



Building gender-sensitive capacity for rural development governance

Policy Brief

Romania

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"Empowering those who implement rural development policies with gender-sensitive knowledge is essential for inclusive governance and unlocking women's potential in rural innovation."

Executive Summary

Despite the LEADER programme's potential to promote community-led innovation and inclusive rural development, its impact is often limited by a lack of gender sensitivity at both the implementation and regulatory levels. Local Action Groups, local governments, and national authorities often lack the skills, tools, and awareness necessary to integrate gender equality into program design, fund management, and project evaluation.

This policy brief proposes a strategic approach to build gender-sensitive governance capacity across all rural development actors.

Drawing from FLIARA insights, this brief recommends targeted action at all levels—from national to local—to ensure institutions are equipped to recognize, support, and promote rural women's innovation through gender-sensitive governance structures.

The Challenge

Although gender equality is a stated objective in EU policies, in Romania, the rural development system lacks the institutional capacity to translate it into practice. Key actors involved in CAP implementation—LAGs, local authorities, and program managers—are often not trained to identify or address gender-specific barriers.



Moreover, while LEADER is meant to be a flexible, locally driven tool for innovation, its implementation is often constrained by either rigid national/regional regulations or by the limited gender awareness of those designing or delivering the interventions.

The FLIARA project highlights that women face specific challenges in accessing rural innovation support, especially when bureaucratic procedures and eligibility criteria are not designed with their realities in mind. Without targeted capacity building, both frontline implementers and managing institutions will continue to miss the opportunity to support rural women effectively.

Policy Solutions

- 🏠 Introduce modular training programs tailored for different stakeholder groups:
 - 👤 LAGs and local public institutions: integrating gender into local strategies, project design, and community engagement.
 - 👤 Managing authorities and evaluators: designing gender-sensitive calls, funding criteria, evaluation tools, and reporting mechanisms.
- 🏠 Create a national pool of certified trainers and a learning community to ensure long-term support for gender integration in rural development governance.
- 🏠 Support LAGs to leverage LEADER's tools—small-scale projects, community-specific target groups—to promote inclusive, gender-sensitive innovation.
- 🏠 Align national regulations and funding guidelines with gender equality objectives, allowing for flexibility and tailored approaches in line with local needs.
- 🏠 Incorporate gender-disaggregated indicators and monitoring frameworks into program evaluation to track progress and impact.

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Practical Tips

- 🏠 Design short, role-specific training modules to support LAGs, local councils, and managing authorities in integrating gender-sensitive approaches into their daily work.
- 🏠 For funding programme managers and evaluators, include dedicated sessions on:
 - 👤 Incorporating gender equality into eligibility and selection criteria.
 - 👤 Using gender-sensitive evaluation grids and scoring systems.
 - 👤 Collecting and reporting gender-disaggregated data as part of monitoring requirements.
- 🏠 Use real case studies from rural Romania and the FLIARA network to show what inclusive practices look like in practice.
- 🏠 Provide a “gender lens checklist” for LAGs and authorities to use when assessing project relevance and impact.
- 🏠 Develop open-access toolkits and templates, including checklists, guidance notes, and training decks.
- 🏠 Encourage joint training sessions that bring together LAGs, local public servants, and national-level stakeholders to build shared understanding.
- 🏠 Foster peer learning exchanges between regions already applying gender-sensitive measures and those starting the journey.
- 🏠 Offer follow-up coaching or online community support to trained actors, beyond one-off workshops.



Supporting Evidence & Best Practices

FLIARA D4.3 findings confirm that participants perceive a lack of well-informed local actors capable of navigating complex systems, with bureaucratic and inaccessible support systems discouraging women's participation.

Participants from rural Romania highlighted that rigid criteria, underfunding, and bureaucratic overload hindered local development—revealing a critical need for skilled professionals trained in gender-sensitive governance.




Successful examples in countries such as Ireland and Sweden show that gender mainstreaming training for local institutions can directly impact the inclusiveness and effectiveness of LEADER interventions.

Conclusion & Call to Action

For gender equality to move from principle to practice in rural Romania, stakeholders at every level of rural governance must be equipped with the right knowledge, tools, and support.

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CALL TO ACTION:

-  The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development should coordinate a national training programme for gender-sensitive CAP implementation.
-  Managing authorities must integrate gender criteria and inclusive evaluation practices into all calls and selection procedures.
-  LAGs and local actors must receive consistent training and guidance to apply gender-aware methods in community engagement and local strategy design.

Investing in capacity building for gender-sensitive governance will not only empower women—it will improve the quality, inclusiveness, and innovation capacity of rural development as a whole.

Further Reading

FLIARA Deliverables: <https://zenodo.org/communities/fliara>

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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