



# Innovation with Impact: Learning how to Engage with Stakeholders

## Policy Brief Germany

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# Learning how to Engage with Stakeholders

*"Empowered with this skill, women in agriculture make innovation flourish."*

## Executive Summary

Women play a key role in the sustainable transition of agriculture and in fostering the development of innovative, resilient rural communities. The FLIARA study shows that when women cultivate their competencies in stakeholder engagement, agricultural and rural innovation blooms. To support other women in developing this capacity, it is important to integrate stakeholder engagement training into agricultural curricula and continuing education in farming and rural entrepreneurship. Placing particular emphasis on educating on political and institutional contexts, and on advocacy skills, is essential for ensuring that rural initiatives achieve broader reach and lasting impact. Such efforts will further enhance women's contributions to agricultural and rural innovation.




## The Challenge and Opportunity

Engaging and persuading diverse stakeholders requires excellent communication skills and sensitivity to both their personal and professional perspectives. Anticipating these varied viewpoints

can facilitate the establishment of businesses and drive innovation. Targeted capacity-building in stakeholder engagement boosts women's contributions to agricultural and rural innovation. Understanding political and institutional contexts is essential because it enables women to navigate decision-making processes, access resources, and advocate for policies that support their innovation goals.

## Policy Solutions



To support women in developing stakeholder engagement capacities, policy makers of the German Federal States may pursue the following pathways:

-  Regional and national private and public institutes can offer learning units and coaching on stakeholder engagement, advocacy, political and institutional contexts as part of agricultural educational and rural entrepreneurship programs, and farming-related training.
-  The institutes should feature these offers prominently on institutional websites to enhance their visibility and accessibility.
-  Make the gender dimension mandatory in vocational and other professional training and learning programs, e.g., via gender-sensitive learning components and peer-to-peer training/mentoring specifically for women.




## Supporting Evidence & Best Practices

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The women innovators interviewed for the **FLIARA** study demonstrate strong abilities in sustaining relationships with collaborators, clients, (local) communities, and decision-makers to advance their initiatives. For example, one innovator invites community members and the mayor to on-site events. Further insights from the FLIARA study inform the following best practices for supporting women in developing stakeholder engagement capacities:

-  Leveraging the expertise of participating women by giving ample space for peer-to-peer learning within any program.
-  Using online or blended learning formats for flexibility, complemented by in-person events to foster networking and lasting relationships.

### Other examples:

-  The MORE project - which focuses on training opportunities and qualifications of rural EU women - provides online trainings in cooperative entrepreneurship, governance, and examples of successful women-led rural cooperatives and includes stakeholder cooperation modules and equips women to build supportive rural business ecosystems using interactive soft skills and enterprise circle methods.
-  The **LIAISON Project's How To Guide 'Achieving Impact'** shows how the output of innovation groups in agriculture can have a lasting impact. LIAISON centered on facilitating successful partnerships for innovation.
-  Political foundations in Germany and non-governmental and civil society organizations in other European countries offer education on civic engagement and democratic participation.



## Conclusion & Call to Action

Innovation and gender equality are essential for sustainable agricultural development, with women innovators in rural Germany already demonstrating strong relational skills that advance their initiatives. To fully unlock this potential in other women, targeted capacity-building, including stakeholder engagement, advocacy training and covering political and institutional contexts, is crucial. Including this in education and training in agriculture and rural development is essential, with learning units ideally incorporating gender-sensitive components and peer learning.

**Strengthening stakeholder engagement capacities yields long-term advancements in women's leadership and business development capacities.** Programmes that empower female agricultural and rural entrepreneurs, create inclusive innovation ecosystems and drive sustainable transformation in agriculture.

## Further Reading

FLIARA Deliverable 3.3: Women-led Innovations in Agriculture and Rural Areas, Lessons Learned Report and Fact Sheets on Female Innovations <https://zenodo.org/records/14045390>

FLIARA Deliverable 7.4: Practice Abstracts – batch 2. Practice Abstract on Political Participation (Publication expected on <https://fliara.eu/deliverables/>)

Interreg Europe Policy Brief “How to boost entrepreneurship in rural areas”, April 2020. The brief points to several Interreg Europe projects (such as RuralGrowth and SOCENT SPAs) that explicitly emphasise building stakeholder networks and cooperation platforms, including rural shops, visitor economy businesses, and social enterprises. This approach fosters not only economic development but also broader community benefits, such as social cohesion or maintaining essential rural services. [https://www.interregeurope.eu/sites/default/files/inline/Policy\\_Brief\\_-\\_How\\_to\\_boost\\_entrepreneurship\\_in\\_rural\\_areas.pdf](https://www.interregeurope.eu/sites/default/files/inline/Policy_Brief_-_How_to_boost_entrepreneurship_in_rural_areas.pdf)

## About FLIARA

The project is on a mission to create a more sustainable future by highlighting the role of women in agriculture and rural areas. FLIARA will boost understanding of the needs and challenges facing women leading innovative environmental and rural development practices in EU farming and rural areas.

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# Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas

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