how gender intersects with other dimensions of participation, including cultural context and identity, within the specific realities of non-urban areas, where cultural activities are often closely connected to local traditions, social expectations, and place-based identities.

Within this framework, CCIs are often described as relatively open and inclusive sectors, particularly when compared to more traditional or industrial fields. However, the findings suggest that this perception does not fully reflect the experiences of individuals working in the sector. While women are widely present across cultural and creative activities, this participation does not necessarily translate into equal access to opportunities, resources, or decision-making processes. Instead, gender continues to shape how roles are distributed and how work is organised within CCIs. The findings also highlight persistent inequalities, including the gender pay gap and the prevalence of gender-based discrimination and harassment across the sector. These dynamics further reinforce the need for clearer organisational and policy-level strategies to prevent and respond to situations of gender-based violence and sexual harassment within cultural and creative work environments, particularly in project-based and informal professional settings where such issues may be more difficult to identify and address. Such inequalities are not always immediately visible, partly due to the sector's progressive and meritocratic self-image, which can obscure structural imbalances and make them more difficult to recognise and challenge.

Consistent with the patterns identified in Tessarin et al. (2023), gendered differences can be observed in the types of activities undertaken within the cultural and creative projects analysed, particularly in

relation to the roles, sectors, and forms of participation associated with women and men. Existing literature suggests that women are more frequently involved in roles related to cultural production, communication, education, and coordination. These roles are central to the functioning of cultural organisations and projects, particularly in non-urban areas, where activities often depend on collaboration and flexible working structures. At the same time, men tend to be more represented in technical roles, leadership positions, and areas associated with higher levels of control over resources and strategic direction. These dynamics reflect the persistence of both horizontal and vertical segregation in the field.

The organisation of work within CCIs also plays a role in shaping these patterns of discrimination. Cultural and creative work is often characterised by project-based structures, short-term contracts, and varying levels of formality. While these conditions can provide flexibility, they can also contribute to instability and unequal working conditions. In this context, access to opportunities is frequently mediated by informal networks, professional connections, and reputation-based systems. The analysis suggests that these mechanisms can favour individuals who are already well-positioned within existing networks, which may contribute to reinforcing gendered inequalities over time.

Differences between urban and non-urban contexts further influence how these dynamics unfold. In non-urban areas, CCIs often operate with more limited resources, smaller markets, and fewer institutional supports. These conditions can create both opportunities and constraints. On the one hand, smaller-scale environments may allow for more flexible roles and closer connections between cultural actors and communities. On the other hand, limited access to funding, infrastructure, and professional networks can restrict opportunities for growth and reinforce existing inequalities. These factors can affect how gender influences participation, particularly in relation to access to leadership roles and more stable forms of employment.

The analysis also highlights the importance of considering broader structural conditions that shape gender inequalities within CCIs. These include factors such as access to education and training, availability of resources, and the distribution of unpaid or under-recognised work. In many cases, these conditions are not specific to the cultural sector but are reflected within it, contributing to the reproduction of existing patterns of inequality. In non-urban areas, where opportunities for professional development may be more limited, these dynamics can be more pronounced.

In addition to these structural factors, Walther et al. (2023) draws attention to the role of cultural norms and expectations in shaping participation within CCIs. Gendered perceptions of certain roles or activities can influence how individuals position themselves within the sector and how their work is recognised. These perceptions may affect both entry into the sector and progression within it, particularly in contexts where cultural practices are closely linked to local traditions and social structures.

An important aspect of the analysis concerns the intersection between gender and other dimensions of participation. In non-urban areas, where cultural and creative activities are often closely connected to place-based identities, these interactions can be particularly relevant. This report highlights the need to consider how different dimensions interact in shaping participation and representation.

Overall, the findings from Walther et al. (2023) indicate that despite the often-progressive perception of cultural and creative sectors, gender inequalities remain embedded in their structures and everyday practices. Participation alone does not ensure equality, as access to roles, resources, and opportunities continues to be shaped by persistent structural patterns. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing a more comprehensive and context-sensitive perspective on gender within CCIs, particularly in non-urban areas. These findings also point to the need for greater awareness, improved data collection, and more targeted strategies to address gender inequalities within CCIs.

Taken together, the findings from Tessarin et al. (2023, 2024) and Walther et al. (2023) provide a complementary understanding of gender within CCIs in non-urban areas, combining structural patterns with more context-specific insights. This highlights how gender shapes participation, roles, and access to opportunities at the sectoral level, while also pointing to the importance of examining how these dynamics are manifested within individual organisations. Subsection 4.2 shifts the focus to the organisational level, exploring how gender operates within CCIs in practice, including internal structures, roles, and participation patterns.

## 5.2. CCIs at an organisational level

This second level of analysis focuses on how gender dynamics are manifested within organisations operating in the cultural and creative sector. It draws on insights from reports produced by Rainey and Collins (2023), Fraioli (2023), Fraioli et al. (2023), the interim (2024) and final (2025) reflexive monitoring reports produced by the IN SITU case studies, and on the activities developed through the implementation of the capacity-building programme, as analysed in Varbanova (2026).<sup>7</sup> Although these materials do not focus specifically on gender as a primary analytical dimension, they offer relevant insights into how gender is reflected within broader organisational dynamics. Together, these sources support the examination of gender roles, participation, and organisational structures across the IN SITU Lab regions. This analysis is further informed by qualitative insights from interviews conducted with case study representatives involving a total of 11 participants from 10 case studies (nine cis females and two cis males), providing additional context on how gender is experienced and articulated within CCI organisational settings.

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<sup>7</sup> Participatory processes such as the Speak Out sessions and the Horizontal Networks, which are described in Fraioli (2023), are addressed in greater detail in the third level of analysis.

For the purpose of analysing the gender dimension within the IN SITU Lab’s cultural and creative ecosystem, focus was placed on data derived from the project’s cultural mapping programme, which involved the systematic collection of data across the six IN SITU Lab regions (reported in Rainey & Collins, 2023). This process followed a structured and comparable approach, using shared templates to ensure consistency across territories, including the identification and documentation of CCIs, cultural organisations, events and festivals, as well as relevant policy and funding frameworks within each regional ecosystem. The mapping was organised around three main components: an inventory of CCIs based on the standardised NACE classification system; an inventory of cultural events, festivals, and organisations capturing broader cultural activity and actors; and an analysis of cultural and innovation policies alongside available funding opportunities. These datasets were complemented by qualitative inputs, including focus groups with cultural and local actors, aimed at understanding the current state and future needs of regional CCI ecosystems.

The development of cultural mapping inventories was carried out through two distinct data collection rounds. The first, conducted in 2023, referred to the period between 2018 and 2022. Available data predominantly corresponded to 2022, so the analysis presents an aggregated overview rather than a year-by-year comparison. The second, conducted in 2025, aimed to cover 2022 to 2024, with most data corresponding to 2024. Similarly, the analysis focuses on an overall overview rather than distinguishing individual years.

Within this framework, cultural mapping constitutes a distinct component of the project’s data collection and provides insights into gender distribution across mapped entities. Figures 1 and 2 present the gender distribution from the inventories of cultural events, festivals, and organisations, aggregated across all IN SITU Labs, allowing for a comparison between the two data collection moments: 2018–2022 (Figure 1) and 2023–2024 (Figure 2).

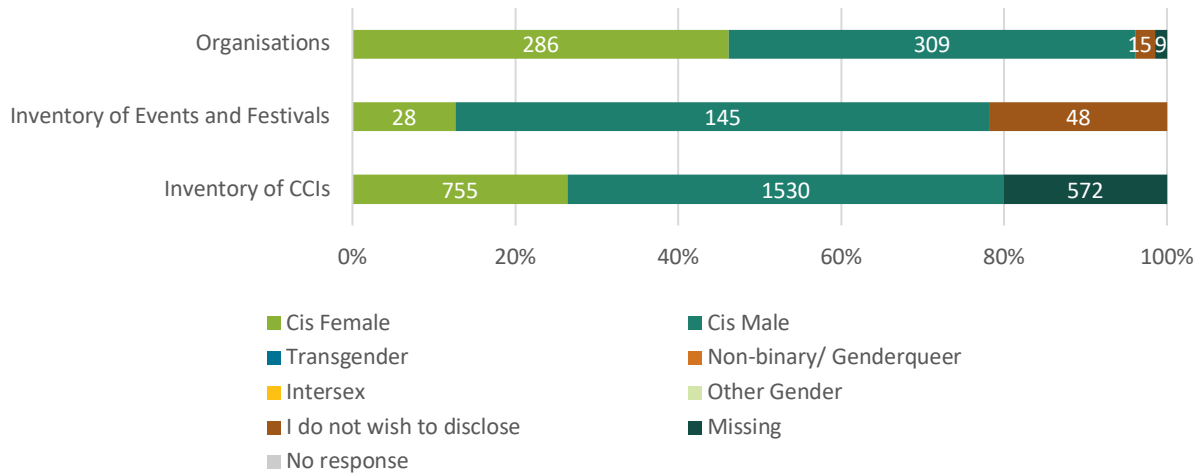


Figure 1 - Gender distribution across cultural mapping categories: CCIs, organisations, and events and festivals (2018–2022)

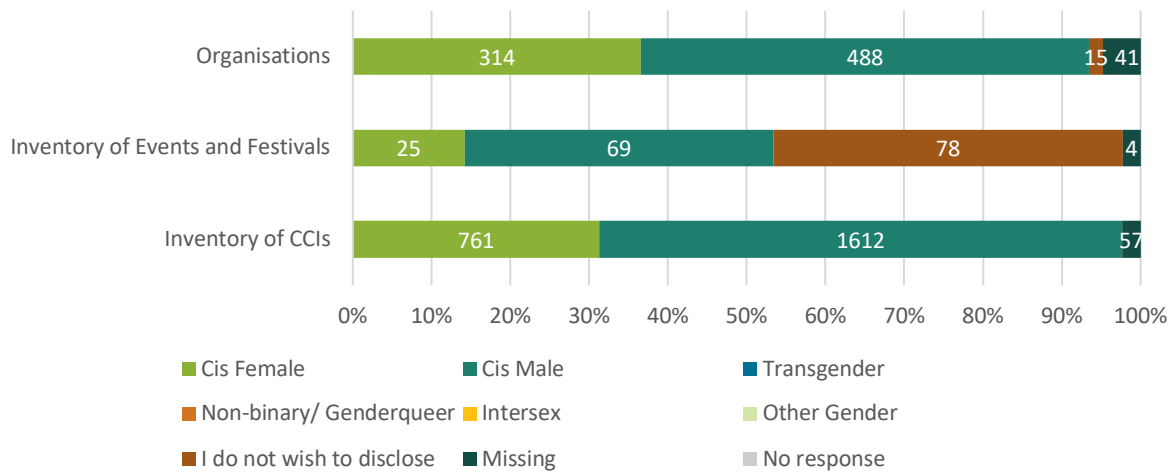


Figure 2 - Gender distribution across cultural mapping categories: CCIs, organisations, and events and festivals (2023–2024)

It is important to clarify that the individuals represented in this data do not reflect the full composition of teams within CCIs, organisations, or events and festivals. Rather, they correspond to individuals in leading or representative roles (e.g., founders, directors, or key responsible persons) who were identified in the mapping process. Furthermore, data from the cultural mapping research should be understood as two separate data collection moments rather than a continuous time series, due to

differences in data availability across Labs. Despite these limitations, the figures reveal clear patterns in gender distribution across CCIs, organisations, and events and festivals.

In the 2018–2022 dataset, cis male representation is predominant across all three categories, although with varying levels. This predominance is most evident in the inventory of events and festivals, where cis male entries represent 65.6% (n=145), while cis female entries account for 12.7% (n=28). A significant share of entries falls under the category “I do not wish to disclose,” representing 21.7% (n=48).

A similar pattern is observed in the inventory of CCIs, where cis male entries represent 53.6% (n=1530), compared to 26.4% (n=755) cis female entries. In this case, 20.0% (n=572) of entries are classified as “missing,” indicating that gender information was not collected.

In contrast, organisations present a more balanced distribution in this first moment, with cis male entries representing 49.9% (n=309) and cis female entries 46.2% (n=286). The remaining share corresponds to “I do not wish to disclose” (2.4%, n=15) and “missing” (1.5%, n=9), representing a relatively small proportion of the total.

The 2023–2024 dataset confirms the continued predominance of cis male representation, while also revealing some shifts across categories. In the inventory of CCIs for this period, cis male entries represent 66.3% (n=1612), while cis female entries account for 31.3% (n=761), and only 2.3% (n=57) are classified as “missing.” This suggests both a stronger imbalance in favour of cis male representation and an improvement in data completeness when compared to the previous period.

In organisations, cis male entries represent 56.9% (n=488), while cis female entries account for 36.6% (n=314). The remaining share corresponds to “I do not wish to disclose” (1.7%, n=15) and “missing” (4.8%, n=41). Compared to the earlier mapping moment, this indicates a widening gap between cis female and cis male representation.

The category of events and festivals presents the most variation across the two data collection moments. In 2023–2024, cis male entries represent 39.2% (n=69), while cis female entries account for 14.2% (n=25). A substantial proportion of entries fall under “I do not wish to disclose” (44.3%, n=78) and “missing” (2.3%, n=4). This high share of these categories limits the robustness of comparisons with the previous period and should be considered when interpreting the data.

Overall, four main trends can be identified from these figures. First, cis male representation is consistently higher than cis female representation in the IN SITU Lab areas across all categories of mapped leadership roles in the periods analysed. Second, the extent of this imbalance varies by category, being more pronounced in CCIs and events and festivals, while organisations appear comparatively more balanced. Third, the presence of “missing” and “I do not wish to disclose” categories play a significant role in shaping the interpretation of the data, particularly in events and

festivals, highlighting the importance of data completeness in cultural mapping processes. Fourth, there is a pronounced overall prevalence of cis genders, which underscores the limited visibility of gender-diverse individuals within leadership positions across non-urban CCIs.

Further insights into gender dynamics at the organisational level can be drawn from Fraioli (2023), which presents the IN SITU case studies and the processes through which they were identified, and Fraioli et al. (2023), which establishes the framework adopted for monitoring their development. Within this framework, the IN SITU case studies documented their own evolution in interim (2024) and final (2025) reports that provide valuable information on organisational practices, participation, and project development. Additional insights can also be drawn from the contributions to these monitoring reports by the Labs, which provide complementary perspectives on participation patterns and project dynamics across different territorial contexts.

While gender is not always explicitly foregrounded, Fraioli (2023), Fraioli et al. (2023), and the case studies' interim (2024) and final (2025) reflexive monitoring reports indicate that, in several cases, women are strongly represented across cultural and creative activities, particularly in community-based and socially oriented practices. At the same time, gender is most often approached through general principles of openness and inclusivity, rather than through targeted strategies or systematic analysis. In some cases, specific efforts to ensure balanced participation or to reflect on gendered experiences are present, for instance, through curatorial or project design choices, while in others gender-related issues are not explicitly identified, with participation being framed as broadly accessible to all. Taken together, these observations point to a varied and context-dependent integration of gender across case studies. While gender is present within organisational and creative practices, it is not consistently articulated as a distinct analytical dimension, remaining largely embedded within broader approaches to inclusion and participation.

Building on these observations, qualitative interviews with IN SITU's case studies provide a more nuanced understanding of how gender is perceived, articulated, and experienced within cultural and creative practices. The interviews were conducted with representatives from 10 of the 12 selected case studies. A total of 11 participants were interviewed, including nine cis females and two cis males, coded as F and M, respectively, in the analysis presented here. The interviews provide a detailed and context-sensitive understanding of how the gender dimension is perceived and integrated within cultural and creative practices in non-urban areas. Rather than emerging as a consistently structured or clearly defined element, gender appears unevenly integrated across projects, situated between implicit commitments to inclusivity and more explicit recognitions of structural inequality. The interviews also reveal important differences in how gender is perceived and articulated, particularly when comparing the perspectives of male and female participants. The interviews were conducted following a semi-structured approach designed to explore how the gender dimension is understood and addressed within each case study (see Annex 1). Questions focused on working conditions, the perceived importance of gender within participants' work, and whether projects engage with broader

gender inequalities. Participants were also invited to reflect on more specific aspects of practice, including the potential reproduction of gender stereotypes, the use of gender-sensitive language, and the extent to which gender is consciously considered in the design and implementation of their activities. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of how gender is negotiated in practice, while recognising that the findings reflect the situated perspectives of case study representatives rather than providing a comprehensive overview of CCIs in non-urban areas. As such, the analysis captures how gender is interpreted and experienced within specific organisational and territorial contexts.

Across the majority of cases, gender equality is framed less as a deliberate objective and more as an assumed outcome of openness. Participation is frequently described as accessible to all, with several interviewees emphasising that their initiatives are “for everyone” (F). In several instances, participants explicitly acknowledge that gender was not actively considered during the design phase of their projects, as illustrated by statements such as “No, it’s not designed to. We didn’t think about that in that moment” (F) and “I don’t imagine that was part of the conversation” (F). In this sense, equality is often understood as something that emerges from inclusive environments, rather than as a dimension requiring intentional planning or systematic reflection. Gender is therefore rarely approached as a clearly defined analytical category and is instead assumed to be addressed through broader values of inclusivity, diversity, and openness.

At the same time, this framing coexists with an awareness that gender inequalities persist within both the sector and the wider social context. This tension is explicitly acknowledged in several interviews. As one participant notes, “we think that we are equal ... but still we are not. It is a man’s world” (F). Such reflections highlight a gap between the normative framing of inclusivity and the realities of gendered experience. While openness is widely valued, it does not necessarily translate into equal outcomes, and existing inequalities may continue to shape participation and recognition.

In some cases, gender is addressed more explicitly, although not always through formalised strategies. Rather than being integrated into structured frameworks, it is often embedded within everyday practices, relational approaches, and facilitation methods. As one participant explains, “when we talk about respect, consent, diversity... we are talking about gender issues” (F), while also noting that “it is always implicit ... it’s a profoundly feminist project because ... everyone should have the right to the same things” (F). These accounts suggest that gender may be actively present within practice, even when it is not formally articulated as a project objective.

A closer examination of everyday practices reveals recurring patterns in the distribution of labour, visibility, and recognition. These patterns indicate that gender continues to shape how cultural and creative work is organised and experienced, even in contexts where equality is assumed.

One of the most consistent findings concerns the distribution of labour. Women are frequently described as taking on roles related to organisation, coordination, and community engagement,

including managing activities, sustaining relationships, and ensuring project continuity. As one participant explains, “it’s always the women that take the initiative and organise things and make something happen ... it’s always the women that volunteer to take the steps” (F). While these roles are central to the functioning of projects, they are often treated as informal or expected, rather than recognised as specialised or strategic work.

At the same time, men are more frequently associated with roles linked to technical expertise, production, and visibility. This is particularly evident in specific sectors, where gender imbalances are more pronounced. For example, one participant highlights that in technical areas such as audiovisual production, “the percentage of female professionals in these areas is still very low” (M). This indicates that gender inequalities are not uniformly distributed but are instead concentrated in particular domains of practice.

In some cases, participants describe efforts to address these imbalances, particularly in relation to representation. This includes ensuring the presence of women in programming or attempting to maintain gender balance among participants. As one interviewee explains, they “try ... to maintain this balance in terms of gender” (M), while another notes, “I’m checking that ... we have this guy singer, so we should invite some lady too” (F). These actions reflect an awareness of gender disparities, but also suggest that responses are often situational rather than embedded within broader strategies.

Even in contexts where women are strongly represented, this does not necessarily translate into equal visibility or influence. Some participants describe situations in which male presence, although limited, receives disproportionate attention. As one interviewee observes, “there could be at least two or three men. And it’s wow! They are coming here” (F), while another adds that “when two men sort of turn up, everyone is so happy to see them ... as if 50, 70 females are less valuable than two male members” (F). These examples point to a disconnect between participation and recognition, where visibility and authority do not necessarily reflect actual levels of involvement.

Patterns of participation further reinforce these dynamics. Several participants note that women tend to be more engaged within cultural and creative contexts, both as organisers and as audiences. As one interviewee explains, “women tend to be more socially and culturally ... active” (F), shaping both the structure of activities and the composition of participants. This contributes to a situation in which women sustain the everyday functioning of cultural initiatives, while men may remain less present in participation but more visible in certain positions.

At the level of individual experience, these dynamics are reflected in how participants describe their own positions. Female interviewees more frequently articulate how gender shapes their experiences, including moments of undervaluation or limited recognition. At the same time, they also describe themselves as actively challenging these expectations through their work. As one participant explains, “we are proving that you don’t have to be a man or with a man to [do this type of work]” (F), while

another reflects that “it is totally different ... that I’m living ... as a woman. It’s totally different ... if I would be a man” (F).

In contrast, male interviewees tend to frame gender in more general terms, often emphasising openness, equal access, and individual identity. Statements such as “it doesn’t really matter ... it is based on the people” (M) reflect a perspective in which equality is understood as treating everyone in the same way. While this position might express a commitment to fairness, it may also limit the extent to which structural inequalities are explicitly recognised or addressed.

Overall, the interviews show that gender is widely acknowledged as relevant but is rarely addressed as a structured or explicitly defined dimension. Instead, it is embedded within broader practices of inclusion, shaped by local contexts, and negotiated through everyday interactions. While many case studies contribute to more inclusive environments, persistent patterns in labour, visibility, and recognition indicate that gender continues to influence how cultural and creative work is organised and experienced in non-urban areas.

Adding to these qualitative insights, the capacity-building programme implemented across the six IN SITU Labs, as documented in Varbanova (2026), offers an additional perspective on how gender dynamics are reflected within CCI organisations. Within this framework, the training sessions constitute a key component of the project's capacity-building approach, aimed at strengthening the capacities of Cultural and Creative Industries in non-urban areas. Implemented between 2023 and 2024, these sessions were designed following a needs-driven and place-based approach, informed by prior project research and ongoing engagement with local stakeholders. Delivered through a combination of online and on-site formats, they addressed a range of thematic areas relevant to CCI development, including entrepreneurship, funding, digitalisation, sustainability, and cross-sector collaboration. Methodologically, they emphasised interactive and practice-oriented learning, incorporating case studies, peer exchange, and group-based activities.

From a gender perspective, the thematic scope of the programme reflects challenges that are particularly relevant to women operating within CCI organisations in non-urban areas, such as limited access to funding, reduced visibility within professional networks, and under-representation in technically oriented roles. In this sense, the capacity-building programme can be understood as an organisational tool with implicit gender relevance, even when gender is not explicitly foregrounded as a framing dimension. The gender composition of participants in these activities can provide an indication of how organisations engage with and facilitate access to capacity-building opportunities for different groups. The specific participation data from these sessions are examined in the following level of analysis, where they are situated alongside the broader range of IN SITU project activities.

Taken together, the analysis of cultural mapping data, the case studies identification method, monitoring-related processes, qualitative interviews, and the capacity-building programme highlight a consistent pattern in how the gender dimension is positioned at the organisational level. While

gender is widely present across cultural and creative practices, it is not consistently addressed as a structured or explicit analytical dimension. As mentioned above, it is most often embedded within broader approaches to inclusion, participation, and community engagement. At the same time, both quantitative and qualitative evidence point to persistent gendered patterns in leadership, roles, and recognition, indicating that structural inequalities continue to shape organisational dynamics. These findings underline the importance of moving beyond implicit approaches to inclusion and towards more explicit and systematic integration of gender within organisational practices and project design.

This provides an important basis for the third level of analysis, which examines how the gender dimension was reflected within IN SITU activities, allowing for a more detailed understanding of how gender is operationalised in practice across different formats and interventions.

### 5.3. IN SITU activities

At this third level, gender was monitored as a cross-cutting dimension across a wide range of IN SITU activities, in line with the project's commitment to integrating gender considerations throughout its implementation. Rather than focusing on specific outputs or organisational structures, this level examines how gender is reflected in participation patterns, engagement formats, and the composition of activities developed across the project.

During the analysis, it was possible to identify several types of activities, including interviews, surveys, focus groups, Speak Out sessions, webinars, conferences, the summer school, the IN SITU Camp for the project's case studies, the Horizontal Networks, and training sessions. These formats range from data collection and participatory processes to capacity-building and knowledge exchange.

Monitoring gender across these activities allows for a more detailed understanding of how participation is distributed, how inclusive different formats are, and how gender dynamics are expressed in practice. In this sense, this level complements the previous analyses by focusing on how gender is operationalised within concrete project activities, rather than solely at the sectoral or organisational level.

Given the diversity of formats and data collection practices across Labs and partners, activities were grouped according to their nature, as this proved to be the most suitable approach for analysing the available data. This was particularly important considering that, in some cases, gender information was either not collected or was incomplete. Accordingly, activities were organised into four main groups:

1. *Data Collection and Research Activities*, which includes interviews, surveys, and focus groups/workshops;
2. *Participatory Community Engagement Activities*, comprising Speak Out sessions and Horizontal Network activities;

3. *Capacity-building and Learning Activities*, which includes training sessions, webinars, the Summer School held in Croatia, and the IN SITU Camp held in the Azores; and
4. *Dissemination and Knowledge Exchange Activities*, which refers to the project’s conferences.

In addition to these activity-based groups, the analysis also considers the composition of the IN SITU project team and the case studies, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender representation throughout the project. The following subsections present the analysis of gender representation across the different activity groups considered.

### 5.3.1. Data collection and research activities

This section presents the gender distribution across data collection and research activities, including interviews, surveys, and focus groups. These activities constitute a central component of the project’s empirical work and provide key insights into participation across different contexts.

#### 5.3.1.1. Interviews

The interviews analysed were conducted within the scope of reports from Walther et al. (2023) and Rainey (2025) and the interviews done within the scope of this report. The gender distribution of interview participants is presented in Figure 3.

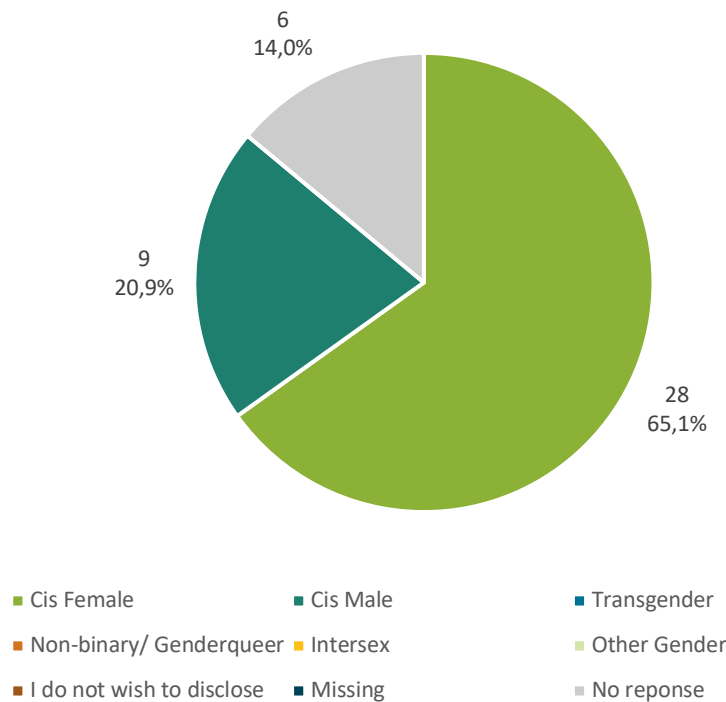


Figure 3 - Gender distribution of interview participants (n=43)

Data collected through interviews conducted within the scope of the IN SITU project activities indicates a clear predominance of cis female participants, representing 65.1% of the total, followed by cis male participants (20.9%). A notable proportion of participants (14%) did not provide information regarding their gender. This distribution suggests a higher level of participation of females in interview-based data collection activities. At the same time, the proportion of non-response should be taken into account when interpreting these results, as it may influence the overall representation.

It should be noted that the interviews conducted within Heinicke et al. (2024) did not include the collection of gender data. These interviews were often carried out spontaneously and in informal contexts, which did not allow for the distribution of data collection forms. As a result, it was not possible to ensure anonymous self-identification. Given the sensitive nature of this information, the research team chose not to ask participants directly about their gender.

### 5.3.1.2. Survey

Figure 4 illustrates the gender distribution of survey participants, based on data collected within Aldazabal et al. (2024). Survey data shows that cis female participants represent 46.0% (n=64), followed by cis male participants with 33.8% (n=47). A smaller proportion of participants selected “I do not wish to disclose,” corresponding to 3.6% (n=5), while 15.8% (n=22) did not provide any response regarding their gender. Only 0.7% (n=1) of participants selected “other gender.” It is important to note that this was the only dataset in which a participant explicitly selected the category “other gender,” specifying “no gender.”

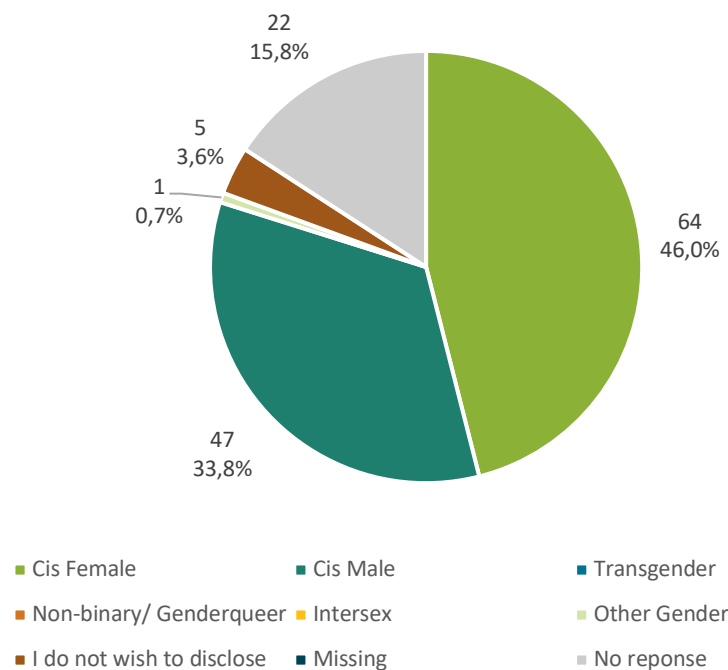


Figure 4 - Gender distribution of survey participants (n=139)

### 5.3.1.3. Focus groups

Figure 5 shows the gender distribution of participants in focus groups, based on data collected within Rainey and Collins (2023), Aldazabal et al. (2024), and Rainey (2025). Focus group data shows a clear predominance of cis female participants, representing 61.8% (n=141), followed by cis male participants with 28.5% (n=65). A proportion of participants selected “I do not wish to disclose,” corresponding to 9.6% (n=22). This distribution indicates a strong participation of females in focus group activities, while still reflecting the presence of male participants in these collective discussion formats.

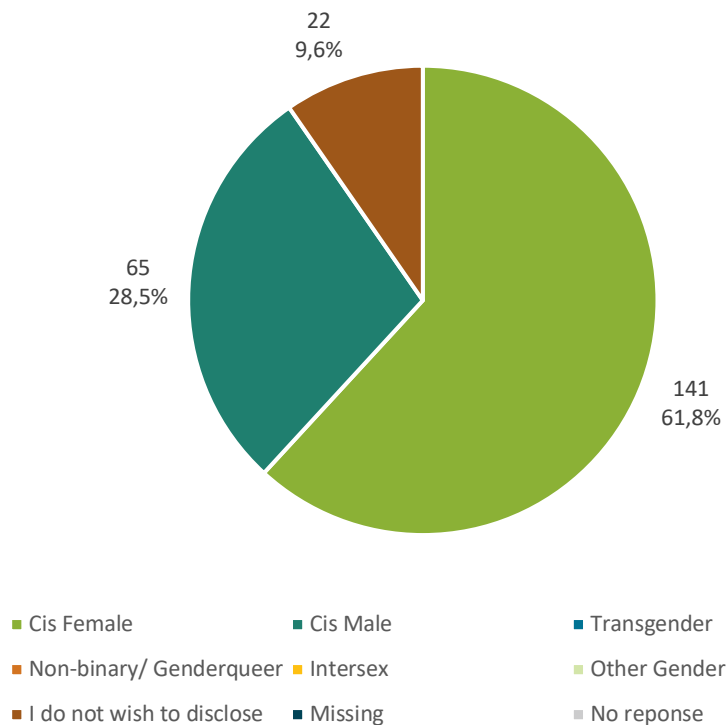


Figure 5 - Gender distribution of focus group participants (n=228)

It is important to note that additional focus groups were conducted within the scope of Torre et al. (2025) and Heinicke et al. (2025), alongside individual interviews. However, in these cases, gender information was not collected. Although data collection forms were distributed, most participants did not return them, which made it impossible to include gender data from these activities in the analysis.

Overall, data collection and research activities reveal a consistent predominance of cis female participants, alongside varying levels of non-response, highlighting both participation patterns and limitations in gender data collection.

### 5.3.2. Participatory community engagement activities

This section examines gender participation within participatory community engagement activities, namely, the Speak Out sessions and Horizontal Networks established within each Lab.

#### 5.3.2.1. Speak Out sessions

As shown in Figure 6, Speak Out sessions show a predominance of cis female participants, representing 65.6% (n=84), followed by cis male participants with 32.8% (n=42). A very small proportion of participants did not provide information regarding their gender, corresponding to 0.8% (n=1), while another 0.8% (n=1) selected “I do not wish to disclose.” This distribution reflects a strong engagement of females in participatory and community-based formats, with limited representation of other gender categories.

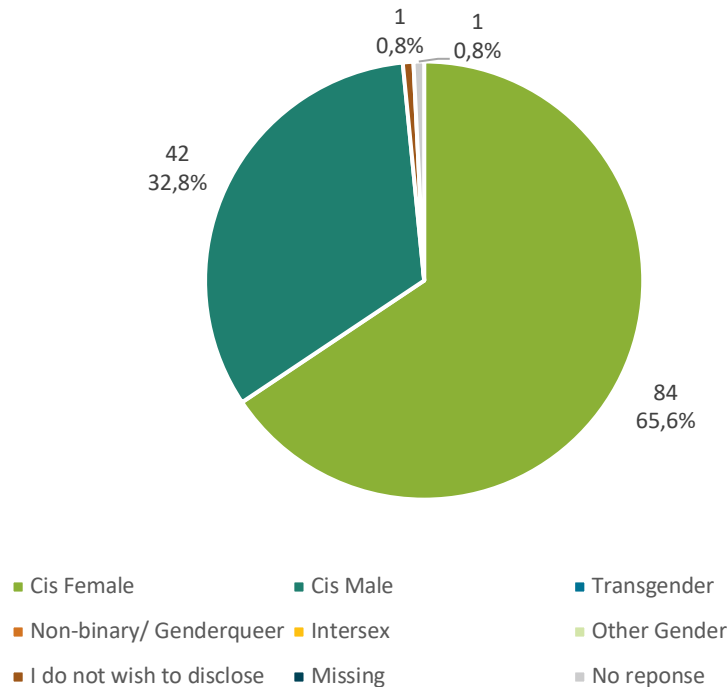


Figure 6 - Gender distribution of participants in Speak Out sessions (n=128)

#### 5.3.2.2. Horizontal Networks

Figure 7 presents the gender distribution of participants in the Horizontal Networks established in each IN SITU Lab area. Horizontal Network activities show a strong predominance of cis female participants, representing 68.9% (n=62), followed by cis male participants with 21.1% (n=19). A proportion of participants selected “I do not wish to disclose,” corresponding to 10.0% (n=9). This distribution reinforces the pattern observed in other participatory formats, with a higher level of engagement of females, alongside a notable share of participants who prefer not to disclose their gender.

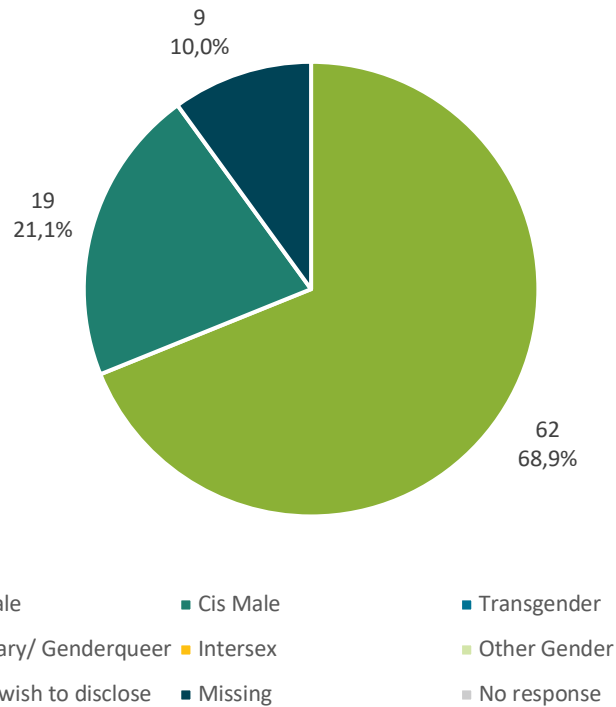


Figure 7 - Gender distribution of participants in Horizontal Networks (n=90)

Overall, participatory community engagement activities, namely, Speak Outs and Horizontal Networks, show a consistent pattern of higher participation of cis female participants, alongside a lower representation of cis male participants and limited presence of other gender categories. Additionally, a small proportion of participants chose not to disclose their gender, which should be considered when interpreting the results.

### 5.3.3. Capacity building and learning activities

This section focuses on capacity building activities developed within the IN SITU project, including training sessions, webinars, the Summer School, and the IN SITU Camp. These activities represent key formats through which knowledge exchange, skills development, and collaborative learning were fostered across different project contexts.

#### 5.3.3.1. Training sessions

In total, 36 training sessions were delivered across all six IN SITU Lab areas between 2023 and 2024, conducted over two or three days per Lab, with each day comprising approximately six sessions. The sessions were developed through a needs-driven and place-based approach and addressed a wide range of themes relevant to Cultural and Creative Industries in non-urban areas, including entrepreneurship, funding and fundraising opportunities, digitalisation, sustainability, collaborative and cross-sector innovation, online and offline business models, cultural entrepreneurship, regional and local cultural policies, and community-based approaches to creativity and innovation. The

programme also incorporated interactive and practice-oriented methodologies, such as case studies, peer exchange, role-playing activities, discussions, and group feedback sessions. As can be observed in Figure 8, the data reflects patterns that resonate with insights from the qualitative interviews analysed previously in the second level of analysis, in which participants frequently describe females as being more actively involved in cultural and community-based activities. In this sense, the strong participation of females in training and capacity-building activities can be understood as part of broader gendered patterns of engagement within cultural and creative practices in non-urban areas.

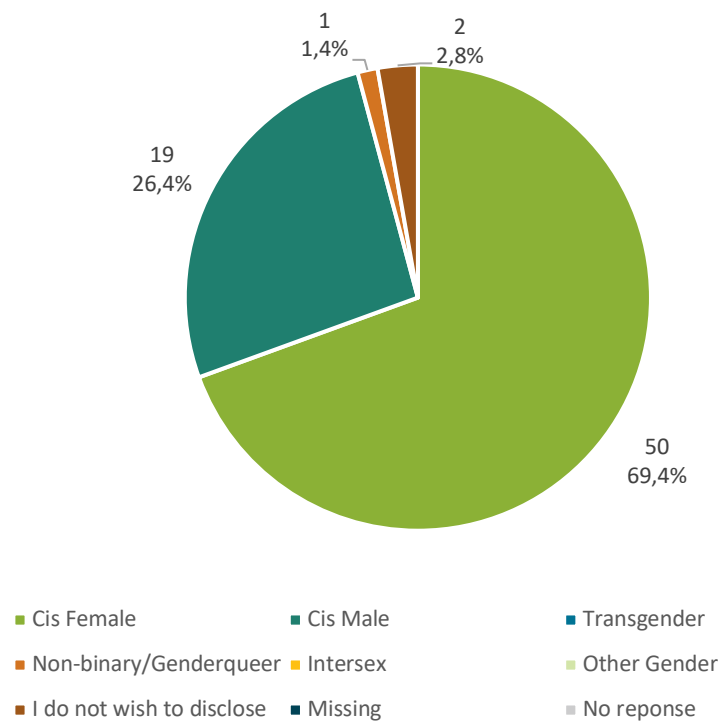


Figure 8 - Gender distribution of participants in training sessions (n=72)

Training sessions were predominantly attended by cis female participants, representing 69.4% (n=50), followed by cis male participants at 26.4% (n=19). A smaller proportion of participants selected “I do not wish to disclose,” corresponding to 2.8% (n=2), while 1.4% (n=1) identified as non-binary/genderqueer. These results indicate a strong participation of females in capacity-building activities.

### 5.3.3.2. Webinars

Following a similar pattern, the distribution of speakers in webinar sessions (Figure 9) also reflects a predominance of cisgender individuals. Cis female speakers represent 36.4% (n=8), followed by cis male speakers at 18.2% (n=4). A considerable proportion of cases are recorded as missing (45.5%,

n=10). Other participants registered for the event via a form on an external platform which did not include a gender question, so this information is not available.

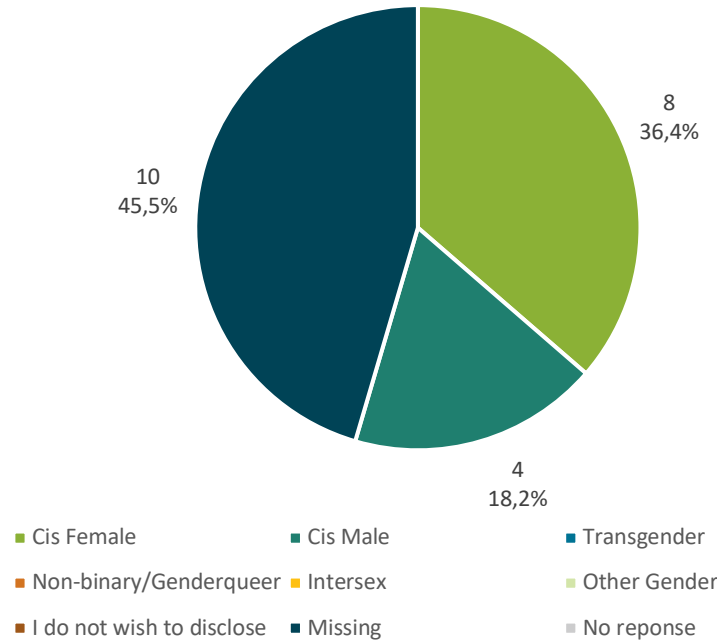


Figure 9 - Gender distribution of speakers in webinar sessions (n=22)

### 5.3.3.3. Summer School

The IN SITU Summer School, “Place-based Creative Solutions for Cultivating Caring and Sustainable Communities,” took place ahead of the first international conference of the IN SITU project. The Summer School was held 20–24 September 2024 in Zlarin, Croatia. Figures 10 and 11 provide insight into the gender distribution of both participants and the teaching team for the Summer School.

Regarding Summer School participants, cis female individuals represent 71.4% (n=10), followed by cis male participants at 21.4% (n=3). One individual selected “I do not wish to disclose,” corresponding to 7.1% (n=1). In the teaching team for the Summer School, cis female members account for 60.0% (n=6), while cis male participants represent 20.0% (n=2), and non-binary/genderqueer participants also represent 20.0% (n=2).

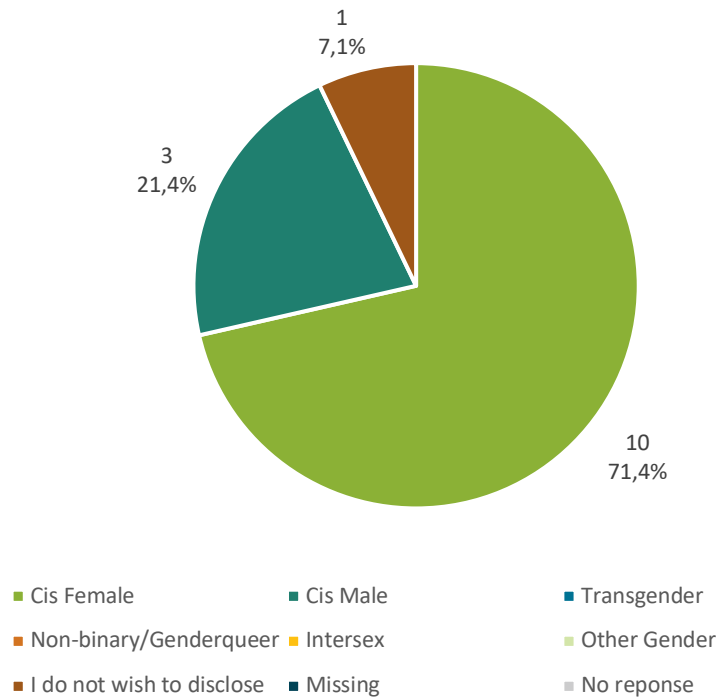


Figure 10 - Gender distribution of participants in the IN SITU Summer School, 2024 (n=14)

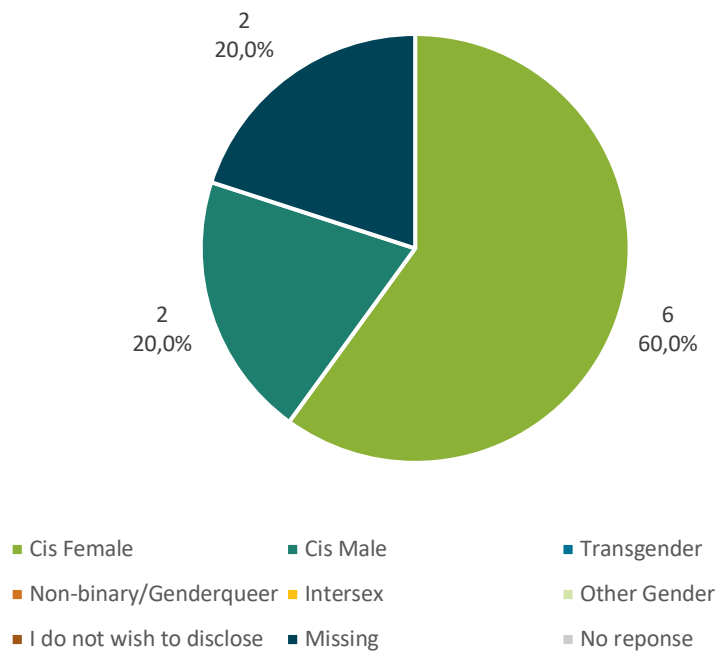


Figure 11 - Gender distribution of the teaching team in the IN SITU Summer School, 2024 (n=10)

#### 5.3.3.4. IN SITU Camp

Similar to the Summer School, the presence of non-binary/genderqueer participants is also observed in the IN SITU Camp, held in Ponta Delgada in the Azores, Portugal, on 16–17 October 2025. The Camp brought together the IN SITU case studies in a collaborative and capacity-building setting, representing a key moment of in-person exchange within the project. Cis female participants represent 66.7% (n=16) of attendees, followed by cis male participants at 29.2% (n=7). A smaller proportion of participants identify as non-binary/genderqueer, corresponding to 4.2% (n=1) (see Figure 12).

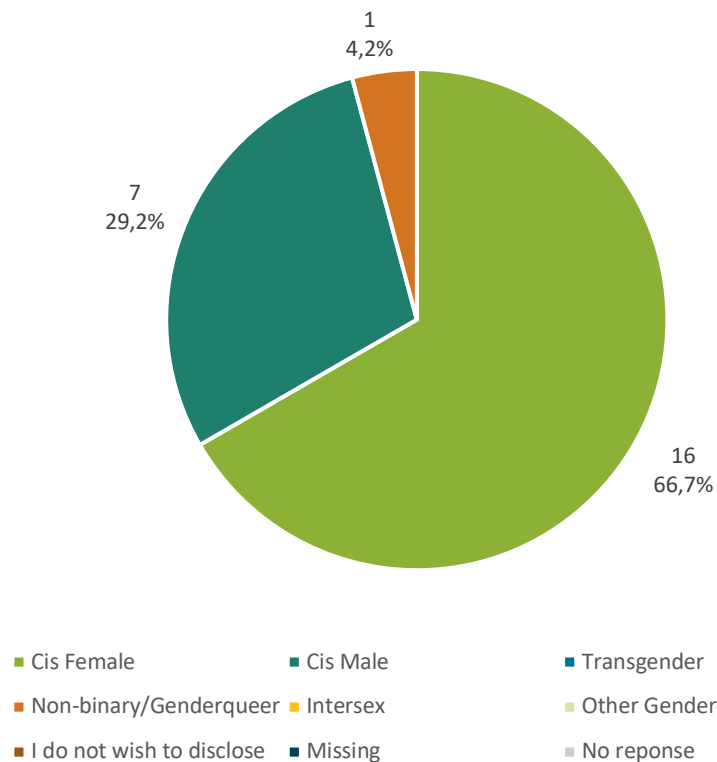


Figure 12 - Gender distribution of participants in the IN SITU Camp (n=24)

Overall, capacity-building and learning activities show a consistent pattern of higher participation of cis female participants across different formats, including training sessions, webinars, the Summer School held in Zlarin (Croatia), and the IN SITU Camp held in Ponta Delgada (Azores, Portugal). While cis male participants are also represented, other gender categories appear only marginally. A small proportion of non-disclosure is also observed, which should be considered when interpreting the results. This pattern is also consistent with broader discussions in the literature, which suggest that cis females often engage more actively in training and capacity-building opportunities as a strategy to navigate structural barriers and unequal professional conditions within cultural and creative sectors.

### 5.3.4. Dissemination and knowledge exchange activities

The analysis now turns to dissemination and public events, focusing specifically on gender representation in conferences organised within the project in Croatia and Latvia. Figure 13 presents the aggregated gender distribution of participants across the two international conferences organised within the scope of the IN SITU project: “Horizons of Sustainability: The Power of Creative Innovation for Transformation of Rural and Non-Urban Futures,” held in Šibenik, Croatia, 25–27 September 2024, and “Culture Matters Here. Cultivating Creative Place-based Innovation in Non-urban Communities,” held in Valmiera, Latvia, 11–13 May 2026. Both conferences brought together researchers, cultural practitioners, artists, policymakers, community actors, and representatives of Cultural and Creative Industries working in non-urban and rural contexts, focusing on themes such as place-based innovation, sustainability, cultural participation, creative practices, policy development, and the role of CCI in fostering more resilient and inclusive communities.

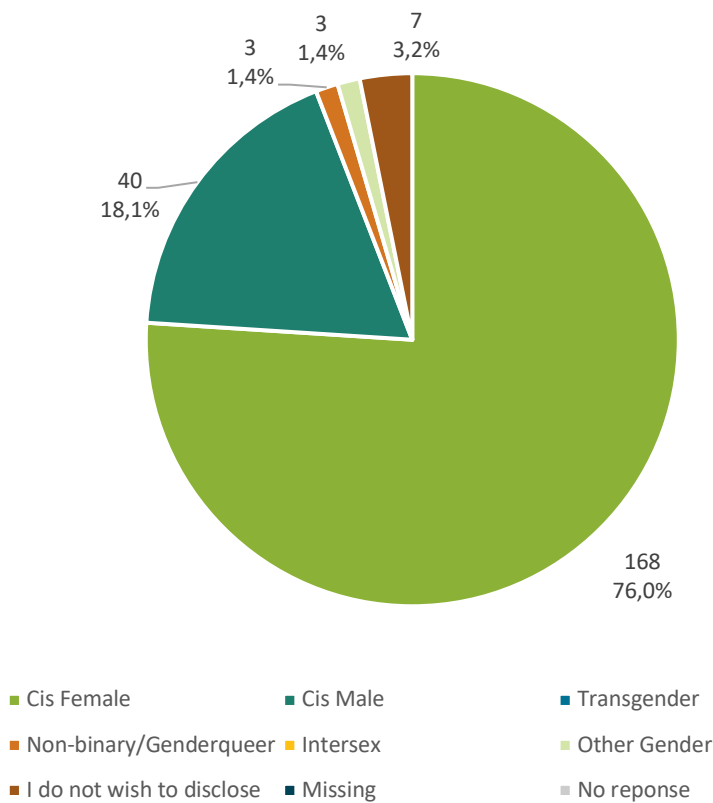


Figure 13 - Gender distribution of participants in the two IN SITU conferences (n=220)

The aggregated data from both conferences indicates a strong predominance of cis female participants, representing 76.0% of the total participants (n=168), followed by cis male participants with 18.1% (n=40). Other gender categories include participants identifying as non-binary/genderqueer (n=3) and other gender identities (n=3). In addition, 3.2% of participants (n=7) selected

the category “I do not wish to disclose,” while small proportions of “missing” and “no response” categories are also present.

These results reflect patterns observed throughout other IN SITU project activities, particularly within participatory and capacity-building contexts, where cis female participation consistently appears more prominent. At the same time, the comparatively limited visibility of non-binary and other gender-diverse categories within the conference data should be interpreted cautiously. The relatively significant proportion of participants classified under “I do not wish to disclose” should also be taken into consideration when interpreting the data, as it highlights the importance of maintaining inclusive and ethically sensitive approaches to gender self-identification in project-based research and participatory activities.

In addition to overall participation, the project also monitored the gender distribution of invited speakers participating in plenary sessions and keynote presentations across both conferences (see Figure 14). The data indicates that cis female invited speakers represented 66.7% of the total (n=34), followed by cis male speakers with 13.7% (n=7). One participant (2.0%) identified as non-binary/genderqueer, while 2.0% (n=1) selected the category “I do not wish to disclose.” In addition, 17.6% (n=9) correspond to missing data. No participants were registered under the categories transgender, intersex, or other gender identities.

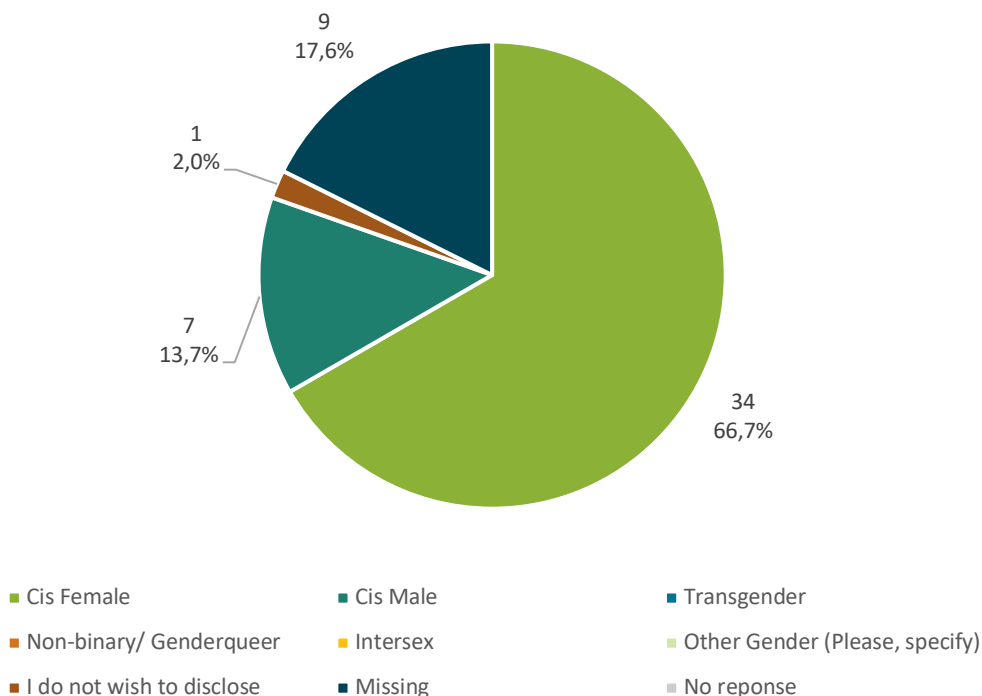


Figure 14 - Gender distribution of invited speakers in the two IN SITU conferences (n=83)

## 5.4. Gender representation in the project team and case studies

### 5.4.1. Research team

Figure 15 presents the gender distribution of the 73 researchers involved in the IN SITU project. This dataset includes all researchers formally associated with the project within their respective institutions, including those who may not have been directly or visibly involved in all project activities. These individuals may have contributed in various ways, such as providing research support, advisory input, or administrative and financial assistance.

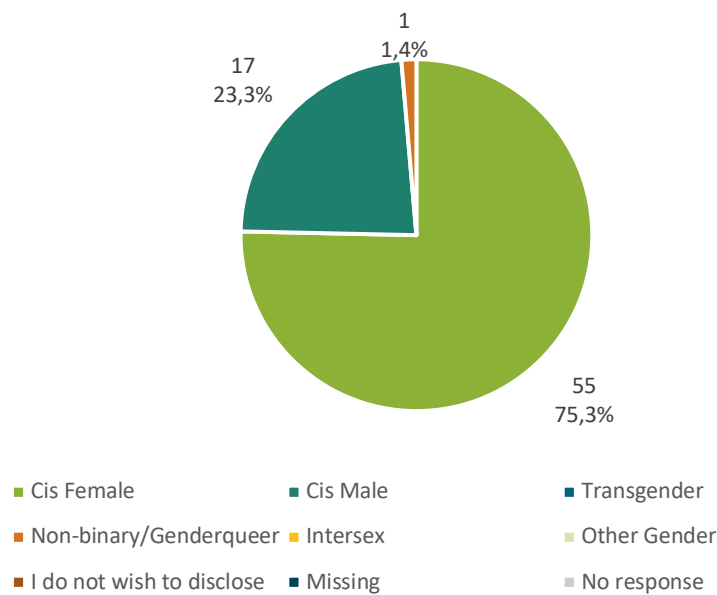


Figure 15 - Gender distribution of researchers involved in the IN SITU project (n=73; last updated 31/12/2024)

Cis female researchers represent 75.3% (n=55) of the total, followed by cis male researchers at 23.3% (n=17). Only one researcher identifies as non-binary/genderqueer, corresponding to 1.4% (n=1). These results indicate a strong representation of females within the broader IN SITU research team, although this distribution should be interpreted considering the dataset's composition, which includes both actively involved and less visible contributors across different institutional contexts.

In addition to the overall composition of the research team, gender representation was also considered across key project meetings, including Lab Committee Meetings, Steering Committee Meetings, General Assemblies, and Consortium Meetings. Gender data for these meetings was derived through the cross-referencing of attendance lists with the dataset of researchers formally associated with the IN SITU project. Given that participation in these meetings largely reflects the core group of researchers formally involved in the project, and that many meetings involve recurring participants over time, no separate graphical or tabular representation is provided. It is important to

highlight that participation across meetings broadly mirrors the overall gender distribution of the IN SITU research team, with a higher representation of cis female participants. While some variation can be observed depending on the type of meeting, particularly in more formal or decision-making contexts, such as Steering Committee Meetings and General Assemblies, these differences remain limited and do not significantly alter the overall pattern.

#### 5.4.2. Consortium meetings

In addition to participation patterns, attention was also given to how the Gender Dimension was addressed within key project meetings. This includes the extent to which gender-related topics were explicitly discussed throughout the project's implementation. In line with Task 7.4, Inclusion of the Cross-cutting Gender Dimension (M1–M48), approximately 10% of the time allocated to the project Kick-off Meeting and consortium working meetings was reserved for discussions related to the Gender Dimension. These discussions aimed to ensure that the IN SITU Gender Equality Plan was being adhered to, while also contributing to the integration of gender-sensitive approaches within the project's research methodology and overall structure.

*Table 3 - Time allocation to the gender dimension in IN SITU kick-off and consortium meetings*

Date	Name of event/location	Total duration (hours)	Time dedicated to gender dimension (hours)	% of total time
October 11-12, 2022	IN SITU Kick-Off Meeting (Azores)	13:00	01:30	11,5
May 31 - June 1, 2023	Working meeting: Mapping and Diagnoses (Finland)	15:15	03:00	19,7
February 19-21, 2024	Working Meeting: Contributions and Diversifications (Ireland)	13:55	01:00	7,2
September 28-29, 2024	Working Meeting: Labs and Strategy (Croatia)	12:45	01:30	11,8
June 2-4, 2025	Working Meeting: Monitoring, Resilience, & Sustainability (Iceland)	18:04	01:00	5,5
May 14-15, 2026	Working Meeting: Non-urban CCI's Competitiveness and Innovation Potential (Latvia)	10:50	0:40	6,2

While the proportion of time dedicated to the Gender Dimension varies across meetings, reflecting their different objectives and focus, gender considerations were consistently integrated throughout the project. This includes both dedicated sessions and broader discussions where gender was addressed as a cross-cutting issue. Overall, approximately 10.3% of the total working time across these meetings was allocated to the gender dimension, aligning closely with the project’s initial commitment.

### 5.4.3. Case studies

We now turn to the gender distribution across the 12 IN SITU case studies. This analysis focuses on the 12 individuals in leading or representative roles associated with each case study, providing an overview of gender representation within this specific component of the project. As presented in Figure 16, the case studies show an equal distribution between cis female and cis male representation, each accounting for 50.0% (n=6). This balanced distribution suggests parity in terms of gender representation among the individuals leading or representing the selected case studies. It is important to note that this data does not reflect the full range of participants involved in each case study but rather refers to the lead or contact person associated with each project.<sup>8</sup>

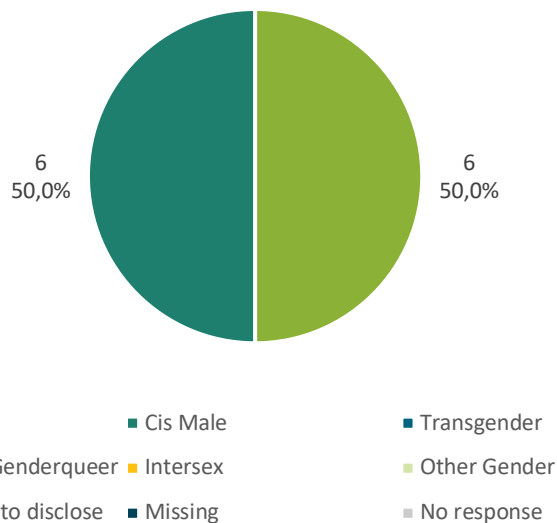


Figure 16 - Gender distribution of case study representatives (n=12)

<sup>8</sup> This distinction is particularly relevant when compared with the interview data presented earlier in this report. While the present analysis considers only the official representatives or main contacts linked to each case study, the interviews occasionally involved different organisational members substituting for the designated representatives, and in one case two members from the same case study participated simultaneously in the interview. As such, the interview sample reflects broader organisational participation rather than solely the formal leadership structure of the case studies.

## 5.5. Key findings and conclusions

The analysis of the gender dimension across the IN SITU project, conducted through a multi-level methodological framework, reveals a set of interconnected patterns that reflect both structural inequalities and emerging opportunities for more inclusive cultural and creative ecosystems in non-urban areas. By combining insights from sectoral analysis, organisational practices, and project-level activities, this report highlights how gender operates as a cross-cutting factor that shapes participation, representation, and access to resources within CCIs. These findings also reflect the project's continuous effort to monitor gender participation and representation across different levels, in line with the IN SITU Gender Equality framework.

At the sectoral level, the findings align with existing literature pointing to the persistence of gender inequalities within Cultural and Creative Industries. While females demonstrate strong participation across the sector, this presence remains unevenly distributed when considering roles associated with decision-making, leadership, and recognition. The data and insights gathered throughout the project suggest that these inequalities are not only a reflection of broader labour market dynamics but are also reinforced by the specific characteristics of CCIs, particularly in non-urban contexts. These include informality, project-based work structures, and reliance on personal networks, which may limit transparency and reduce the effectiveness of equal opportunity mechanisms. As highlighted in previous research, such conditions can create environments where inequalities are less visible yet structurally embedded.

At the organisational level, a more nuanced picture emerges. The case studies analysed within the project point towards examples of more balanced gender representation, particularly in leadership or representative roles. This suggests that smaller-scale, place-based cultural initiatives may, in some cases, offer more flexible and inclusive organisational models. However, this apparent balance should be interpreted cautiously. Rather than indicating a structural shift across the sector, these cases illustrate specific contexts in which gender dynamics may be more equitable due to local conditions, organisational values, or the nature of the initiatives themselves. Importantly, the interviews conducted with the case studies provide deeper insight into these dynamics, revealing how issues of visibility, recognition, and access to opportunities continue to be negotiated within organisations, even when numerical balance appears to be achieved. The cultural mapping component adds another important dimension to the analysis by focusing on individuals in leadership or representative roles within CCIs, organisations, and events and festivals within the IN SITU Lab areas. Although this data does not capture entire teams, it provides valuable insight into who occupies visible and decision-making positions within cultural ecosystems. The findings indicate that while some degree of balance can be observed, gender disparities remain present, particularly when considering the broader structural context in which these roles are embedded. Moreover, the interpretation of this data requires careful consideration of methodological limitations, including variations in data availability across Labs and differences in the temporal coverage of the datasets.

At the level of project activities, the analysis highlights a consistently strong participation of females across a wide range of formats, including data collection activities, participatory community-engaged processes, and capacity-building initiatives. This trend is particularly visible in activities such as interviews, focus groups, and community-based formats, where females often constitute the majority of participants. However, the findings also suggest that participation alone does not necessarily equate to equal influence or visibility. Differences can be observed depending on the type and format of activity, with more formal or high-visibility contexts potentially reflecting more balanced or, in some cases, less female-dominated participation. These variations indicate that gender dynamics are closely linked to the structure and purpose of each activity, as well as to broader patterns of access and representation within the sector.

The analysis of participatory community engagement activities, including Speak Out sessions and Horizontal Networks, further reinforces the importance of context in shaping gender participation. These formats, which are often designed to encourage inclusivity and dialogue, tended to facilitate higher levels of engagement from females and other underrepresented groups. At the same time, they highlight the role of project design in either enabling or constraining equitable participation. In this regard, the role of IN SITU Labs as experimental environments is particularly relevant, as they enable the testing and observation of more inclusive practices, fostering spaces where gender dynamics can be challenged and reconfigured.

Similarly, capacity building and learning activities, including training sessions, webinars, the Summer School, and the IN SITU Camp, demonstrate the relevance of gender-sensitive approaches in shaping participation patterns. These activities not only provide opportunities for skills development but also function as spaces where representation, visibility, and interaction between participants can be observed. While inclusive gender categories were considered in data collection, the presence of non-binary and gender-diverse individuals remains limited across the activities analysed. This does not necessarily indicate their absence within the sector but rather reflects the composition of participants engaged throughout the project and the degree to which they explicitly identified themselves. In this sense, the findings highlight that, although the gender dimension was approached in an inclusive way, its empirical expression remains largely centred on binary categories, pointing to the importance of continuing to promote diverse participation in future initiatives. At the same time, the distribution of participants across different roles within these activities, such as attendees versus teaching teams, suggests that further attention may be needed to ensure balanced representation not only in participation but also in positions of authority and knowledge transmission.

While inclusive gender categories were incorporated into the project's data collection framework, the presence of non-binary and other gender-diverse participants remained comparatively limited across the organisational and activity-based data analysed. At the same time, several datasets included a relatively significant proportion of participants classified under "I do not wish to disclose," particularly in activities such as cultural mapping, Horizontal Networks, focus groups, and survey-based data

collection. Although it is not possible to determine how participants within this category identify, its recurrence highlights some of the broader methodological and structural challenges involved in collecting gender data within complex participatory and research contexts. In this sense, while the project adopted an inclusive approach to gender categories, the empirical expression of the gender dimension remained predominantly centred on cisgender categories, reinforcing the importance of continuing to develop more inclusive forms of participation and gender-sensitive data collection practices in future initiatives.

Across all levels of analysis, the findings also highlight important methodological challenges associated with collecting and interpreting gender data in complex, multi-partner research projects. The presence of categories such as “missing” and “no response” reflects the diversity of data collection contexts and the limitations inherent in working across different methodologies, partners, and cultural settings. In particular, informal or spontaneous interactions, such as certain interviews conducted during fieldwork, did not always allow for the systematic and ethical collection of gender data. While these limitations affect the comparability of results, the decision to retain and explicitly acknowledge these categories contributes to the transparency and robustness of the analysis.

Overall, the results of this report suggest that gender inequalities within CCIs in non-urban areas are both persistent and context-dependent. While the sector shows strong cis females’ participation, this does not automatically translate into equal representation across all roles and levels of influence. At the same time, the IN SITU project demonstrates that targeted approaches such as integrating gender as a cross-cutting dimension in research design, monitoring participation across activities, and fostering inclusive participatory formats can contribute to more equitable outcomes.

The findings also suggest that gender equality within CCIs in non-urban areas cannot be understood only through levels of participation or representation. Although cis females were strongly represented across many of the activities and contexts analysed, this did not always correspond to equal visibility, recognition, or access to decision-making roles and opportunities. At the same time, while the project adopted a broader and more inclusive understanding of gender, the available data remained largely centred on cisgender categories, with limited visibility of non-binary and other gender-diverse participants. This reflects both the composition of participants involved throughout the project and the broader challenges associated with collecting and representing diverse gender experiences within CCIs. Overall, the findings reinforce that gender dynamics within non-urban cultural and creative ecosystems are shaped by broader social, organisational, and territorial conditions.

Importantly, these findings reinforce the need to understand gender not as an isolated variable but as part of a broader set of intersecting factors, including geography, organisational structures, and access to resources. In line with the theoretical perspectives outlined earlier in this report, gender dynamics in non-urban CCIs are shaped by the interplay between spatial, social, and institutional conditions. As such, efforts to promote gender equality in these contexts must go beyond increasing participation

and instead address the underlying structures that influence who is able to participate, in what capacity, and with what level of visibility and recognition. In this sense, the insights generated through this analysis contribute to informing more gender-sensitive cultural policies and practices, particularly in non-urban areas where structural constraints and opportunities coexist in complex ways.

## 6. Recommendations

The findings of this report point to a gap that recurs across all levels of analysis: the gap between what gender equality requires in practice and what actually happens within Cultural and Creative Industries in non-urban areas. At the same time, the experiences and participation of non-binary, trans, intersex, and other gender-diverse individuals often remain even less visible within both institutional structures and gender equality discussions, partly due to the limited availability of data and the continued predominance of binary understandings of gender across cultural and policy frameworks. Women participate actively but this participation does not automatically translate into equal recognition, visibility, or influence. Women's contributions in coordination, community engagement, and relational work are central to how cultural initiatives function, yet they are often treated as informal or expected rather than as skilled and strategic work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015; Heinicke et al., 2024). Gender equality in cultural and creative industries, particularly in non-urban areas, requires deliberate and consistent action: in how EU-funded projects are set up and evaluated, in how policies are designed, and in how organisations work day-to-day. The following recommendations are addressed to these three groups of actors.

Overall, the recommendations highlight that strengthening the gender dimension requires a more consistent alignment between policy frameworks, organisational practices, and EU-funded programmes. While important commitments and tools are already in place, their impact depends on how they are translated into everyday practices and sustained throughout the project lifecycle. The experience of IN SITU shows that integrating the gender dimension as an ongoing and shared responsibility can support more balanced participation, visibility, and access to opportunities. By ensuring greater coordination across levels and remaining attentive to different territorial contexts, future initiatives can contribute to more inclusive and meaningful outcomes.

### 6.1. EU programmes: Improving consistency and impact

EU-funded programmes play an important role in supporting the gender dimension and ensuring that it is integrated across projects. This is grounded in a broader European legal and policy framework, where gender equality is established as a fundamental principle and a cross-cutting priority across research, innovation, and regional development policies. Recent developments, including the European Commission's *Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030* (European Commission, 2026) and the

*Roadmap for Women's Rights* (European Parliament, 2025), further reinforce the need to embed the gender dimension consistently across all stages of EU-funded initiatives.

Within this context, the experience of IN SITU suggests that there is still room to strengthen how these principles are implemented in practice, particularly in ensuring greater continuity between commitments made at the proposal stage and their application throughout the project. Gender Equality Plans can support this process when used as ongoing reference points rather than formal requirements. When revisited throughout the project, they can help ensure that the gender dimension remains visible and connected to everyday practices and decision-making processes.

EU programmes can also strengthen implementation by supporting clearer and more practical guidance. While the policy framework is well established, projects/organisations may differ in their levels of experience and available resources, particularly in non-urban contexts. Providing accessible tools, examples, and support can help ensure that the gender dimension is understood and applied in a more consistent way across different types of projects.

To strengthen impact, evaluation approaches can place greater emphasis on how projects engage with the gender dimension in practice. Beyond compliance with formal requirements, considering how roles, visibility, and access to opportunities are distributed can provide a more meaningful understanding of outcomes and of how projects can contribute to addressing existing inequalities.

Finally, recognising the diversity of project contexts remains essential. EU frameworks increasingly highlight the importance of inclusive and context-sensitive approaches. Ensuring that support mechanisms are flexible enough to accommodate different territorial realities, including non-urban settings, can help ensure that the gender dimension is implemented in ways that are both realistic and effective.

## **6.2. Policy frameworks: Turning commitments into practice**

Policymakers can play an important role by ensuring that gender considerations are consistently included in cultural, rural, and innovation policies. This can be done by integrating gender more clearly into programme design, funding criteria, and evaluation processes, making it a visible and expected part of how initiatives are developed and assessed.

Supporting a more consistent approach to collecting information on gender across projects can also make a difference. Ensuring that this type of information is considered from the beginning and collected in a simple and comparable way can help build a clearer picture of participation and experiences over time. This could be done through a shared template with a small set of common questions, or by storing the information in a simple shared database, making it easier to compare participation across projects. This approach could give projects a clear and practical way to collect the information.

Policymakers can support a broader understanding of innovation within CCIs by recognising and valuing non-technological forms of innovation, such as cultural production, community-based initiatives, and collaborative practices. At the same time, it is important to support access to the skills needed to engage with different forms of technological innovation. As highlighted in Tessarin et al. (2023, 2024), women are more frequently represented in roles associated with lower to medium levels of digital skills, while their presence in more digitally specialised roles remains more limited. Supporting access to digital skills and training is therefore essential to ensure more balanced participation across different types of activities and opportunities within CCIs.

Finally, policy approaches can benefit from being more sensitive to the realities of non-urban areas. Adapting measures to local conditions, including access to infrastructure, networks, and opportunities, can help ensure that gender equality efforts are more relevant and effective in different contexts. This may include recognising that access to training, funding, and professional networks is often more limited in these areas, which can affect how individuals enter and progress within CCIs.

In this context, policymakers can support more tailored approaches that contemplate smaller-scale environments and existing local dynamics. Supporting local initiatives, facilitating connections between actors, and improving access to training opportunities can help strengthen participation and reduce existing gaps. These measures are particularly important in contexts where informal networks and limited resources play a central role in shaping opportunities.

### 6.3. Organisational practices: Making gender equality part of everyday work

Organisations play a central role in shaping how gender equality is experienced in practice within CCIs. Although gender equality is often recognised as something important, it is not always reflected in everyday practices. This is particularly visible in contexts where work is organised in flexible and informal ways, as is often the case in CCIs, as observed in both the literature and the data analysed.

To address these challenges, organisations can benefit from adopting more explicit approaches to gender equality. Tools such as Gender Equality Plans can support this process, particularly when accompanied by dedicated structures such as gender committees or working groups that help ensure these considerations remain present throughout a project.

Creating space for reflection is equally important, particularly by supporting a better understanding of what gender equality means in practice and why it is relevant. Moments of conversation, alongside workshops or facilitated sessions where these issues are explicitly addressed, can help build this awareness and support individuals in taking these aspects into account in their daily work. Introducing these discussions early in project development can also contribute to building a shared understanding among team members.

Working conditions should also be considered. The project-based and often unstable nature of work in CCIIs can lead to uneven experiences, particularly for those in more precarious positions. Organisations can respond by promoting fairer conditions, setting clearer expectations, and ensuring more consistent approaches in how tasks and opportunities are allocated.

Finally, organisations play a role not only in facilitating access to new opportunities but also in recognising existing contributions. This includes supporting access to digital and technical skills, while also valuing forms of work that are often less visible but essential, such as coordination, communication, and community-based activities.

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## Annex 1. Interview guide

### Building the *Gender Booklet (D7.4)* for the IN SITU project: Interview

This interview is designed to collect valuable insights for the project “IN SITU – Place-based Innovation of Cultural and Creative Industries in Non-urban Areas” (Grant Agreement no. 101061747). It focuses on 12 case studies located in Portugal, Iceland, Croatia, Ireland, Latvia, and Finland, each showcasing unique aspects of cultural and creative industries in non-urban settings.

The information gathered from these interviews will be instrumental in developing a gender booklet (D7.4) to meet the European Commission’s requirements for a gender dimension analysis.

1. Are the working conditions of the project designed to promote gender equality? If so, how?
2. How important do you consider the gender dimension in your work overall? Please rate from 0 to 10, and explain your reasoning.
3. In your view, does your project address gender inequalities in society? If yes, please describe how it does so.
4. Do you believe it is possible to address this topic through your work? If yes, please explain how; if no, why not?
5. Have you checked if you are projecting stereotypical gender roles? If so, how?
6. Do you incorporate gender-sensitive language in your communications, initiatives, and campaigns? If so, how?



## Annex 2. Exploring gender roles in non-urban cultural and creative industries: Insights from the IN SITU project (booklet)



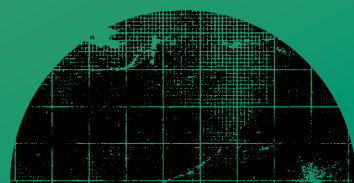
**IN  
SITU** place-based **innovation** of  
**cultural and creative** industries  
in **non-urban** areas

# Exploring Gender Roles in Non-urban Cultural and Creative Industries: Insights from the IN SITU Project



Funded by  
the European Union

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Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme under  
Grant Agreement no. 101061747






# Exploring Gender Roles in Non-urban Cultural and Creative Industries: Insights from the IN SITU Project



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# I. **Short Overview** of the IN SITU Project

## Project Objectives and Scope

*IN SITU – Place-based Innovation of Cultural and Creative Industries in Non-urban Areas* is a four-year project funded under the Horizon Europe Programme (Grant Agreement no. 101061747) that combines research and experimental actions to advance the innovation-related practices, capacities, and potentials of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) based in non-urban and rural areas of the European Union (EU). The Consortium involves 13 partners from 12 countries, consisting of research institutions, cultural academies, a European cultural network, and a national cultural foundation.

The IN SITU project is structured around six Labs, which function as place-based research and innovation environments in non-urban regions across Europe. These Labs bring together local stakeholders, cultural actors, and researchers to explore and support cultural and creative practices within their specific territorial contexts. The six IN SITU Labs are located in the Azores archipelago in the mid-Atlantic Ocean (Portugal); the western coastal periphery (Ireland); the West Region (Iceland); Rauma and Eurajoki on the west coast and the Baltic Sea archipelago (Finland); Valmiera County (Latvia); and Šibenik-Knin County (Croatia).

The project aims to:

- Challenge dominant urban-centric perspectives on cultural economies by taking non-urban areas seriously as spaces of cultural production and innovation.
- Widen understanding of the value that CCIs in rural and peripheral areas add to their communities and territories.

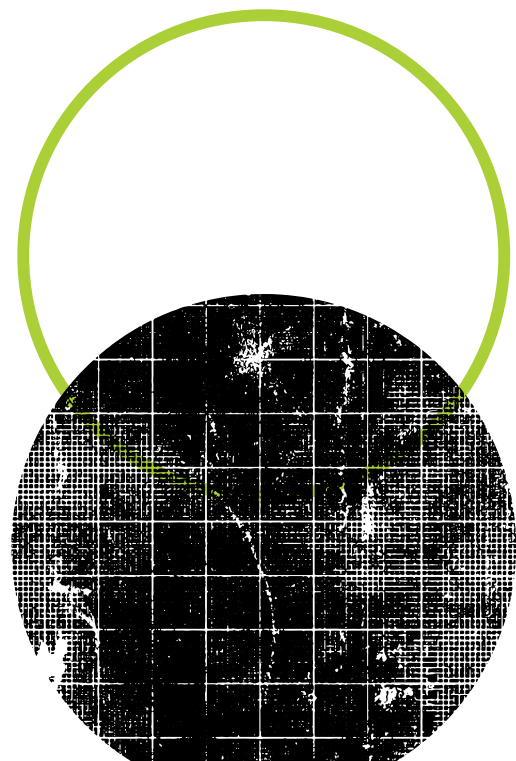
- Analyse new CCI business practices and collaborative governance models that produce arts and culture-based development with real community impact.

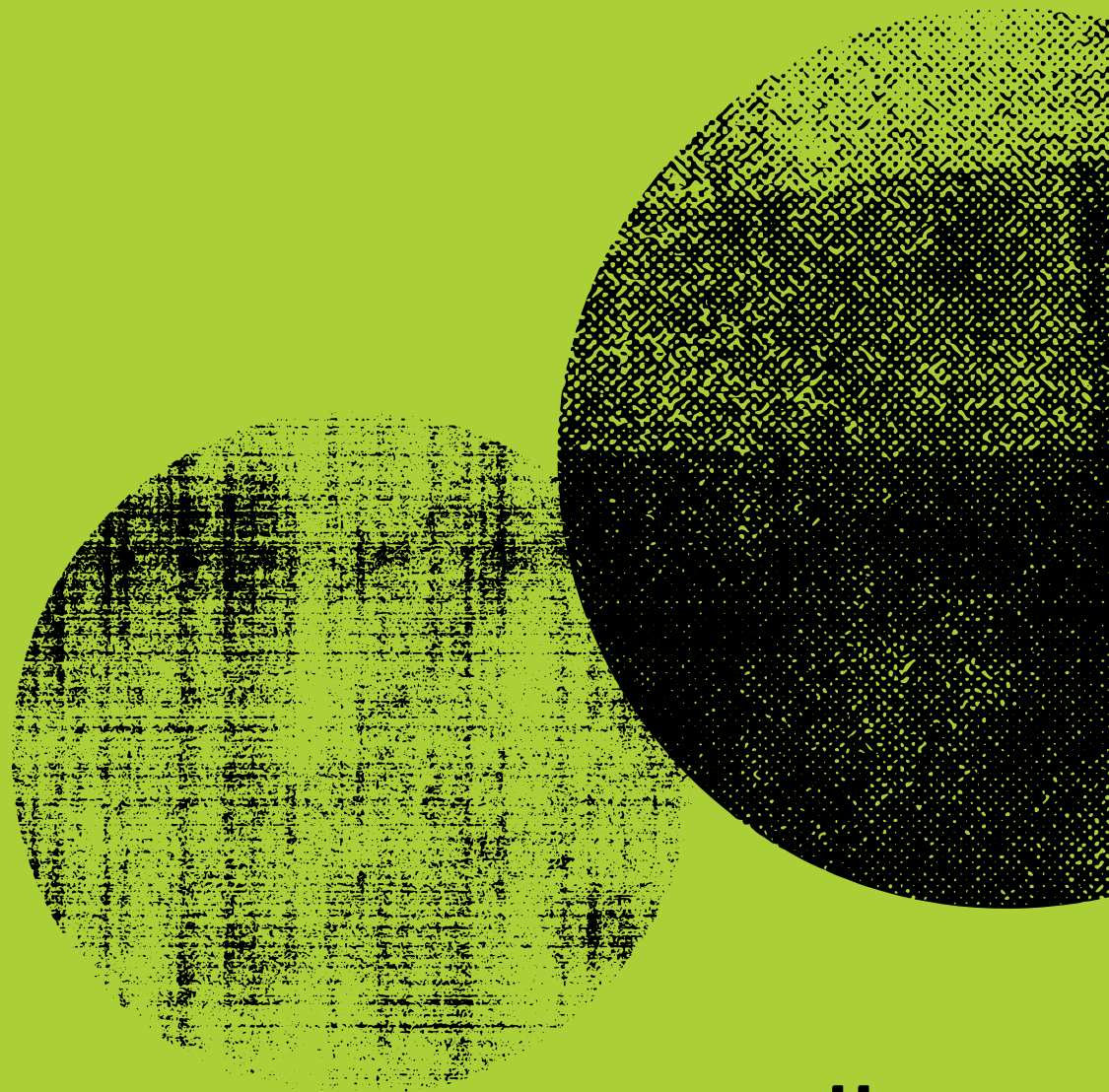
Within this context, gender is recognised as a key dimension of analysis. It is not treated as an add-on, but as something that shapes how cultural initiatives are developed, how people participate, and how access and opportunities are distributed.

***The IN SITU Concept Guide (IN SITU, 2024) approaches gender as both a social construct and a system of power. It refers to the roles, expectations, and attributes socially assigned to individuals, while gender identity relates to how each person identifies, which may differ from their biological sex.***

This booklet provides an accessible overview of how the gender dimension has been addressed throughout the IN SITU project. It brings together data and insights to highlight key patterns, challenges, and opportunities across cultural and creative industries in non-urban areas — from the wider European context to organisations and project activities.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that although this booklet adopts an inclusive understanding of gender that goes beyond binary categories, the empirical data collected throughout the project reflects a significantly stronger presence of cis female and cis male, with comparatively limited representation of trans, non-binary, intersex, queer, and other gender-diverse individuals. This should be taken into consideration in reading and interpreting the analysis presented in this booklet.





## II. **Gender Equality:** Historical Context, Rural Disparities, and Policy Frameworks

## Brief Historical Perspective on Gender Equality in Europe

In rural contexts, women have long contributed to cultural and creative practices, particularly through crafts and artisanal work. However, such contributions have often gone unrecognised within formal cultural sectors. This helps explain why women's presence in recognised cultural roles, especially in leadership positions, has remained limited.

Gender inequalities in cultural and creative industries are thus shaped not only by gender itself but also by place. In non-urban areas, geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, and reduced access to funding and professional networks influence both how cultural work takes place and who participates. These conditions tend to reinforce traditional gender roles and make women's work less visible and less valued, especially when it occurs in informal or domestic settings. They may also contribute to environments where different forms of gender-based discrimination, exclusion, and violence persist, particularly in informal or precarious working contexts.

Despite the perception of cultural and creative sectors as open and progressive, inequalities remain pervasive, affecting not only women but also trans, non-binary, queer, and other gender-diverse individuals, whose experiences often remain less visible within both policy frameworks and cultural institutions.



*It is precisely this ethos of progressiveness that obscures existing inequalities and even pushes sexism and other forms of discrimination beyond the boundaries of the unspeakable – but not beyond the boundaries of the possible.”*

— Walther, Heinicke & Kegler, 2023, p. 5

These inequalities are also reinforced by the nature of creative work:



*CCIs are marked by persistent gender inequalities that are amplified by the precariousness, informality and requirements for flexibility which are widely noted features of contemporary creative employment.”*

— Walther, Heinicke & Kegler, 2023, p. 7

Women are more often found in lower-paid, part-time, and project-based roles, and are still underrepresented in leadership positions.

CCIs in non-urban areas can support women's economic independence and participation, but only if gender is actively considered in how these initiatives are designed and implemented.

## Policy Frameworks for Gender Equality in Europe

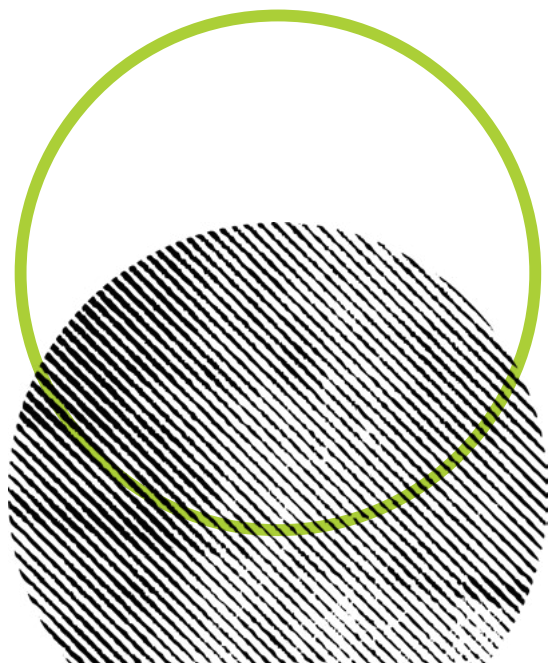
Gender equality is a core principle of the European Union (EU) and is embedded in its legal framework. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union establishes equal pay as a fundamental right, while the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibits discrimination based on sex (European Union, 2012, Art. 21; European Parliament, 2025).

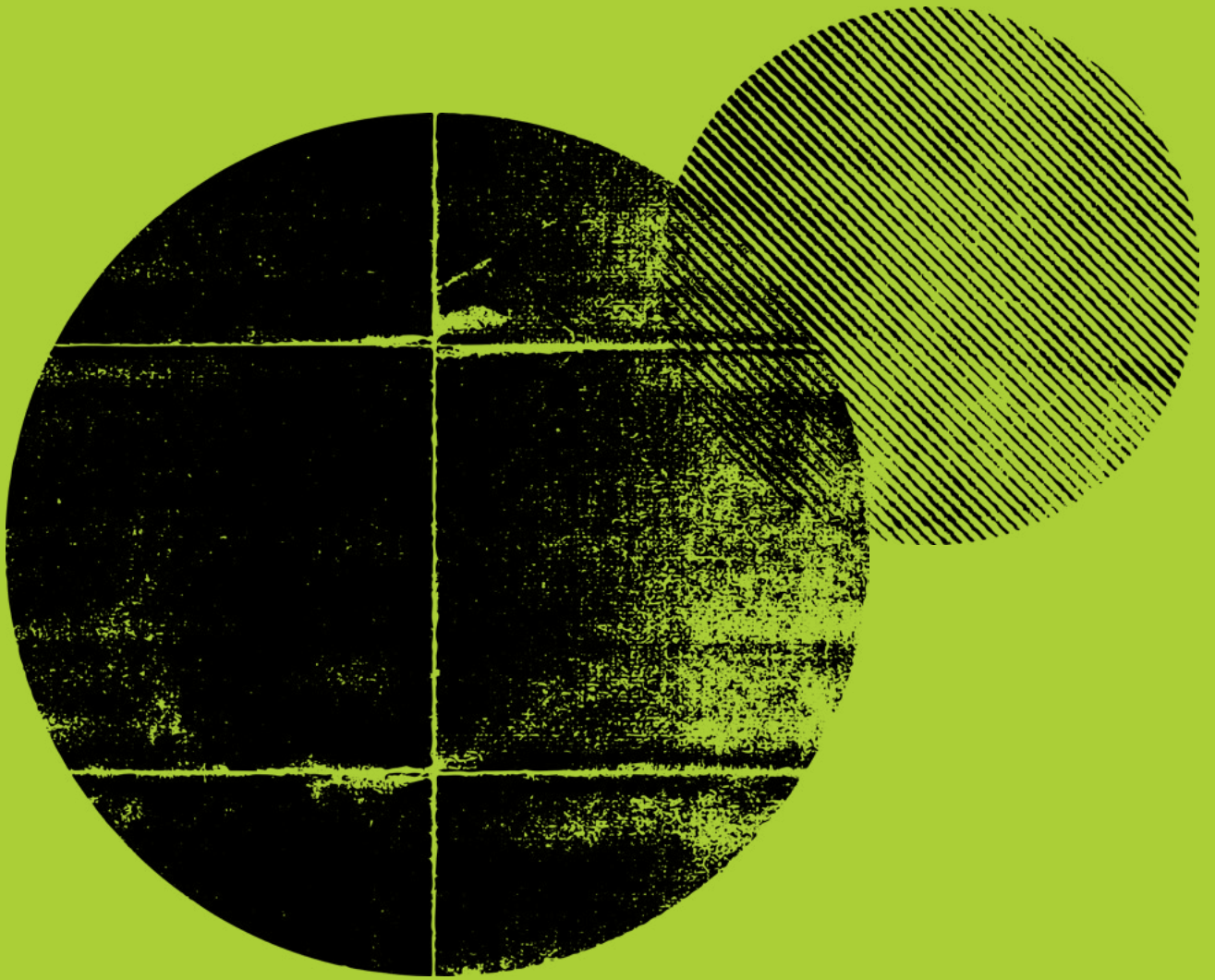
This commitment is further advanced through policy frameworks such as the European Commission's *Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030*, which builds on previous initiatives and translates the *Roadmap for Women's Rights* into concrete action (European Parliament, 2025). The Strategy adopts a dual approach, combining targeted measures with systematic gender mainstreaming across all policy areas, and sets out key priorities including combating gender-based violence, promoting economic empowerment and equal pay, supporting work–life balance and equality in care, ensuring equal participation in the labour market and decision-making, and strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender equality (European Commission, 2026).

At the policy level, gender mainstreaming is applied across EU programmes and funding instruments, including Horizon Europe, ensuring that gender perspectives are integrated into research and innovation processes (EIGE, n.d.).

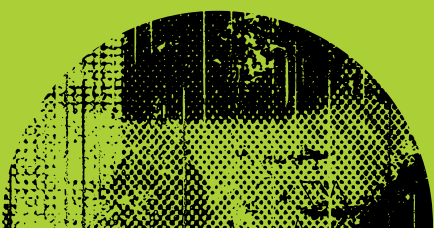
Under Horizon Europe, all funded projects are required to adopt a Gender Equality Plan and to integrate the gender dimension throughout their activities. In the IN SITU project, this is reflected in its methodological approach, monitoring processes, and in the analysis presented in this booklet.

In the context of cultural and creative industries, these frameworks support measures that promote participation, visibility, and access to opportunities (EIGE, 2019; Menzel, 2021). In non-urban areas, they also emphasise the importance of adapting policies to different territorial contexts, ensuring that cultural development and innovation are inclusive and accessible beyond urban centres (Walther, Heinicke & Kegler, 2023).





**III.**  
Methodological  
**Approach to the  
Gender Dimension  
Analysis** of the  
IN SITU project



This booklet is based on a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collected throughout the IN SITU project.

Qualitative data include insights from project reports produced by the IN SITU partners and interviews with case study representatives.

Quantitative data were collected through a monitoring system that recorded participation in IN SITU activities, including workshops, events, and other project-led initiatives. This monitoring was carried out using instruments such as forms and structured reporting templates, providing information on who participated, in what roles, and across which

regions. It offers a structured way to observe patterns of involvement, leadership, and engagement over time, complementing the qualitative insights from reports and interviews. By combining these data, the analysis captures both the overall trends and the specific nuances of gender dynamics within the project.

Together, these data sources provide a broad understanding of gender dynamics, combining overall patterns with individual experiences (Creswell, 2009).

The analysis follows a three-level framework:



Although broader terms such as *women* and *men* are used throughout the booklet in historical and conceptual discussions, the empirical analysis presented in the following sections follows the predefined gender categories adopted within the IN SITU data collection framework. Accordingly, references to *female* and *male* in the analysis of

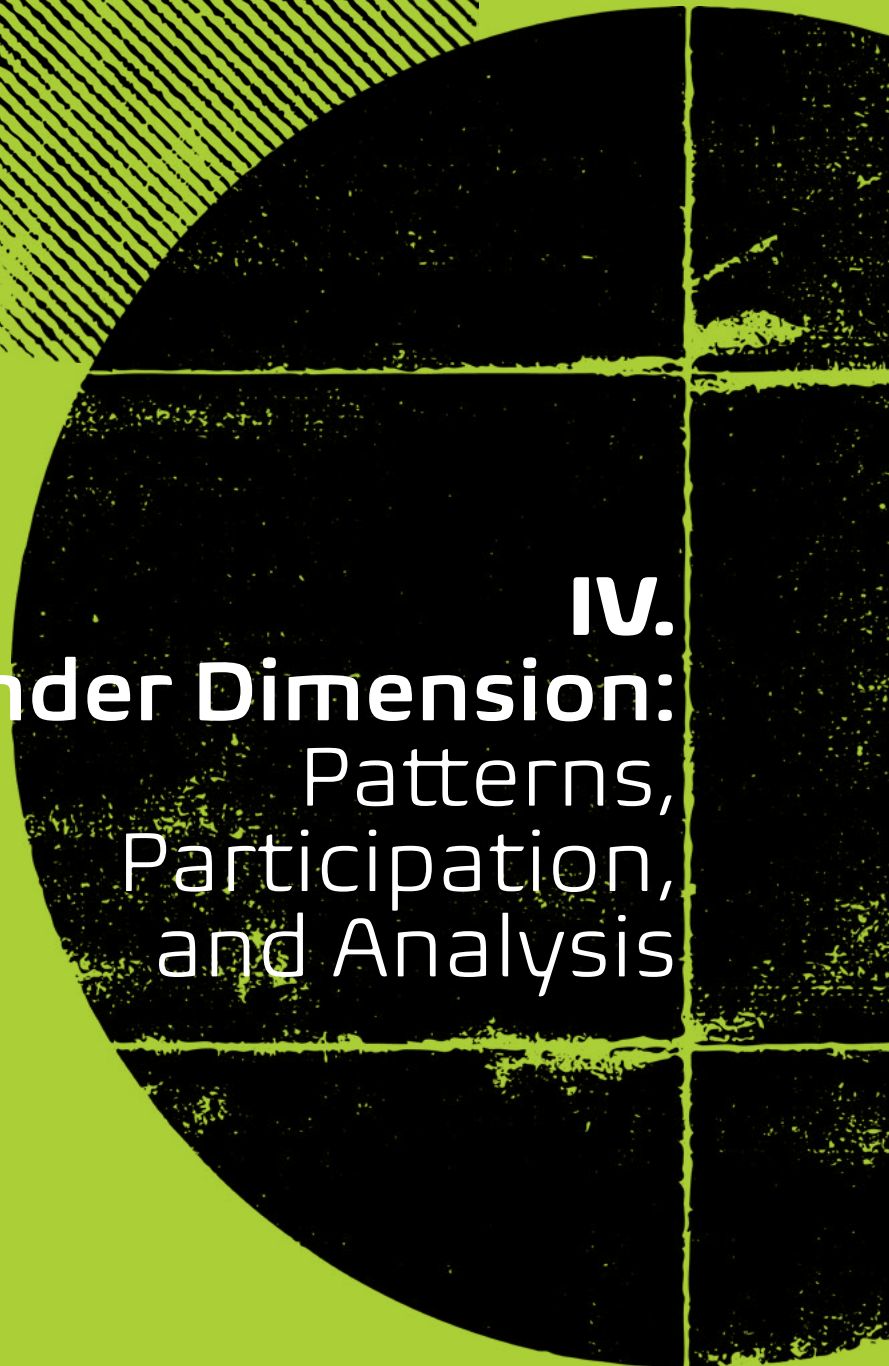
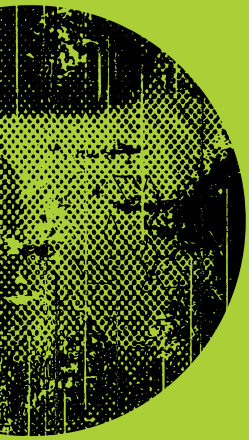
quantitative data specifically refer to the *cis female* and *cis male* categories included in the project's monitoring and data collection processes.

Gender data was collected through self-identification using the categories presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Gender categories used in IN SITU

Gender Category	Definition
<b>CIS FEMALE / CIS MALE</b>	Cisgender refers to individuals whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth (Aultman, 2014).
<b>TRANSGENDER</b>	“An adjective to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. People who are transgender may also use other terms, in addition to transgender, to describe their gender more specifically.” (GLAAD, n.d.-a)
<b>NON-BINARY / GENDERQUEER</b>	Individuals whose gender identity is not exclusively male or female and may vary over time or reject binary categories (Richards et al., 2016).
<b>INTERSEX</b>	“Intersex refers to someone with one or more innate sex characteristics, including genitals, internal reproductive organs, and chromosomes, that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies.” (GLAAD, n.d.-b)
<b>OTHER GENDER</b>	Any gender identity not captured by the categories above (self-described).
<b>I DO NOT WISH TO DISCLOSE</b>	Participants who prefer not to share their gender identity.





# **IV.** Gender Dimension: Patterns, Participation, and Analysis

## 1. The CCI sector in non-urban areas

Cultural and creative industries play a key role in non-urban areas, contributing to local economies, community life, and cultural expression.

Across European regions, women are strongly represented in cultural and creative occupations, particularly in non-urban contexts where these activities are closely connected to local communities.



*[...] despite the high number of women graduates in education and training in the cultural sphere, they are more often employed in low-paid jobs and still struggle to advance their careers, because of several persistent inequalities such as (horizontal and vertical) segregation patterns and/or the phenomenon of the gender pay gap."*

— Walther, Heinicke & Kegler, 2023, p. 7

Women's strong presence within the sector does not necessarily result in equal opportunities, recognition, or influence over decision-making processes. Gender shapes how work is organised within the sector. Women are more often involved in roles related to cultural production, communication, education, and coordination, while men tend to be more represented in technical, digital, and leadership positions. These patterns reflect persistent forms of inequality, even within a sector often perceived as open and progressive.

As highlighted in IN SITU research, this perception of openness can sometimes obscure existing inequalities:



*[...] sexism appears to be widely tolerated in the CCIs, described internally as an unpleasant but accepted reality."*

— Walther, Heinicke & Kegler, 2023, p. 5

In non-urban areas, these dynamics are further influenced by local conditions. Limited access to funding, infrastructure, and professional networks can reinforce existing inequalities, while traditional gender roles may continue to shape expectations and participation.

At the same time, innovation in these contexts often takes different forms. Rather than being driven by technology alone, it is frequently expressed through cultural, social, and organisational practices rooted in local realities. Non-urban areas can be



*remarkably innovative, even in the absence of agglomeration benefits."*

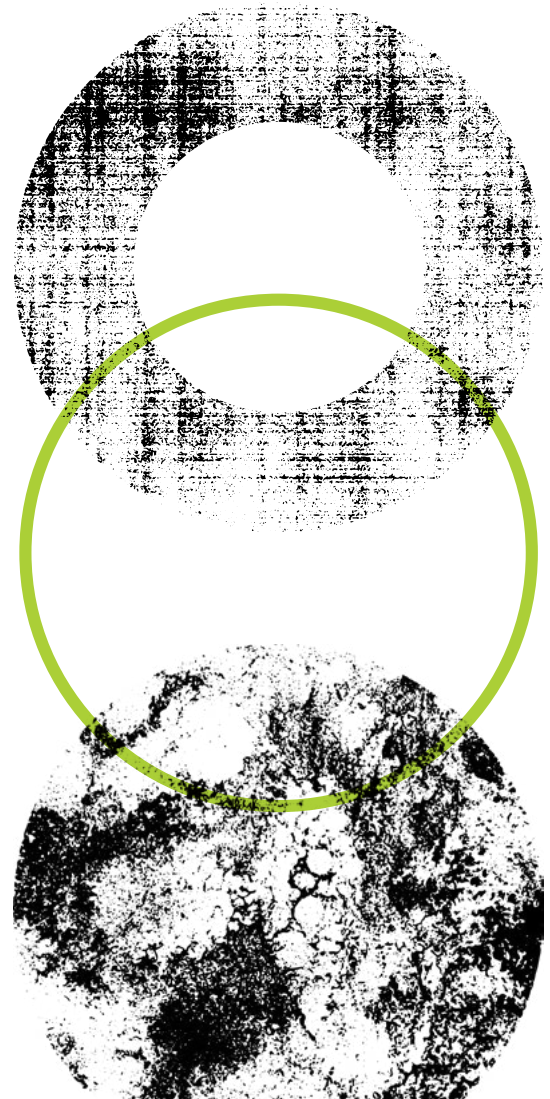
— Tessarin, Cortinovia, Castaldi, & Boschma, 2023, p. 11

This broader understanding of innovation is important, as it makes visible forms of contribution that are often overlooked by conventional indicators. However, not all contributions are equally recognised.

Traditional measures of innovation, such as patents, tend to reflect high-tech and research-intensive activities, where men are more strongly represented. In contrast, forms of innovation more common in CCI, including cultural production, social innovation, and community-based practices, are less visible in these metrics. As a result, women's contributions to innovation in non-urban CCI may be underestimated.

At the same time, differences in access to skills and resources continue to shape participation. Women are more frequently present in roles requiring lower to medium levels of digital skills, while their representation in more specialised technical areas remains more limited. In non-urban contexts, where access to training and infrastructure may be more constrained, these differences can be further reinforced.

Despite the perception of CCI as inclusive spaces, inequalities remain embedded in their structures and everyday practices. Participation alone does not ensure equality, as access to resources, visibility, and decision-making continues to be unevenly distributed.



## 2. CCI at an organizational level

This level focuses on how gender is reflected within organisations operating in the cultural and creative sector. While the previous section looked at broader patterns across the sector, this level shifts the focus to how these dynamics are experienced in practice, within organisations, projects, and everyday working environments.

Cultural and creative organisations play a key role in shaping how work is organised, who takes on different roles, and how opportunities are distributed. They are often spaces of collaboration, creativity, and experimentation, but they are also influenced by wider social structures and existing inequalities.

Understanding gender at this level means looking beyond overall participation and examining how responsibilities, visibility, and decision-making are shared within organisations. It also involves considering how organisational structures, working conditions, and access to resources can influence participation in different ways.

### Cultural Mapping: Who Leads?

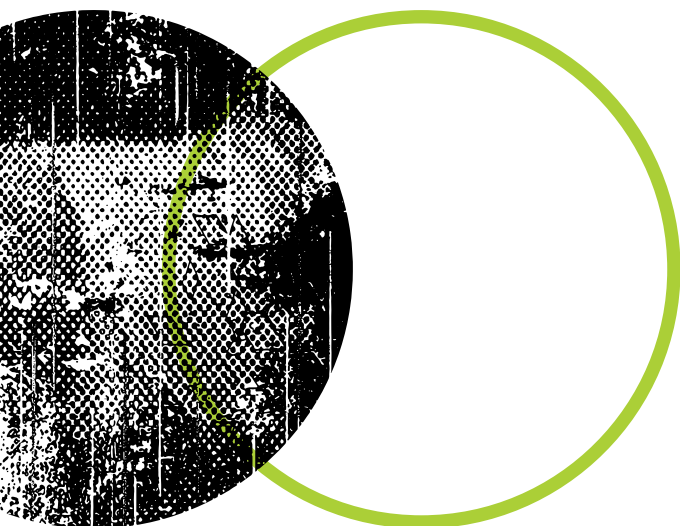
The cultural mapping produced within the project provides an overview of gender distribution across CCIs, organisations, and events and festivals in the IN SITU Lab regions. The data refers to individuals in leading or representative roles, such as founders or directors.

Across both data collection moments (2018–2022 and 2023–2024), a consistent pattern emerges: cis male representation is higher than cis female representation across all categories.

This imbalance is most visible in CCIs and events and festivals, while non-profit cultural organisations tend to present a more balanced distribution.

Three main trends can be identified:

- Persistent gender imbalance in leadership roles, with higher representation of cis males
- Variation across categories, with non-profit cultural organisations showing more balanced distributions
- Differences across organisational settings, reflecting how organisational structures and sector characteristics shape participation



## Insights from case studies: What Do the Interviews Tell Us?

Interviews with case study representatives provide a closer look at how gender is understood and experienced within cultural and creative organisations. The semi-structured format allowed participants to reflect not only on their working conditions but also on how gender is perceived, addressed, and sometimes overlooked in their everyday practices.

Across most cases, gender equality is framed less as a deliberate objective and more as an assumed outcome of openness. Participation is frequently described as accessible to all, with several initiatives presented as being “for everyone”.

In several instances, participants explicitly acknowledged that gender was not considered during the design of their projects:

**“No, it’s not designed to. We didn’t think about that in that moment.”**

**“I don’t imagine that was part of the conversation.”**

In this sense, equality is often understood as something that will naturally emerge from inclusive environments, rather than as a dimension requiring intentional planning or reflection.

**“We think that we are equal... but still we are not. It is a men’s world.”**

This highlights a gap between the idea of inclusivity and the realities of gendered experience.

In some cases, gender is present but not explicitly framed as such. Instead, it is embedded within broader values such as respect, diversity, and inclusion:

**“When we talk about respect, consent, diversity... we are talking about gender issues.”**

**“It is always implicit... it’s a profoundly feminist project because... everyone should have the right to the same things.”**

These accounts suggest that gender can be actively present in practice, even when it is not formally recognised or articulated.

At the level of everyday practices, recurring patterns emerge in how roles are distributed. Women are frequently associated with organisation, coordination, and community engagement:

**“It’s always the women that take the initiative and organize things and make something happen... it’s always the women that volunteer to take the steps.”**

While these roles are essential to the functioning of projects, they are often informal and less visible. At the same time, men tend to be more present in technical or specialised roles:

**“The percentage of female professionals in these [technical] areas is still very low.”**

Even in contexts where women are highly present, this does not necessarily translate into equal visibility or recognition:

**“There could be at least two or three men. And it’s wow, they are coming here.”**

**“When two men sort of turn up, everyone is so happy to see them... as if 50, 70 females are less valuable than two male members.”**

These examples point to a disconnect between participation and recognition.

The interviews also reveal differences in how gender is perceived. Women more frequently describe how gender shapes their experiences and the need to challenge expectations:

**“We are proving that you don’t have to be a man or with a man to [do this type of work].”**

**“It is totally different... that I’m living... as a woman. It’s totally different... if I would be a man.”**

In contrast, male participants tend to frame gender in more general terms:

**“It doesn’t really matter... it is based on the people.”**

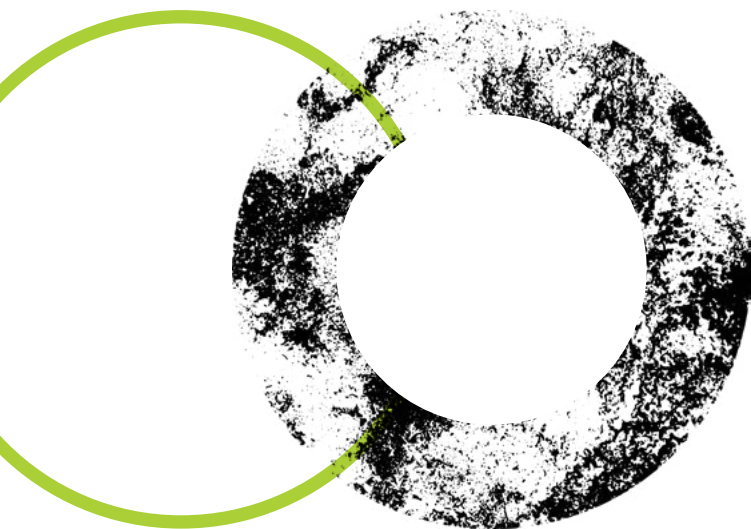
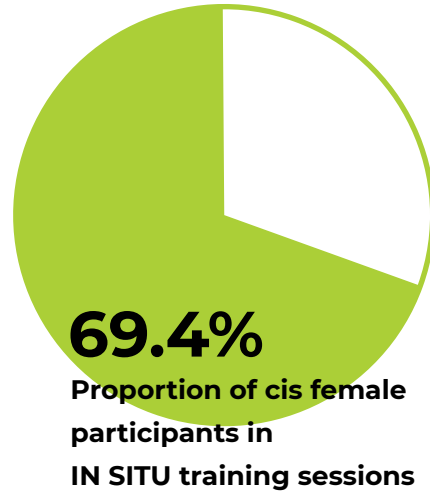
While this reflects a commitment to fairness, it may also make it more difficult to recognise structural inequalities.

Rather than offering a general overview of the sector, these interviews capture situated experiences, shaped by specific organisational and territorial contexts. They reveal how gender is not only a structural issue, but also something negotiated in practice through decisions, interactions, and ways of working.

### Training and Capacity-Building

Training sessions delivered across the six IN SITU Labs between 2023 and 2024 provide additional evidence on gender participation patterns. These sessions, which addressed topics including entrepreneurship, funding, digitalisation, sustainability, and cross-sector collaboration, were predominantly attended by women.

This strong female participation in capacity-building activities is consistent with the broader pattern identified in the interviews, in which women are described as more actively involved in cultural and community-based activities. While encouraging, this pattern also raises questions about the structural conditions that make women more likely to seek out training — and whether this motivation reflects a response to existing barriers and inequalities.





across activities, although their presence is visible in specific contexts such as the IN SITU Camp and the Summer School.

A share of participants selected “I do not wish to disclose” or did not provide a response, particularly in activities such as surveys and interviews, which reflects differences in participation formats and data collection approaches. Overall, the distribution highlights consistent patterns of participation

across activities, with a strong presence of cis female participants alongside a meaningful contribution from cis male participants across formats.

In addition, the project ensured that gender was consistently addressed in key meetings, with approximately 10% of the time in Kick-off and Consortium Meetings dedicated to the Gender Dimension.

## Key Findings

### → Strong female participation across activities

Women consistently represent the majority of participants across most IN SITU activities, particularly in participatory and community-based formats.

### → Gender dynamics vary by activity format

More participatory and collaborative formats tend to engage more women, while more formal contexts show more balanced participation.

### → Structural inequalities remain in CCIs

Gender inequalities persist across the sector, particularly in access to recognition, resources, and decision-making positions.

### → Inclusive approaches create more equitable spaces

Participatory formats and IN SITU Labs demonstrate the potential of inclusive approaches to foster more balanced and diverse participation.

### → Limited visibility of gender diversity

While inclusive gender categories were used, the collected data remained predominantly centred on cis female and cis male participation.

### → Gender as a cross-cutting dimension matters

Integrating gender throughout the project contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of participation and representation.



# v. Recommendations

The findings of this report point to a gap that recurs across all levels of analysis: the gap between what gender equality requires in practice and what happens within cultural and creative industries in non-urban areas. Women participate actively — but this participation does not automatically translate into equal recognition, visibility, or influence. Moving beyond this gap requires action at multiple levels.



*“The cultural sector can act as a role model in the area of gender equality and collectively reflect on the gender system, and eventually even break down gender as a social construct.”*

— Tessarin, Cortinovia, Castaldi, & Boschma, 2023, p. 33

### For EU Programmes

EU-funded programmes play an important role in ensuring that the gender dimension is integrated into projects from the outset. The IN SITU experience suggests there is room to strengthen how these principles are applied in practice.

- Use Gender Equality Plans as ongoing reference points throughout the project, not merely as administrative requirements to be fulfilled at the proposal stage.
- Provide clearer and more practical guidance on implementing the gender dimension, particularly for projects operating in non-urban or rural contexts with limited prior experience.
- Strengthen evaluation approaches by examining how roles, visibility, and access to opportunities are distributed in practice — going beyond compliance with formal requirements.
- Recognise the diversity of project contexts. Flexible support mechanisms that accommodate different territorial realities, including non-urban settings, will be more effective than standardised approaches.



### For Policymakers

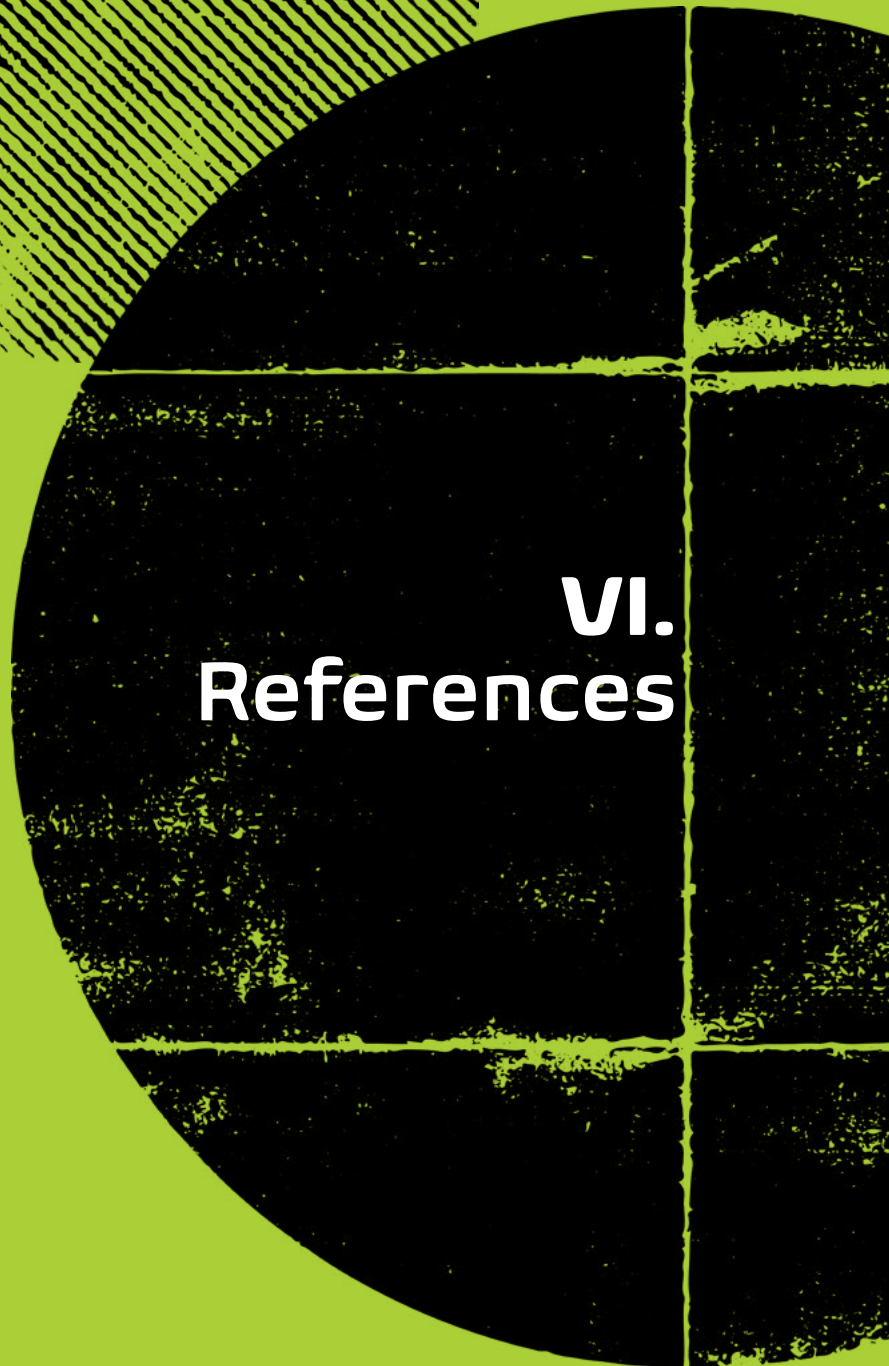
Policies aimed at supporting CCIs need to go beyond counting participants and instead examine who occupies positions of visibility, leadership, and decision-making — and whether structural conditions enable equal access to those positions.

- Recognise and value non-technological forms of innovation, including cultural production, community-based initiatives, and collaborative practices — areas where women are strongly represented but often overlooked by standard innovation metrics.
- Support access to digital and technical skills for women working in CCIs. As the data shows, women are underrepresented in more technically specialised roles; targeted training can help address this imbalance.
- Adapt policy measures to the realities of non-urban areas. Geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, and restricted access to professional networks require context-sensitive approaches rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.
- Support local initiatives, facilitate connections between actors, and improve access to training and funding in non-urban areas — particularly where informal networks and limited resources are the primary shapers of opportunity.

### For Organisations

Organisations play a central role in shaping how gender equality is experienced in practice. Gender equality is often recognised as important — but is not always reflected in everyday practices. Addressing this gap requires moving from implicit commitments to explicit action.

- Adopt formal tools such as Gender Equality Plans, supported by dedicated working groups or gender committees that ensure gender considerations remain present throughout project design and implementation.
- Create spaces for reflection: workshops, facilitated discussions, or internal conversations where gender equality is explicitly discussed. Introducing these early in project development helps build shared understanding.
- Review working conditions. The project-based and often unstable nature of CCI work can create uneven experiences, particularly for those in more precarious positions. Clearer expectations and fairer task allocation can help.
- Value the full range of contributions within organisations — including coordination, communication, and community engagement. These roles, disproportionately performed by women, are central to how cultural initiatives function and should be recognised and remunerated accordingly.
- Support access to digital and technical training, while ensuring that existing non-technical expertise is equally valued.



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