



# Promoting gender equality in Romania's rural communities by supporting innovative women

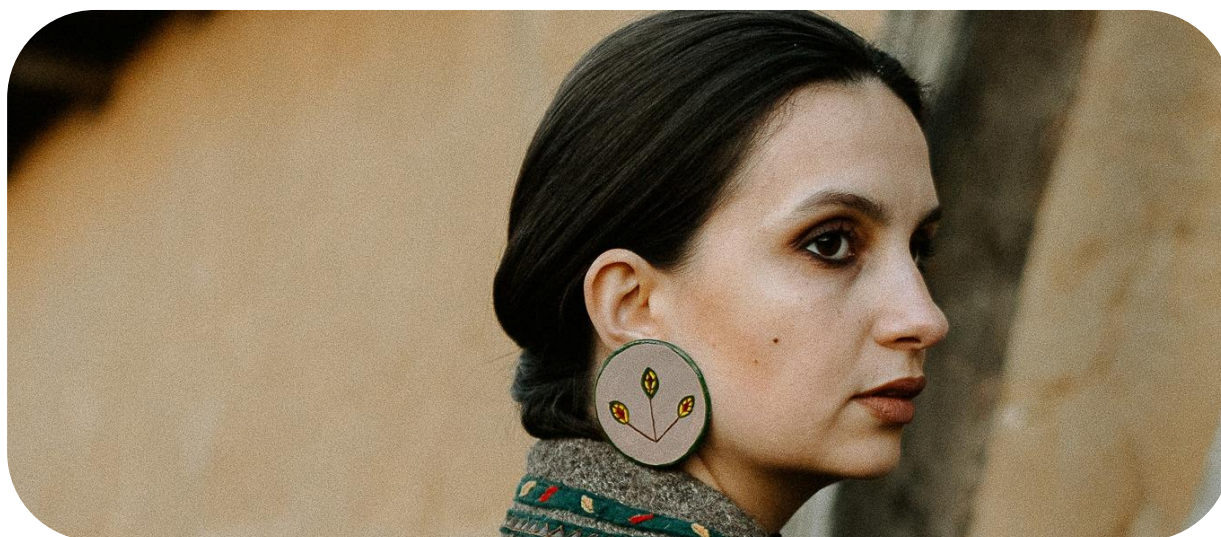
## Policy Brief Romania

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## Executive Summary


This policy brief advocates for promoting gender equality in rural Romania by supporting women innovators driving sustainable development, particularly in agriculture and rural communities. It identifies gender inequality as a barrier to women's participation in decision-making and innovation. The brief proposes comprehensive policies that eliminate stereotypes, provide institutional support, and empower women. Key measures include skills development, gender education, gender impact assessments, and national media campaigns to raise visibility and challenge stereotypes. We call for collaboration between government, civil society, and communities to foster inclusive rural development and enhance women's roles as agents of change.

## The Challenge

Gender inequality in rural Romania hinders women's potential as innovators and leaders, especially in agriculture and rural development. The problem of women shouldering a greater burden of domestic and childcare responsibilities stems from the lack of gender equality, which affects their capacity and availability to engage in other types of labour. These issues limit the ability of many rural women to engage in innovation, but also more broadly to engage in public decision-making and initiatives outside the home, which in turn maintains the status quo of gender inequality. Beliefs such as 'women are not interested in politics' still influence rural women's public presence and engagement, either as a direct barrier to accessing decision-making spheres and spaces, or becoming internalised by women, who then become disempowered. Entrenched patriarchal norms and scepticism towards women in non-traditional roles limit collaboration and recognition of their work and impact. Ineffective public policies and mistrust of institutions further exacerbate these challenges (D4.3).





## Policy Solutions

-  **Funding and implementation of cross-cutting skills development programs for rural women** and facilitating access to best practice models and functional networks to strengthen their confidence, agency, and involvement in rural innovation.
-  **Improvement of gender equality education and training** in rural communities through the development of educational tools and the integration of gender equality education in both formal and informal settings.
-  **Implementation of Gender Impact Assessments (GIA):** It is recommended that institutional-level GIA be carried out, with specific breakdowns for women, youth, and young people in rural agriculture, entrepreneurship, and rural development policies.

-  **Support for the expansion of existing empowerment programs for rural women through:** a) Adoption of short training courses offered by CSOs (civil society organizations) to support the self-empowerment of rural women, helping them identify as agents of change in their communities; b) Funding and c) National/local coverage.
-  **National, regional, and local media campaigns for visibility** through a) Institutional media initiatives to present rural innovations led by women and b) Counteracting gender stereotypes by promoting diverse success stories at all levels: local, regional, and national.

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## Practical Tips

-  Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of policies on different categories of rural women (ethnicity, age, religion, income, marital status, disabilities, etc.).
-  Facilitate participation in decision-making by supporting the development of local and regional platforms where women can share knowledge, collaborate, and engage in shaping local policies.
-  Use media and storytelling to change perceptions by promoting diverse success stories from rural women, and countering gender stereotypes through national, regional, and local campaigns.
-  Use real case studies from rural Romania and the FLIARA network to show what the supports and good practices look like in practice.

## Supporting Evidence & Best Practices

**Visibility and local marketplaces (Romania):** Platforms dedicated to rural women's products and innovations that enhance visibility and market access for women entrepreneurs.

**Paid and shared parental leave (Sweden):** Welfare policies supporting shared parental leave that reduce gender barriers and encourage both men and women to engage in rural innovation.

**Public childcare support (Sweden):** Accessible childcare services that enable women to balance family responsibilities with entrepreneurial and innovative activities.

**Cultural shift in gender norms (Sweden):** Progressive family policies contributing to changing patriarchal norms and encouraging male participation in childcare, fostering a more equitable environment for innovation.



## Conclusion & Call to Action

To achieve sustainable rural development in Romania, it is essential to empower women as key drivers of innovation. Gender equality remains hindered by deep-rooted cultural norms and insufficient institutional support, limiting women's participation in decision-making and innovation. Policies that provide training, foster networks, ensure gender-sensitive infrastructure, and support visibility campaigns are vital to raising awareness and challenging stereotypes. Consistent, intentional action is needed to counteract these barriers and promote women's roles in rural entrepreneurship and agriculture in Romania. Immediate and focused efforts are required to dismantle stereotypes, empower rural women, and integrate gender equality into rural development policies for a more inclusive and sustainable future.

## Further Reading

<https://zenodo.org/records/14045390>

<https://fliara.eu/innovators/>

D4.3 Initial Benchmarking Report: <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

[www.fliara.eu](http://www.fliara.eu)



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