

FINAL PROGRAMME REPORT

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND GENDER EQUALITY

European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014–2021
(EEA FM 2014 – 2021)

Executive summary

Programme Objectives

The Work-life Balance and Gender Equality Programme, financed by the EEA Grants during the 2014–2021 period, was managed by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG), acting as Programme Operator. With a budget of more than €6 million, this programme was dedicated to improving gender equality, work–life balance, and the prevention of domestic and gender-based violence in Portugal.

Created to address persistent challenges related to gender equality in the labour market, women's participation in political and family decision-making, and domestic violence, the programme had the following objectives:

- Promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination in the labour market.
- Support the reconciliation of professional, personal, and family life.
- Combat domestic and gender-based violence by strengthening protection and prevention mechanisms.
- Develop tools to measure and assess gender inequality in organizations.
- Strengthen bilateral cooperation with the donor countries: Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.

Through a series of measures and initiatives, the programme aimed to improve women's situation and promote greater equality of opportunity, and to raise awareness and foster changes in mindset, while promoting strategic partnerships to ensure the sustainability of its actions.

Overall Results

With an integrated approach based on innovation, capacity building, and the promotion of work–life balance, the programme proved to be an effective instrument for reducing gender inequalities and promoting equal opportunities in the labour market, directly aligning with the core objectives of the EEA Grants.

It directly contributed to reducing economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area by supporting 33 projects, that involved over a hundred innovative initiatives and partnerships, focused on gender equality and improving work–life balance. It also contributed to the creation of qualified jobs, the revitalization of local economies, the enhancement of business competitiveness through gender equality policies, and the promotion of inclusive and responsible business practices.

Furthermore, the programme strengthened bilateral relations between Portugal and the donor countries by developing innovative partnerships and promoting collaboration among universities,

research centres, companies, and public entities in Portugal, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein. It facilitated knowledge exchange and the sharing of best practices, established long-term cooperation networks, and promoted international mobility for researchers, students, and professionals, expanding internationalization opportunities for Portuguese entities.

The final financial execution reached 94.98% of the total allocation (EEA Grants + National Contribution), demonstrating efficient use of available funds and contributing to the achievement of the Programme's strategic objectives.

Achived Results

Enhanced gender equal opportunities in the labour market (Outcome 1)

- Funding: €2.5 million
- Number of projects: 17
- Objective: Increase gender equality opportunities in the labour market.
- Results: 32 women promoted to leadership positions; 25 new training programs implemented; 12 initiatives promoting gender equality in companies; 5 practical tools developed to measure workplace gender inequality.
- Examples of projects: Gender Pay Gap-E, MERIT – MothER Income Inequality, PROMOVA.
- Lessons learned: Importance of strong partnerships with companies, flexibility to adapt projects to local realities, and the need to provide ongoing support to organizations implementing gender equality policies.

Improved accountability systems for women's equal participation (Outcome 2)

- Funding: €1.9 million
- Number of projects: 7
- Objective: Improve accountability systems to ensure women's equal participation.
- Results: Over 900 professionals received gender equality training; 49 municipalities implemented gender mainstreaming tools; 25 practical tools developed to promote gender equality.
- Examples of projects: National Statistics System on Gender Equality, Cávado + Igual.
- Lessons learned: Need for ongoing local follow-up and capacity building; importance of engaging communities in promoting equality and combating gender stereotypes.

Improved system for the protection and prevention of domestic and gender-based violence (Outcome 3)

- Funding: €1.3 million
- Number of projects: 9
- Objective: Improve the protection and prevention system for domestic and gender-based violence.

- Results: 600 victims assisted; 669 professionals trained in coordinated response mechanisms; 5 new gender-based violence prevention programs implemented; 4 interventions addressing sexual exploitation.
- Examples of projects: A Teu Lado (“By Your Side”), Evaluation Study on the Impact of Measures Applied to Offenders.
- Lessons learned: Importance of specialized support for victims; need to strengthen interinstitutional collaboration and provide continuous training to professionals dealing with victims of violence.

Bilateral Cooperation

The Programme prioritized the development of strategic bilateral actions aimed at strengthening business relations and cooperation between donor countries and Portugal, as well as deepening collaboration in the fields of gender equality and work–life balance.

Main results:

- 32 projects involved partners from donor countries.
- 50% of planned partnerships continued after the programme ended.
- Events and missions facilitated the exchange of best practices and knowledge in gender equality, public policy, and work–life balance models with Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.

Lessons learned: Strengthen partner matchmaking from the early stages; ensure continuous communication and adequate administrative support; plan budgets that enable effective partner participation; and explore hybrid or virtual models to facilitate cooperation when facing constraints or geographical distance.

Sustainability and Future Impact

The programme established solid foundations in strategic areas such as gender equality, work–life balance, and prevention of gender-based violence, promoting innovative practices and inclusive public policies. The projects strengthened social competitiveness and contributed to integrating equality and reconciliation dimensions into public policies and institutional strategies, aligning with the 2030 Agenda.

The sustainability of actions is ensured through the continuation of several partnerships and the local adaptation of projects, with strong potential for replication. The involvement of local authorities, the sharing of methodologies, and the transfer of knowledge contribute to long-term impact, supporting the evolution of gender equality policies in Portugal and the donor countries.

Recommendations:

- Greater administrative and budgetary flexibility.
- Focus on larger-scale, higher-impact projects.
- Strengthen support for SMEs and startups promoting gender equality and work–life balance.

- Improve coordination with complementary programs, including domestic and gender-based violence prevention initiatives.
- Better definition and monitoring of indicators, using qualitative tools.
- Strengthen interministerial and cross-sectoral collaboration to integrate gender equality into public policies.