



Gender Mainstreaming

# Fostering a gender and intersectional perspective in EU foresight

# Fostering a gender and intersectional perspective in EU foresight



# European Institute for Gender Equality

We are an independent centre and the primary source for information on gender equality in the European Union. We contribute to making the European Union become a Union of Equality, where women and men, girls and boys in all their diversity are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our societies.

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# Executive summary

- Foresight is the method of anticipating future developments and potential risks to inform strategic planning. In the EU, foresight has been integrated into policymaking since 2021 to create evidence-based strategies that anticipate future trends, risks and opportunities. Strategic foresight is woven into the EU institutional framework involving the European Commission's leadership, its advisory bodies and services, and collaboration among EU institutions and Member States.
- The EU is mandated to incorporate a gender perspective into all policies and activities to achieve gender equality, and foresight is no exception. By adopting a gender-transformative approach, foresight can better address the diverse needs and priorities of women and men, thus promoting gender equality by considering all subgroups as agents of change.
- When the EU has engaged in strategic foresight and anticipated future developments and risks, it has not adequately taken gender inequalities into account. It has often failed to incorporate the gender perspectives of disadvantaged groups, resulting in policies that perpetuate gender inequalities and other, intersecting inequalities. Achieving gender balance in foresight teams, among foresight participants and especially among decision-makers remains challenging as well.
- An intersectional perspective considers how gender and characteristics such as age, socioeconomic situation, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, rural or urban location are interconnected and influence people's experiences. There are numerous opportunities to incorporate a gender and intersecting inequalities perspective into foresight at different stages of the EU policy cycle and the 'Better regulation' framework. This policy brief explains how this can be achieved.

# The role foresight plays in the EU and its key actors

## Box 1. Foresight is the study of plausible future developments

Foresight is the discipline of exploring, anticipating and shaping the future to help build and use collective intelligence in a structured, systemic way to anticipate developments. Foresight does not predict the future. It can help understand it by detecting risks and emerging issues and their possible impacts. Foresight can also be aspirational and proactive by describing the futures we want. Thus, it enables strategic planning.

Source: European Commission (n.d.)<sup>(1)</sup>.

## Foresight in the EU helps policymakers shape the future

Foresight was placed 'at the heart of better policymaking' <sup>(2)</sup> in the EU in 2021. The communication on 'Better regulation' <sup>(3)</sup> asked for impact assessments <sup>(4)</sup>, fitness checks <sup>(5)</sup> and major evaluations <sup>(6)</sup> to consider major trends identified through strategic foresight. It further expanded the mandate of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board (RSB), which advises the College of Commissioners (the political leadership of the Commission) and examines impact assessments and major evaluations produced by different services of the European Commission <sup>(7)</sup>.

The provisions of the 2021 communication on 'Better regulation' were operationalised in the revised 'Better regulation' guidelines <sup>(8)</sup> and 'Better regulation' toolbox <sup>(9)</sup> for carrying out impact assessments and evaluations. The revised 'Better regulation' guidelines point to strategic foresight in evaluations when considering the long-term relevance of policies in light of possible future developments <sup>(10)</sup>. In impact assessments, strategic foresight is meant to inform the problem definition. In the revised toolbox, tool #20 on strategic foresight for impact assessments and evaluations most directly helps incorporate foresight into EU evaluations and impact assessment contexts <sup>(11)</sup>. [Figure 1](#)

<sup>(1)</sup> European Commission (n.d.), 'Strategic foresight' ([https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-planning/strategic-foresight\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-planning/strategic-foresight_en)).

<sup>(2)</sup> von der Leyen, U. (2019), Mission letter from the President-elect of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen to Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President-designate for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight, Brussels, 10 September 2019.

<sup>(3)</sup> European Commission (2021), Commission communication – Better regulation: Joining forces to make better laws, COM(2021) 219 final.

<sup>(4)</sup> Impact assessments look at the problems to be tackled, the objectives to be achieved, the trade-offs to consider, the options for action and their potential impacts. European Commission (2021), Commission staff working document – Better regulation guidelines, SWD(2021) 305 final.

<sup>(5)</sup> A fitness check is a comprehensive evaluation of a policy area that usually addresses how a set of related legislative acts have contributed to the attainment of policy objectives. See note 4.

<sup>(6)</sup> A major evaluation examines how existing legislation and spending programmes have been performing, to check that they are efficient, effective, relevant and coherent, and that EU-level intervention is adding value. European Commission (2021), Commission staff working document – Better regulation guidelines, SWD(2021) 305 final.

<sup>(7)</sup> European Commission (2020), Decision of the President of the European Commission on an independent Regulatory Scrutiny Board, P(2020) 2, Brussels, 23 January 2020.

<sup>(8)</sup> European Commission (2021), Commission staff working document – Better regulation guidelines, SWD(2021) 305 final.

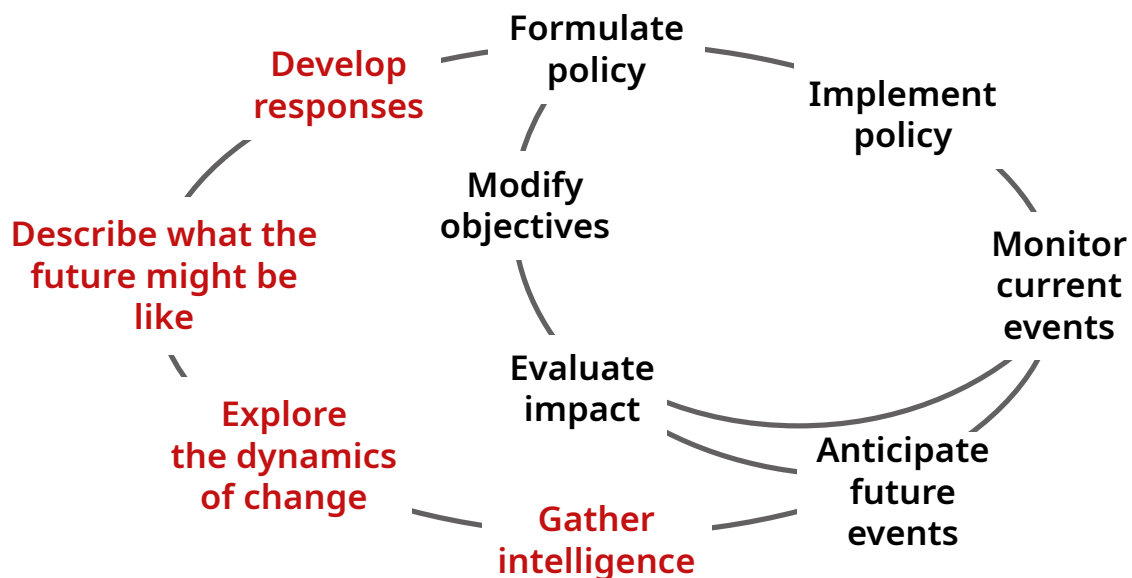
<sup>(9)</sup> European Commission (2021), *Better Regulation Toolbox* ([https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en)).

<sup>(10)</sup> European Commission (2021), Commission communication – Better regulation: Joining forces to make better laws, COM(2021) 219 final.

<sup>(11)</sup> European Commission (2021), 'Tool #20. Strategic foresight for impact assessments and evaluations', in *Better Regulation Toolbox*, pp. 155–158. Additional tools include tool #13 on how to analyse problems, tool #15 on how to set objectives and tool #16 on how to identify policy options.

illustrates how strategic foresight may support the overall policymaking cycle.

**Figure 1. Connection between strategic foresight and policymaking**



Source: Government Office for Science (2017) <sup>(12)</sup>.

EU strategic foresight supports the policy process through different activities. These range from the Commission's annual strategic foresight reports (which inform its work programmes and multi-annual programming exercises)<sup>(13)</sup> to the 'Better regulation' agenda (which integrates foresight to ensure that adopted EU policies and laws are fit for the future)<sup>(14)</sup>.

## Strategic foresight at the EU level involves a range of actors

The key actors in EU strategic foresight are the Vice-President of the College of Commission-

ers, who is responsible for strategic foresight; the Secretariat-General, which supports and coordinates the work of the European Commission; the Joint Research Centre (JRC), which offers internal foresight capacities; the Strategic Foresight Network, which ensures policy coordination between all directorates-general; and the EU-wide Foresight Network, which brings together foresight experts from all Member States and the European Commission.

In addition, the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System is an interinstitutional EU process promoting foresight and anticipatory governance <sup>(15)</sup>.

<sup>(12)</sup> Government Office for Science (2017), *The Futures Toolkit – Tools for futures thinking and foresight across UK government* ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/674209/futures-toolkit-edition-1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674209/futures-toolkit-edition-1.pdf)).

<sup>(13)</sup> European Commission (n.d.), 'Strategic foresight' ([https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-planning/strategic-foresight\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-planning/strategic-foresight_en)).

<sup>(14)</sup> See note 13.

<sup>(15)</sup> The European Strategy and Policy Analysis System partners are the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank, the European Union Institute for Security Studies and the European Court of Auditors.

# Why foresight in the EU needs a stronger gender and intersecting inequalities perspective

Before EU strategic foresight is examined from a gender and intersecting inequalities perspective, it is important to note a wider debate on how inclusive futures research is. Foresight has been criticised for failing to incorporate the perspectives of disadvantaged groups and to address inequalities, including gender inequalities<sup>(16)</sup>. Futures studies frequently marginalise non-Western cultures and often lack a critical and reflexive perspective; futures studies are male-dominated (due to the absence of women from professional activity, and the focus on new technologies and other domains traditionally considered stereotypically 'male'), issues that are especially important to gender equality are rarely considered and women are often viewed as victims, rather than as drivers of change, which means that their alternative futures are often ignored<sup>(17)</sup>.

The remainder of this section centres on the EU and explains why it is important to integrate a gender dimension into EU strategic foresight.

The EU is required to mainstream a gender perspective into all EU policies and activities; strategic foresight is no exception. To achieve

equality between women and men as mandated by the treaties<sup>(18)</sup>, the EU has been committed to systematically considering the differences between the conditions, perspectives, priorities, needs and interests of women and men<sup>(19)</sup>. This also applies to exploring existing and future EU policies, legislation or programmes.

While policies and legislation may be seen as gender neutral and aim to benefit all members of the public equally, the reality shows that structural gender inequalities exist<sup>(20)</sup>, which means that 'gender-unaware' policies may have varying effects on women and men and potentially exacerbate gender inequalities. This is well illustrated by the White Paper 'The future of Europe: Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025'<sup>(21)</sup>. It set out possible paths for the future of Europe and offered five scenarios for how the EU could evolve, depending on the choices made. However, researchers noted the absence of a gender equality perspective in the White Paper (and the series of underlying reflection papers<sup>(22)</sup>)<sup>(23)</sup> and provided a list of implications of policy solutions that fail to consider gender equality in each scenario. These implications are summarised in [Box 2](#).

<sup>(16)</sup> Polchar, J. (2020), 'Whose futures matter? How foresight can make the future more inclusive', LinkedIn post, 24 November 2020; and Bergman, H., Engwall, K., Gunnarsson-Östling, U. and Johannesson, L. (2014), 'What about the future? The troubled relationship between futures and feminism', *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, Vol. 22, No 1, pp. 63–69.

<sup>(17)</sup> Gunnarsson-Östling, U. (2011), 'Gender in futures: A study of gender and feminist papers published in *Futures*, 1969–2009', *Futures*, Vol. 43, No 9, pp. 1029–1039.

<sup>(18)</sup> The Treaty of Lisbon adds the non-discrimination principle and equality between women and men to the values of the EU (Article 2 TEU) and mandates that the Union shall combat discrimination and promote equality between women and men (Article 3 TEU). Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007.

<sup>(19)</sup> European Commission (1996), Commission communication – Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities, COM(96) 67 final (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:1996:0067:FIN:EN:PDF>).

<sup>(20)</sup> See, for example, European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2020), *Beijing + 25: The fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/beijing-25-fifth-review-implementation-beijing-platform-action-eu-member-states>); or European Commission (2023), *2023 Report on Gender Equality in the EU*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg ([https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2023-04/annual\\_report\\_GE\\_2023\\_web\\_EN.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2023-04/annual_report_GE_2023_web_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(21)</sup> European Commission (2017), *European Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe and reflection papers on EU27 by 2025*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/637205>).

<sup>(22)</sup> European Commission (2017), *European Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe and reflection papers on EU27 by 2025*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/637205>).

<sup>(23)</sup> Ahrens, P. and van der Vleuten, A. (2020), 'Fish fingers and measles? Assessing complex gender equality in the scenarios for the future of Europe', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 58, No 2, pp. 292–308.

**Box 2. Implications of futures for Europe that do not integrate a gender perspective****Scenario 1: 'Carrying on'**

The EU focuses on delivering its reform agenda agreed in 2016; EU legislation is checked regularly. This scenario warns that outdated legislation will be withdrawn.

This would mean that the 2008 draft directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment outside the labour market, irrespective of age, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief, and the 2012 draft directive on gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges, which were blocked at the times they were proposed, would be withdrawn. The social dimension reflection paper discusses inequalities, but this gender-sensitive diagnosis is not followed by a strategy to fight structural gender inequalities and stereotypes. The reflection paper on EU finances makes provisions for funding social inclusion and employment, and links positive incentives to the European semester.

**Scenario 2: 'Nothing but the single market'**

The EU is re-centred on the single market. This scenario fails to consider implications for gender equality.

The reflection papers on the social dimension and the future of EU finances state explicitly that, in this scenario, equality legislation will be abolished, the equal treatment of part-time workers will no longer be ensured and there will no longer be minimum standards for family leave at the EU level.

**Scenario 3: 'Those who want more do more'**

The EU proceeds as it has been doing but allows willing Member States to do more together in specific areas. This scenario fails to consider implications for gender equality.

Scenario 3 bears similarities to scenario 1, but it allows some Member States to step up their collaboration. However, even if a subgroup of Member States adopted high social standards, the reflection papers on the social dimension concede that this would make them more expensive and less competitive. Other countries could attract business by deliberately lowering their standards.

**Scenario 4: 'Doing less more efficiently'**

The EU focuses on delivering more and faster in selected areas where it can add value. This scenario fails to consider implications for gender equality.

Scenario 4 is similar to scenario 2, but it proposes a focus on a reduced number of areas and suggests that regional development, public health and parts of employment and social policy are excluded because most of these are indirectly related to the functioning of the single market.

**Scenario 5: 'Doing much more together'**

EU Member States decide to share more power, resources and decision-making across the board. This scenario fails to consider implications for gender equality.

The reflection paper on deepening and completing economic and monetary union concedes that, during the 2007–2008 financial crisis, the euro area did not deliver on the promise of prosperity, stability and protection for all, leading to rising social inequalities. The paper suggests deepening economic and monetary union because it could contribute to jobs, growth, social fairness, economic convergence and financial stability. The reflection paper on harnessing globalisation pleads for inclusive growth and the reflection paper on the future of finances demands that the EU invest in people through education and training, health, equality and social inclusion.

This future would have positive effects on gender equality (e.g. further institutionalisation of existing soft law, and new measures, such as gender-responsive taxation). It could revive gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting for all EU legislation and policies if (and only if) there was consensus among the Member States that the EU should act.

Source: Ahrens and van der Vleuten (2020) <sup>(24)</sup>.

<sup>(24)</sup> Ahrens, P. and van der Vleuten, A. (2020), 'Fish fingers and measles? Assessing complex gender equality in the scenarios for the future of Europe', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 58, No 2, pp. 292–308.

The authors argue that the gendered policy outcomes in all scenarios would be negative, except in the last scenario, which is considered unrealistic<sup>(25)</sup>. Given that foresight aims to identify what may (plausibly) happen, at least some of the scenarios should envisage progress towards gender equality in a way that seems reasonable.

When existing gender inequalities in women's and men's economic, political and social positions are not considered, the resulting situation will probably remain the same or worsen in the

future. Therefore, policies or programmes targeting broad groups – healthcare professionals, teachers, farmers, entrepreneurs, researchers, etc. – but failing to distinguish between women and men in these occupations or sectors of the economy are effectively unaware of gender inequalities, even if unintentionally. Being unaware of differences between women and men means that unique gendered experiences and realities are ignored, their specific challenges are dismissed and opportunities to make progress towards gender equality and other policy objectives are missed (see [Box 3](#)).

### Box 3. Spillover effects of gender-aware agriculture policies

The agriculture sector is a key component of the EU economy, contributing 1.3 % of the EU's gross domestic product in 2021 <sup>(26)</sup>, with 8.7 million people working in the industry <sup>(27)</sup>. At the same time, agriculture accounts for 11 % of all greenhouse gases in the EU and remains a significant source of harmful air, water and soil pollutants <sup>(28)</sup>. However, sustainable agricultural practices can provide environmental benefits by, for example, mitigating global warming by trapping greenhouse gases within crops and soils and providing habitats for plants, insects and birds <sup>(29)</sup>.

How women operate in the agriculture sector is significantly different from how men do. In 2020, women made up 32 % of farmers in the EU, and this number is slowly increasing <sup>(30)</sup>. However, their work in agricultural production tends to be underestimated and under-represented in official data <sup>(31)</sup>. Women, particularly young women farmers, demonstrate stronger commitment and a higher propensity to embrace sustainable agricultural methods, such as organic farming and agroforestry, while employing fewer chemical inputs than men <sup>(32)</sup>. Agriculture policies and programmes unaware of these and other gender differences would miss opportunities to make progress towards gender equality and accelerate progress towards the European Green Deal objective of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, while also creating an inclusive economy that leaves no one behind <sup>(33)</sup>.

<sup>(25)</sup> See note 24.

<sup>(26)</sup> Eurostat (n.d.), 'Performance of the agricultural sector' ([https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Performance\\_of\\_the\\_agricultural\\_sector](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Performance_of_the_agricultural_sector)).

<sup>(27)</sup> Eurostat (n.d.), 'Farmers and the agricultural labour force – Statistics' ([https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Farmers\\_and\\_the\\_agricultural\\_labour\\_force\\_-\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Farmers_and_the_agricultural_labour_force_-_statistics)).

<sup>(28)</sup> European Environment Agency (n.d.), 'Agriculture and food system' (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/in-depth/agriculture-and-food>).

<sup>(29)</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2019), 'Agriculture and the environment' (<https://www.oecd.org/agriculture/topics/agriculture-and-the-environment/>).

<sup>(30)</sup> Eurostat (n.d.), 'Farmers and the agricultural labour force – Statistics' ([https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Farmers\\_and\\_the\\_agricultural\\_labour\\_force\\_-\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Farmers_and_the_agricultural_labour_force_-_statistics)).

<sup>(31)</sup> EIGE (2017), *Gender in Agriculture and Rural Development*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-agriculture-and-rural-development>).

<sup>(32)</sup> Unay-Gailhard, I. and Bojnec, Š. (2021), 'Gender and the environmental concerns of young farmers: Do young women farmers make a difference on family farms?', *Journal of Rural Studies*, Vol. 88, pp. 71–82 (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.09.027>).

<sup>(33)</sup> European Commission (2019), Commission communication – The European Green Deal, COM(2019) 640 final.

Adopting a gender-responsive approach to EU impact assessments<sup>(34)</sup>, evaluations<sup>(35)</sup> and accompanying public consultations<sup>(36)</sup> can help (re)design interventions to better respond to the different needs and strategic priorities of women and men in all their diversity and ultimately to advance gender equality<sup>(37)</sup>. EU strategic foresight can strengthen this process by addressing gender impacts on present and future generations.

It is important to bear in mind whose futures foresight research explores and how it could be relevant to all. In particular, foresight studies should cover issues important to both women and men and should not view women and men from any specific group as victims but consider them all drivers of change. **Therefore, gender-responsive and transformative foresight should be a method of gender mainstreaming that integrates gender equality concerns into the exploration, anticipation and creation of the future.**

<sup>(34)</sup> Gender impact assessment is a tool to estimate the expected impacts of a proposed intervention on the state of equality between men and women. See [EIGE \(2017\), \*Gender Impact Assessment – Gender mainstreaming toolkit\*](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(35)</sup> Gender-responsive evaluation is a method of gender mainstreaming that integrates gender equality concerns into the evaluation's objectives, methodology, approaches and use. As a gender mainstreaming method, gender-responsive evaluation is applicable to all types of interventions, including those not necessarily aimed at gender equality and gender-specific interventions. In this way, gender-responsive evaluation also assesses to what extent an intervention has pursued gender mainstreaming. See [EIGE \(2022\), \*Gender-responsive Evaluation\*](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(36)</sup> Public consultations inform impact assessments and evaluations and can incorporate foresight-related questions.

<sup>(37)</sup> [EIGE \(2022\), \*Gender-responsive Evaluation\*](#), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg; and see note 34.

# Gender-specific concerns or impacts of policies on gender inequalities have not been thoroughly integrated into EU strategic foresight: points for improvement

## Only a few EU strategic foresight studies consider a gender equality and intersectional perspective

Many reviewed reports from EU institutions that use foresight research <sup>(38)</sup> fail to mention gender equality explicitly. For example, among the flagship research that informed two recent strategic foresight reports, one speaks about just (green and digital) transitions but does not recognise gender differences in these domains today or in the possible futures <sup>(39)</sup>. Another report discusses EU security issues, dependencies in critical areas and capacity <sup>(40)</sup>, and it admits

that reducing inequalities remains an area for improvement and notes the existing EU 'Union of equality' strategies <sup>(41)</sup>. It also acknowledges inequalities in relation to gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, employment status, race or ethnic origin, and citizenship. However, a gender and intersecting inequalities perspective is missing in the scenario narratives that speak about society at large.

The foresight research supporting major policy initiatives is another example of where a gender perspective is lacking (see [Box 4](#)).

<sup>(38)</sup> The research team adopted a purposeful, three-pronged approach to identifying foresight research published by the European institutions: (1) reviewed all three EU strategic foresight reports and snowballed relevant foresight research; (2) searched the European Commission's documents repository (search terms 'foresight' and 'report', published in 2020–2022) and snowballed relevant foresight research; (3) examined publications of selected EU agencies (i.e. EIGE, the European Environment Agency, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, the Fundamental Rights Agency, the JRC) looking for foresight research published since 2020. The searches identified 11 reports that were included in the review.

<sup>(39)</sup> Muench, S., Stoermer, E., Jensen, K., Asikainen, T., Salvi, M. and Scapolo, F. (2022), *Towards a Green and Digital Future*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(40)</sup> Cagnin, C., Muench, S., Scapolo, F., Störmer, E. and Vesnic-Alujevic, L. (2021), *Shaping and securing the EU's open strategic autonomy by 2040 and beyond*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(41)</sup> These strategies are the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020–2030, the gender equality strategy for 2020–2025, the LGBTIQ equality strategy for 2020–2025, the EU anti-racism action plan for 2020–2025 and the strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities for 2021–2030.

#### Box 4. A vision for rural areas towards 2040

The Commission's JRC developed foresight scenarios presenting possible futures for EU rural areas in 2040<sup>(42)</sup>. A set of four scenarios were developed between September and December 2020: (1) rurbanities (expanding rural areas, fragmented multilevel governance<sup>(43)</sup>), (2) rural renewal (expanding rural areas, networked multilevel governance<sup>(44)</sup>), (3) rural connections (shrinking rural areas, networked multilevel governance) and (4) rural specialisation (shrinking rural areas, fragmented multilevel governance).

Contributions from the scenario process towards the vision established the character of desired rural areas of the future (e.g. diverse and inclusive, resilient, innovative), roles of the future rural areas (e.g. provision of goods and services, support in addressing climate change and improving the quality of life), and the needs, requirement and values that should govern future developments. This foresight study directly informed the Commission's communication on the long-term vision for rural areas<sup>(45)</sup>.

However, the report refers to people (sometimes farmers, entrepreneurs, employees, inhabitants, etc.) without considering any differences between women and men in all their diversity. Available evidence points out that women in rural areas face distinct challenges compared with men<sup>(46)</sup> and that policymakers often fail to envisage any real change in the gender equality agenda of rural development policymaking<sup>(47)</sup>.

The foresight scenarios presenting possible futures for EU rural areas in 2040 would have been better if they had done the following.

- **Gendered approaches to spatial development** should have been acknowledged and considered in the study<sup>(48)</sup>.
- **Retaining women in rural areas** (seen as key to the long-term viability of these areas in the literature)<sup>(49)</sup> should have featured in examining drivers of change (especially rural demography).
- **Power and gender dynamics** should have been considered in examining drivers of change (especially multilevel governance) to open up new perspectives and possibilities<sup>(50)</sup>. This is also with a view to addressing gender inequalities in the EU institutions in agricultural matters.
  - **European Parliament.** The share of women members of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development was 38 % in 2021<sup>(51)</sup>; the share of women rapporteurs during the 2021 common agriculture policy reform was 33 %<sup>(52)</sup>.
  - **Council of the European Union.** The share of women chairs of the Council of Agriculture Ministers in charge of the EU's common agricultural policy negotiations since 2013 has been 22 %<sup>(53)</sup>.
  - **European Commission.** Since 2004, there have been two women Commissioners for Agriculture (33 %) <sup>(54)</sup>.
- **Scenarios should have used gender-responsive narratives**, accounting for differences between women and men in rural areas.

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) based on Bock and Krzysztofowicz (2021)<sup>(55)</sup>.

<sup>(42)</sup> Bock, A. K. and Krzysztofowicz, M. (2021), *Scenarios for EU Rural Areas 2040 – Contribution to European Commission's long-term vision for rural areas*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(43)</sup> Fragmented multilevel governance indicates limited coordination and no collaboration between the different types of actors, resulting in low policy coherence.

<sup>(44)</sup> Networked multilevel governance describes a well-coordinated and collaborative decision-making process.

<sup>(45)</sup> European Commission (2021), *Commission communication – A long-term vision for the EU's rural areas – Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040*, COM(2021) 345 final.

<sup>(46)</sup> Goverde, H., de Haan, H. and Baylina, M. (2004), 'Conclusion: Power, gender and the significance of place', in Haan, H. D. (ed.), *Power and Gender in European Rural Development*, Routledge, London.

<sup>(47)</sup> Bock, B. B. (2015), 'Gender mainstreaming and rural development policy; the trivialisation of rural gender issues', *Gender, Place and Culture*, Vol. 22, No 5, pp. 731–745.

<sup>(48)</sup> Zibell, B., Damyanovic, D. and Sturm, U. (2019), *Gendered Approaches to Spatial Development in Europe: Perspectives, similarities, differences*, Routledge, Abingdon, United Kingdom.

<sup>(49)</sup> See note 47.

<sup>(50)</sup> Goverde, H., de Haan, H. and Baylina, M. (2004), 'Conclusion: power, gender and the significance of place', in Haan, H. D. (ed.), *Power and Gender in European Rural Development*, Routledge, London.

<sup>(51)</sup> In May 2023, the share of women members in the European Parliament Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development was 40 %. See EIGE (2023), 'Gender balance in the European Green Deal', statistical note, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-balance-european-green-deal>).

<sup>(52)</sup> Bas-Defosse, F. (2021), 'What if a sustainable CAP was relying on a more gender-balanced decision-making?', Institute for European Environmental Policy, 16 September (<https://ieep.eu/news/what-if-a-sustainable-cap-was-relying-on-a-more-gender-balanced-decision-making/>).

<sup>(53)</sup> See note 52.

<sup>(54)</sup> Sandra Kalniete (served from 1 May 2004 to 11 November 2004) and Mariann Fischer Boel (served from 2004 to 2009).

<sup>(55)</sup> Bock, A. K. and Krzysztofowicz, M. (2021), *Scenarios for EU Rural Areas 2040 – Contribution to European Commission's long-term vision for rural areas*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Two other EU foresight reports share a common theme of recognising the importance of considering gender in their analyses, but they apply different approaches and vary in the coverage of their gender analysis. The need for a gender-balanced green transition is well acknowledged in the report *The Future of Jobs Is Green* <sup>(56)</sup>, which notes that women's increased participation in technical education is a condition for a successful transition towards a green economy. The report highlights the underrepresentation of women in some sectors and points out that changes in the nature of work and attracting more women to science, technology, engineering and mathematics education may help improve gender balance <sup>(57)</sup>.

Another report <sup>(58)</sup> (on the impact of demographic change) demonstrates how a trend analysis could consider a gender perspective. In this report, the trend analysis focuses on demographic change and its impact on the social market economy in the EU. In examining the drivers of change, the report notes differences in life expectancy between women and men, and the increasing age of women at childbirth, and points out that a growing number of older people (especially women) live alone. It uses gender indicators (e.g. the gap in life expectancy at birth between women and men) and sex-dis-

aggregated data (e.g. healthy life years at birth, median age of the EU-27 population). Finally, it discusses the impacts of these changes on the labour market, where gender differences are given some consideration. It would have been even better if the report maintained the gender analysis in sections related to skills and education, health and long-term care, and regional and local dimensions, including infrastructure and access to service <sup>(59)</sup>. These examples should nonetheless inspire more gender-responsive strategic foresight in the EU.

### **EU impact assessments and evaluations do not yet use foresight to its full potential to future-proof policies, legislation or programmes**

Most of the reviewed impact assessment and evaluation reports <sup>(60)</sup> did not provide information about using foresight techniques. Only five of them explicitly made use of foresight <sup>(61)</sup>. These five reports used only two of the four foresight techniques listed in the 'Better regulation' toolbox (see [Box 5](#)): four reports relied on megatrends analysis (existing long-term driving forces that are likely to have a significant influence on the future) and one report <sup>(62)</sup> employed scenario planning (a process resulting in a set of stories of plausible futures).

<sup>(56)</sup> Asikainen, T., Bitat, A., Bol, E., Czako, V., Marmier, A., Muench, S., Murauskaite-Bull, I., Scapolo, F. and Stoermer, E. (2021), *The Future of Jobs Is Green*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(57)</sup> See note 56, pp. 8–10.

<sup>(58)</sup> European Commission (2020), Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the impact of demographic change, COM(2020) 241 final.

<sup>(59)</sup> See the discussion of the gender implications of public services design in Perez, C. C. (2019), 'Chapter 1: Can snow-clearing be sexist?', in Perez, C. C. (ed.), *Invisible Women: Exposing data bias in a world designed for men*, Penguin Random House, London.

<sup>(60)</sup> The research team searched the register of the Commission's documents for impact assessment and evaluation reports adopted since strategic foresight was introduced in 2020 as part of the 'Better regulation' guidelines (search terms 'foresight' or 'scenarios', published in 2020–2022). The review included 33 documents: 18 evaluation reports, 14 impact assessments and 1 fitness check. All reports from 2022 (27) and selected reports from 2021 and 2020 (5) were included in the review. The reason for prioritising the most recent reports was to allow strategic foresight to be better established in the context of impact assessment and evaluation in the EU. Reports from 2021 and 2020 were selected purposefully to incorporate policy areas absent in 2022 into the analysis (i.e. agriculture and rural development, climate action and regional policy).

<sup>(61)</sup> The reports are the Directorate-General (DG) for Defence, Industry and Space's impact assessment on establishing the Union secure connectivity programme; DG Environment's impact assessment on the classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures; the impact assessment on a single market emergency instrument by DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs; the impact assessment on adapting non-contractual civil liability rules to artificial intelligence by DG Justice and Consumers; and DG Health and Food Safety's impact assessment on the sustainable use of plant protection products.

<sup>(62)</sup> European Commission (2022), Commission staff working document – Impact assessment report accompanying the document Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the sustainable use of plant protection products and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, SWD(2022) 170 final.

### Box 5. Foresight methods listed in the 'Better regulation' toolbox (tool #20)



**Horizon scanning** involves a systematic review of new or emerging trends (usually requiring literature review and/or data analysis and scan workshops). It is used primarily to gather intelligence about the future.



**Scenario planning** identifies plausible visions of the future, describing the context of a policy area (usually requiring literature review and/or data analysis, scenario analysis and validation workshops or consultations).



**Megatrends analysis** examines changes in patterns and interactions of long-term global driving forces that are observable in the present and are likely to continue in the future (usually requiring literature review and/or data analysis and engagement workshops).



**Visioning** identifies a preferred direction of travel / a roadmap outlining actions to achieve the vision. It is used to describe a desirable future.

Source: EIGE based on European Commission (2021) <sup>(63)</sup>.

There are many other foresight methods that can be used (e.g. driver mapping <sup>(64)</sup>, Delphi <sup>(65)</sup>, backcasting <sup>(66)</sup>, gaming <sup>(67)</sup> or policy stress-testing <sup>(68)</sup>). Each of these can and should take

a gender and intersecting inequalities perspective. The method used may depend on the specific purpose for which the foresight exercise is intended (see Figure 2).

<sup>(63)</sup> European Commission (2021), *Better Regulation Toolbox* ([https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en)).

<sup>(64)</sup> Driver mapping is the process of identifying and analysing the key forces of change that are shaping a particular system.

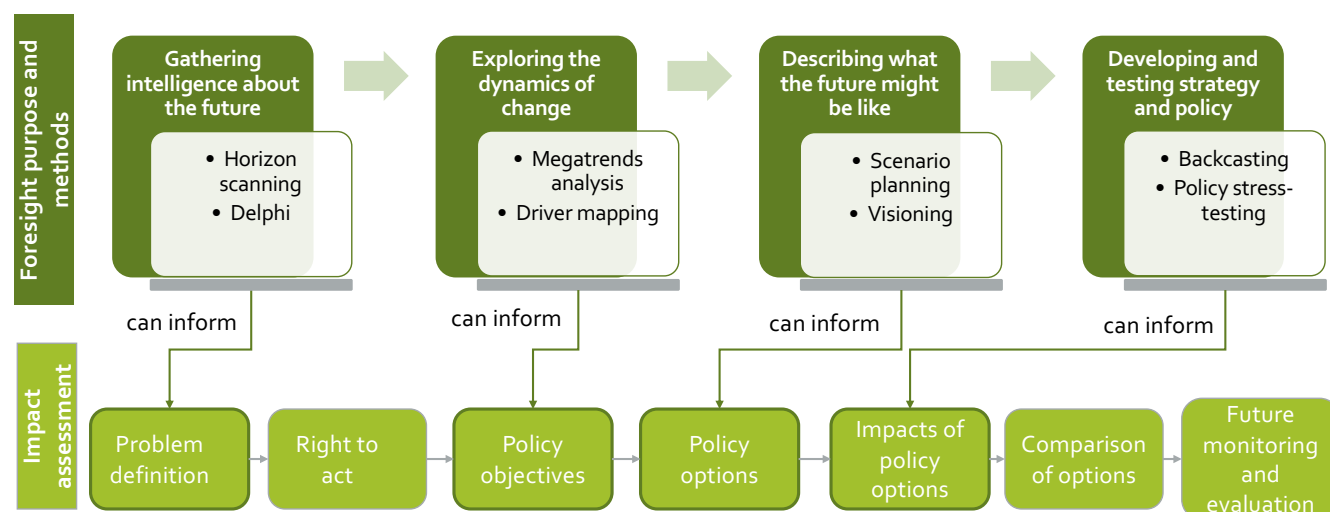
<sup>(65)</sup> Delphi is a technique used to reach a reliable consensus on a certain topic whereby a panel of experts collates, processes and reassesses their knowledge in a number of rounds, until expert consensus is achieved. See Helmer-Hirschberg, O. (1967), *Analysis of the Future: The Delphi method*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica.

<sup>(66)</sup> Backcasting is a method whereby a desirable future outcome is envisioned, and then used to determine the chain of events and programmes that need to happen in order to achieve that endpoint. See Bibri, S. E. (2018), 'Backcasting in futures studies: A synthesized scholarly and planning approach to strategic smart sustainable city development', *European Journal of Futures Research*, Vol. 6, No 1, 13.

<sup>(67)</sup> Gaming is a method that aids planning and decision-making by gauging possible reactions of involved stakeholders.

<sup>(68)</sup> Policy stress-testing is a method used to examine the robustness and resilience of policies, strategies or plans in the face of various future scenarios and uncertainties.

**Figure 2. Examples of foresight methods, their purpose and what stage of impact assessment they can inform**



Notes: Any foresight method could inform multiple stages of impact assessment. For example, Delphi could be used for defining a problem, setting objectives or developing policy options. However, its primary purpose is to gather intelligence most directly linked to the problem definition. For simplicity, the figure captures only the most direct links between methods and impact assessment stages. Source: EIGE based on Government Office for Science (2017) <sup>(69)</sup>.

## The gender and intersecting inequalities perspective was not present in the foresight element of the impact assessment reports that explicitly made use of foresight

None of the five reports that used foresight included information on how future developments could affect women and men in all their diversity, and what this meant for the initiative under consideration. This does not mean that the gender perspective was missing from the reports altogether: the impact assessments did discuss gender inequalities as part of examining the social impacts of the initiative. However, the gender and intersecting inequalities

perspective was missing when possible futures were explored as part of the foresight exercise.

When it comes to adopting a gender perspective, the main limitation of the impact assessments and evaluations simply referring to the megatrends is that the gender implications for women and men are usually not considered (see Table 1 for more on the megatrends). The impact assessment that drew on findings from a scenario planning study also missed an opportunity to adopt a gender perspective. Box 6 outlines the brief mentions of foresight elements included in the impact assessment report and dives deeper to examine the supporting foresight study. It concludes with suggestions on how a gender perspective could have been included.

<sup>(69)</sup> Government Office for Science (2017), *The Futures Toolkit – Tools for futures thinking and foresight across UK Government* ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/674209/futures-toolkit-edition-1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674209/futures-toolkit-edition-1.pdf)).

### Box 6. Impact assessment report for a regulation on the sustainable use of plant protection products

The impact assessment states that ‘The foresight study accompanying this impact assessment explored possible future scenarios on the use of pesticides considered to represent plausible scenarios. Key insights included that policy strategies need to be equipped with adequate incentives as well as implementation and monitoring strategies. Pesticide use needs to be managed in the longer term, considering innovation, public understanding and consumer demands. Regulations should support a level playing field for farmers across the EU aiming to build a consensus among stakeholders concerning the use of pesticides in the future’ <sup>(70)</sup>. The report refers to farmers without considering any differences between women and men farmers.

The foresight study examined factors influencing pesticide use among farmers and provided four future scenarios: (1) mixed sustainable approaches, (2) commercial sustainability, (3) unsustainable inertia and (4) widespread sustainability. As in the impact assessment report, the foresight study refers to farmers without considering that this is a diverse group <sup>(71)</sup>.

It would have been better if the following had been considered.

- **Gender inequalities in agriculture** (in terms of workforce, division of labour, wages, access to opportunities, technologies and land) <sup>(72)</sup> should have been considered more explicitly in the impact assessment and foresight study.
- Both the impact assessment and the foresight study should have acknowledged that **women farmers are involved in alternative and environmentally friendly approaches more often than male farmers are** and that sustainable agriculture could be a means of advancing gender equality <sup>(73)</sup>.

**Efforts to counterbalance male-dominated decision-making in EU institutions** in agriculture-related matters (outlined in Box 3) should have been considered, documented and addressed in the impact assessment of the Commission’s proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council. This is important because evidence shows that **women’s leadership translates into more ambitious climate change policies** <sup>(74)</sup>.

Source: EIGE based on European Commission, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, Feijao et al. (2022) <sup>(75)</sup>.

<sup>(70)</sup> European Commission (2022), Commission staff working document – Impact assessment report accompanying the document Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the sustainable use of plant protection products and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, SWD(2022) 170 final, p. 7.

<sup>(71)</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, Feijao, C., d’Angelo, C., Flanagan, I., Abellan, B., Ryen Gloinson, E., Smith, E., Traon, D., Gehrt, D., Teare, H. and Dunkerley, F. (2022), *Development of future scenarios for sustainable pesticide use and achievement of pesticide-use and risk-reduction targets announced in the farm to fork and biodiversity strategies by 2030*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2875/565045>).

<sup>(72)</sup> Guérillot, A. (2021), ‘The profession of woman organic farmer’, *Travail, genre et sociétés*, Vol. 45, No 1, pp. 39–55; and EIGE (2017), *Gender in Agriculture and Rural Development*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(73)</sup> Bas-Defosse, F. (2021), ‘What if a sustainable CAP was relying on a more gender-balanced decision-making?’, Institute for European Environmental Policy, 16 September (<https://ieep.eu/news/what-if-a-sustainable-cap-was-relying-on-a-more-gender-balanced-decision-making/>).

<sup>(74)</sup> Mavisakalyan, A. and Tarverdi, Y. (2019), ‘Gender and climate change: Do female parliamentarians make difference?’, *European Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 56, pp. 151–164.




<sup>(75)</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, Feijao, C., d’Angelo, C., Flanagan, I., Abellan, B., Ryen Gloinson, E., Smith, E., Traon, D., Gehrt, D., Teare H. and Dunkerley, F. (2022), *Development of future scenarios for sustainable pesticide use and achievement of pesticide-use and risk-reduction targets announced in the farm to fork and biodiversity strategies by 2030*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2875/565045>).

It matters *whose* futures the foresight research explores

The Commission’s platform Knowledge4Policy <sup>(76)</sup> provides foresight resources and tools, including scenario planning, megatrends analysis, horizon scanning and visioning. For example, this platform has identified 14 megatrends affecting the future of Europe <sup>(77)</sup>. While it is recognised that megatrends interact with each other <sup>(78)</sup>, the platform often fails to consider gender equality and how it interacts with other

characteristics or intersecting inequalities in the presentation of each megatrend. In addition to the megatrend that focuses on widening inequalities, which explicitly refers to and explains gender inequalities <sup>(79)</sup>, several other trends are likely to affect women and men differently, but do not mention these implications explicitly. Examples of megatrends that are missing any gender perspective include the changing nature of work or shifting health challenges, both of which may have different impacts on women and men (see Table 1).

**Table 1. The 14 megatrends likely to influence the future of Europe need to better consider a gender perspective**

 <b>Accelerating technological change and hyperconnectivity</b>  Differences in access to resources and know-how, compounded by gender stereotypes, can (further) disadvantage women: older women use the internet less frequently and their access to mobile internet is lower than that of their male peers <sup>(80)</sup> .	 <b>Aggravating resource scarcity</b>  Gender relations between women and men have an impact on who controls natural resources <sup>(81)</sup> . For example, land ownership is gendered given that marginal land is more often farmed by women than men (and the opposite is true of prime agricultural land) <sup>(82)</sup> .	 <b>Changing nature of work</b>  The risk of job loss due to automation is higher for women than for men because women are more likely than men to undertake routine, repetitive tasks (which are more prone to automation) <sup>(83)</sup> .
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<sup>(76)</sup> The Knowledge4Policy platform aims to bridge the science-policy gap by bringing together evidence for policy from scientists to policymakers across Europe. See the European Commission web page on the Knowledge4Policy platform’s Competence Centre on Foresight ([https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight_en)).

<sup>(77)</sup> European Commission (n.d.), ‘The Megatrends Hub’ ([https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/tool/megatrends-hub\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/tool/megatrends-hub_en)).

<sup>(78)</sup> See note 77.







<sup>(79)</sup> See note 77.

<sup>(80)</sup> EIGE (2020), *Gender Equality Index 2020 – Digitalisation and the future of work*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(81)</sup> EIGE (2019), ‘Grey literature on environment and climate change’, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(82)</sup> Allwood, G. (2014), ‘Gender mainstreaming and EU climate change policy’, in Weiner, E. and MacRae, H. (eds), ‘The persistent invisibility of gender in EU policy’, *European Integration Online Papers*, Special Issue 1, Vol. 18, Art. 6, pp. 1–26.

<sup>(83)</sup> See note 80.

 <b>Changing security paradigm</b> <p>Women (and girls) are disproportionately affected in armed conflicts, while they are under-represented in the police, army and security-related occupations<sup>(84)</sup>. Women are continuously and disproportionately affected by intimate partner and family-related homicide and trafficking of human beings. With the rise of cyberstalking, cyberharassment, sexting and grooming, women and girls in particular are more vulnerable to cyberviolence than ever before<sup>(85)</sup>.</p>	 <b>Climate change and environmental degradation</b> <p>Environmental behaviours, attitudes and consumption are gendered<sup>(86)</sup>. Women seem more concerned about the climate and more likely to take action (e.g. reduce waste or consumption of disposable items) than men<sup>(87)</sup>.</p>	 <b>Continuing urbanisation</b> <p>There are gender differences in migration from rural areas: men are less likely to migrate and migration to cities is more rewarding for women than for men<sup>(88)</sup>. Gender inequalities often persist in smart cities<sup>(89)</sup> but little is known of their mechanisms or solutions to this issue<sup>(90)</sup>.</p>
 <b>Diversification of education and learning</b> <p>Education is a catalyst for social change and mainstreaming gender equality in education and training policy is key<sup>(91)</sup>. However, boys exhibit a higher likelihood of not reaching a basic level of proficiency in reading, mathematics and science than girls, and, when it comes to high-achieving individuals, girls tend to invest less in mathematics and science than boys do<sup>(92)</sup>.</p>	 <b>Widening inequalities</b> <p>This megatrend recognises gender inequalities and takes into account other intersecting characteristics.</p>	 <b>Expanding influence of East and South</b> <p>The shift of global economic power has implications for international norms, including gender equality<sup>(93)</sup>.</p>

<sup>(84)</sup> EIGE (2020), *Sectoral Brief: Gender and security*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(85)</sup> See note 84.

<sup>(86)</sup> EIGE (2020), 'Area K – Women and the environment: Climate change is gendered', Beijing + 25 policy brief, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(87)</sup> European Commission (2017), *Special Eurobarometer 459 – Climate Change*.

<sup>(88)</sup> Rye, J. F. (2006), 'Leaving the countryside: An analysis of rural-to-urban migration and long-term capital accumulation', *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 49, No 1, pp. 47–65.

<sup>(89)</sup> Smart cities are open innovation environments where different actors (public, private and third sector organisations) and citizens work together to plan and implement policies and services to stimulate economic growth, and improve the quality of life and sustainability through the use of information and communication technologies.

<sup>(90)</sup> Nesti, G. (2019), 'Mainstreaming gender equality in smart cities: Theoretical, methodological and empirical challenges', *Information Polity*, Vol. 24, No 3, pp. 289–304.

<sup>(91)</sup> EIGE (2017), *Gender in Education and Training*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(92)</sup> OECD (2023), *Gender, Education and Skills – The persistence of gender gaps in education and skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

<sup>(93)</sup> van Eerdewijk, A. and Roggeband, C. (2014), 'Gender equality norm diffusion and actor constellations: A first exploration', in Vleuten, A., van Eerdewijk, A. and Roggeband, C. (eds), *Gender Equality Norms in Regional Governance: Transnational dynamics in Europe, South America and southern Africa*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 42–64.

 <b>Growing consumption</b> <p>Women and men have different access to resources. Level of income affects the amount of money spent and ability to make decisions about personal consumption <sup>(94)</sup>.</p>	 <b>Increasing demographic imbalances</b> <p>Gender stereotypes make ageing and labour market experiences different for women and men. Older women are in a particularly disadvantageous position, given the persistent gender gap in pensions and the limited economic independence of older women <sup>(95)</sup>.</p>	 <b>Increasing influence of new governing systems</b> <p>Women are often under-represented in positions of power: representation of women in national parliaments, governments and regional/local assemblies, on corporate boards of companies and in national central banks is consistently and significantly lower than that of men <sup>(96)</sup>.</p>
 <b>Increasing significance of migration</b> <p>The reasons for migration and challenges for migrant women and men differ <sup>(97)</sup>. Women make up nearly half of international migrants but they are more likely to be without work. Women migrants and women and girl refugees and asylum seekers face more dangers than their male counterparts. Women migrants, refugees and asylum seekers face different risks and insecurities from men in the various stages of the migration process. Women refugees and asylum seekers are considered those in the most vulnerable situations, requiring a prompt and effective protection response, as they are at a higher risk of gender-based violence, including trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced marriage <sup>(98)</sup>.</p>	 <b>Shifting health challenges</b> <p>Gender plays a role in the incidence, prevalence and treatment of health conditions <sup>(99)</sup>. Women are less likely to smoke, drink excessively or exercise than men <sup>(100)</sup>. Women are more likely to be misdiagnosed, as the symptoms of conditions such as heart attacks are different for women and men <sup>(101)</sup>. Differences in health-risk behaviour exist between women and men from childhood onwards. In childhood and adolescence, boys have a higher mortality rate due to behaviour-generated causes (suicide, drug abuse, traffic accidents) and present with more physical and mental health problems than girls. The main health problems among young men are injuries caused by traffic accidents. Young women suffer especially from invisible health risks, such as excessive use of medication and dieting, and sexual violence <sup>(102)</sup>.</p>	

Source: EIGE based on the EU megatrends <sup>(103)</sup>.

<sup>(94)</sup> EIGE (2024), *Financial Independence and Gender Equality: Joining the dots between income, wealth, and power*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(95)</sup> European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and EIGE (2017), *Towards Age-friendly Work in Europe: A life-course perspective on work and ageing from EU agencies*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(96)</sup> EIGE (2023), 'Gender balance in politics – November 2022', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg; EIGE (2023), 'Gender balance in business and finance – December 2022', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg; EIGE (2015), *Gender Equality in Power and Decision-making – Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for action in the EU Member States*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg; and EIGE (2023), 'Gender Equality Index – Power in European Union in 2023 edition' (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/domain/power>).

<sup>(97)</sup> EIGE (2020), *Sectoral Brief: Gender and migration*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(98)</sup> See note 97.

<sup>(99)</sup> EIGE (2017), *Gender in Health*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(100)</sup> EIGE (2023), 'Gender Equality Index – Health in European Union in 2023 edition' (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/domain/health>).

<sup>(101)</sup> Perez, C. C. (2019), 'Yentl syndrome', in Perez, C. C. (ed.), *Invisible Women: Exposing data bias in a world designed for men*, Penguin Random House, London.

<sup>(102)</sup> EIGE (2017), *Gender in Health*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

<sup>(103)</sup> See note 77.

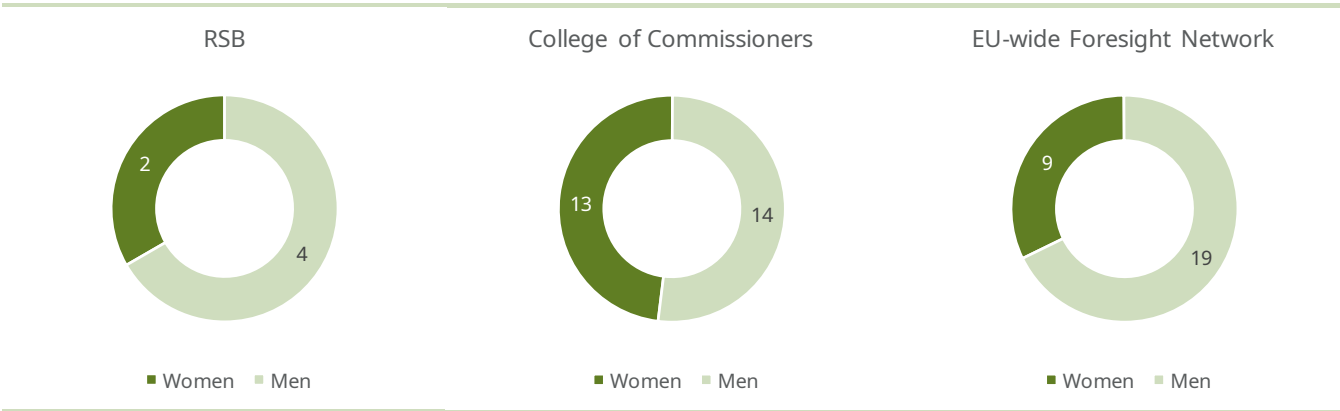
**Who makes decisions matters too, because those who are absent cannot influence strategic planning processes; however, fixing the gender balance in foresight and decision-making continues to be a challenge**

Historically, men have held the majority of leadership positions in politics, business and other areas, thus limiting women’s representation and influence. Other intersecting social identities, such as age, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic situation, disability, religion, sexual orientation and rural or urban location, have further compounded this, resulting in intersecting inequalities and often multiple forms of discrimination. When certain groups of women and men are

under-represented in positions of power, it can result in policies and decisions that fail to address their needs and concerns <sup>(104)</sup>.

Gender balance among stakeholders in the EU impact assessments, evaluations and foresight tilts towards men, especially at the top (Figure 3) <sup>(105)</sup>. The RSB <sup>(106)</sup> – where men form the majority of members – advises the College of Commissioners (the political leadership of the Commission) and examines impact assessments and major evaluations produced by the European Commission <sup>(107)</sup>. The College of Commissioners has been balanced in terms of gender since 2020, but gender parity is not present at all levels of its management <sup>(108)</sup>. Women are also under-represented in the EU-wide Foresight Network (which defines priorities for the Commission’s strategic foresight agenda) <sup>(109)</sup>.

**Figure 3. Gender balance in selected bodies in 2023**



Source: EIGE based on the Commission’s website <sup>(110)</sup>.

<sup>(104)</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2022), *Improving Representation in Clinical Trials and Research: Building research equity for women and underrepresented groups*, The National Academies Press, Washington DC.

<sup>(105)</sup> When looking at the gender composition of key stakeholder bodies in the context of impact assessments and evaluations in the EU, the research team relied on manual analysis given the lack of sex-disaggregated data.

<sup>(106)</sup> The RSB is an independent body within the Commission. See the Commission web page on the board ([https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/regulatory-scrutiny-board\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/regulatory-scrutiny-board_en)).

<sup>(107)</sup> In 2023, the RSB had room for seven members: two women and four men (including the chair), with one place remaining vacant. See the Commission web page on the board’s members ([https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/regulatory-scrutiny-board/members-regulatory-scrutiny-board\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/regulatory-scrutiny-board/members-regulatory-scrutiny-board_en)).

<sup>(108)</sup> European Commission (2022), ‘Commission welcomes political agreement on gender balance on corporate boards’, press release, 7 June 2022 ([https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_3478](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_3478)).

<sup>(109)</sup> In 2023, the EU-wide Foresight Network included 9 women and 19 men. See the section on the network on the Commission web page on strategic foresight ([https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-planning/strategic-foresight\\_en#eu-wide-foresight-network](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-planning/strategic-foresight_en#eu-wide-foresight-network)).

<sup>(110)</sup> European Commission (n.d.), ‘Members of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board’ ([https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/regulatory-scrutiny-board/members-regulatory-scrutiny-board\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/regulatory-scrutiny-board/members-regulatory-scrutiny-board_en)); European Commission (n.d.), ‘The Commissioners’ ([https://commissioners.ec.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://commissioners.ec.europa.eu/index_en)); and European Commission (n.d.), *Ministers for the Future* ([https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/69fea923-a600-4194-824d-965f04519986\\_en?filename=ministers\\_future\\_2024\\_5.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/69fea923-a600-4194-824d-965f04519986_en?filename=ministers_future_2024_5.pdf)).

The critical issue is the composition of foresight teams and expertise available to them. This is an area where the availability of data hampers the analysis. Little to no information is available on the gender balance and/or gender expertise among foresight contributors (Box 7), researchers and participants in EU foresight research.

These are the key areas where more diverse gender representation and expertise need to be considered carefully, for example by drawing on gender equality and equality experts, bodies and networks (while changing the gender balance in the management structures may take more time).

### **Box 7. Examples of gender balance among contributors to foresight research**

Foresight studies are often carried out in consultation with relevant steering groups and expert panels. For example, the impact assessment on the sustainable use of pesticides notes the contribution of an interservice steering group<sup>(111)</sup>, but no sex-disaggregated data on the composition of the group are provided<sup>(112)</sup>. A better example of this is the EU Environmental Foresight System report, which acknowledges contributions from the European Environment Agency Scientific Committee and the Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks. Both committees have achieved gender parity among their members<sup>(113)</sup>. While other reviewed reports do not disclose the membership of any advisory committees, some of them share information on experts and other contributors to the foresight research reports. The analysis shows that women are slightly under-represented (they form 43 % of the named contributors). This analysis does not take into account the level of seniority or level of effort invested by these contributors in the foresight research (due to the lack of data).

Source: EIGE based on reviewed reports.

<sup>(111)</sup> Members include DG Health and Food Safety, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, DG Climate Action, DG Defence, Industry and Space, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, DG Environment, Eurostat, DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, DG International Partnerships, DG Justice and Consumers, the JRC, DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, DG Mobility and Transport, DG Regional and Urban Policy, DG Research and Innovation, the Secretariat-General, the Legal Service, DG Taxation and Customs Union and DG Trade.

<sup>(112)</sup> European Commission (2022), Commission staff working document – Impact assessment report accompanying the document Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the sustainable use of plant protection products and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, SWD(2022) 170 final.

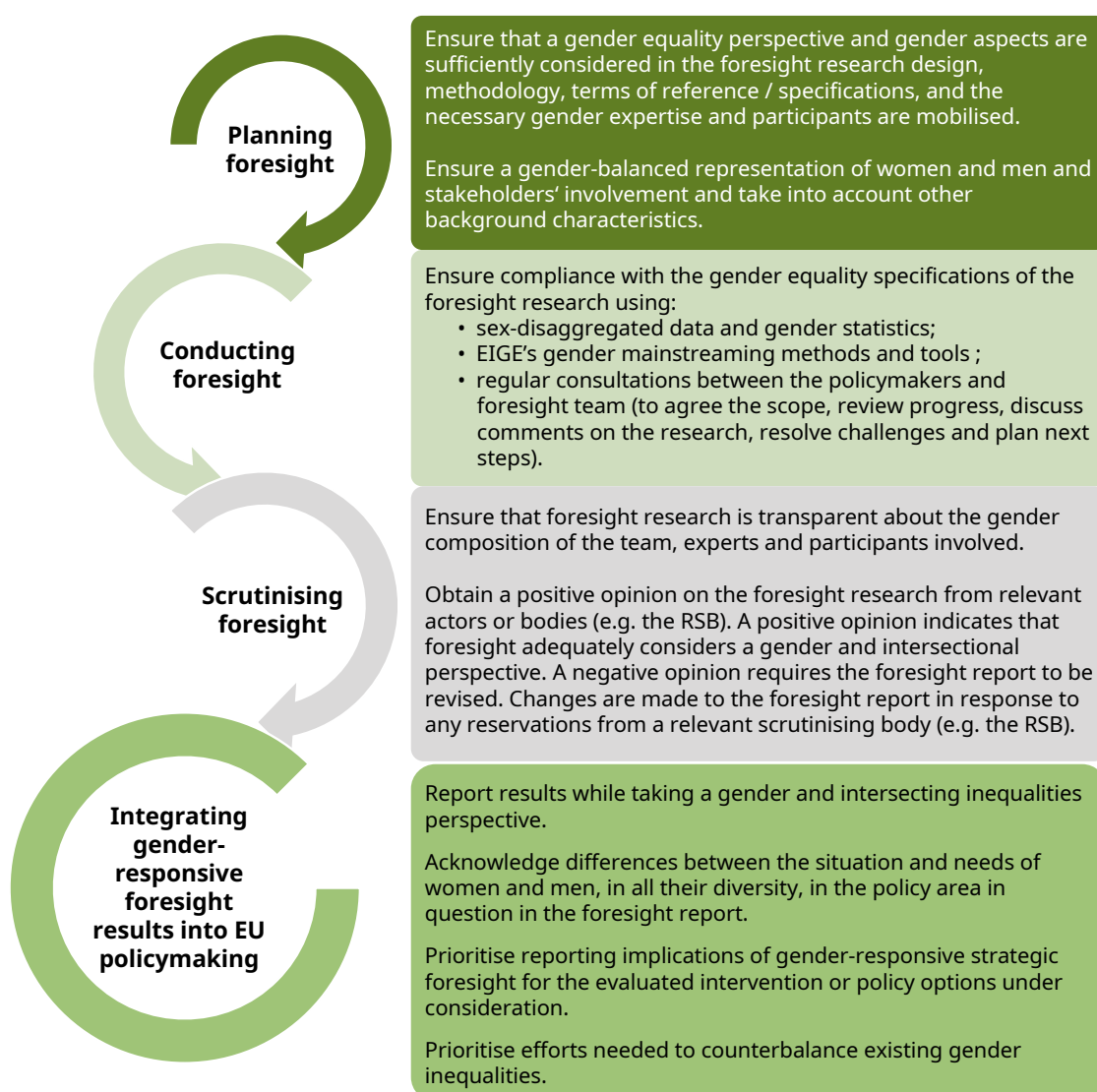
<sup>(113)</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment, White, O., Garnett, K., Zamparutti, T., Rolands, S. and Spela, K. (2022), *The EU Environmental Foresight System (Forenv) – Final report of 2020–21 annual cycle: Emerging issues impacting the delivery of a zero-pollution ambition by 2050*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

# What else can be done to make EU foresight more responsive to gender and intersecting inequalities

**Processes in EU impact assessments and evaluations offer opportunities to make the foresight element of policymaking more gender-responsive**

The steps involved provide multiple entry and check-in points for incorporating a gender equality and intersecting inequalities perspective (see [Figure 4](#)).

**Figure 4. Steps for gender-responsive foresight research in EU evaluations and impact assessments**



Source: EIGE.

## The European Institute for Gender Equality's tool for gender-responsive strategic foresight offers step-by-step guidance




There are few resources that help foresight become more responsive to the different needs and capacities of and circumstances experienced by women and men in all their diversity. EIGE's gender-responsive evaluation for an environmental and sustainable future for all (GREENA) step-by-step toolkit – and its Tool 7<sup>(14)</sup> in particular – is one of the first to address this gap.

The GREENA step-by-step toolkit and Tool 7 on using gender-responsive strategic foresight can be accessed [here](#).





## Policy recommendations to incorporate a gender and intersectional perspective into foresight at different stages of the 'Better regulation' process

There are a range of entry points that could help embed a gender and intersecting inequalities perspective into EU strategic foresight and into foresight research supporting the 'Better regulation' agenda (Table 2).




**Table 2. Entry points and recommendations for EU institutions to incorporate gender equality into the EU strategic foresight**

Entry points and recommendations		How	Who
Context			
	Establish better links and checks between the 'Better regulation' framework and EU obligations and commitments to mainstreaming gender in the EU policymaking process, including evaluations, impact assessments and strategic foresight research, in order to ensure compliance	Integrate the new tool for gender-responsive and intersecting inequalities in EU strategic foresight into the 'Better regulation' framework	European Commission
	Foster the use of gender mainstreaming methods in the EU strategic foresight reports and the full foresight cycle	Include gender expertise in participatory foresight Provide training and awareness-raising activities on gender equality and gender mainstreaming	Competence Centre on Foresight
	Complement predictive quantitative methods (e.g. forecasting) with qualitative futures so that participatory approaches make it easier to adopt a gender and intersecting inequalities perspective	Plan for participatory methods	European Commission / private and public contractors


<sup>(14)</sup> EIGE (2024), *Gender-responsive evaluation for a sustainable future for all: GREENA step-by-step toolkit*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, tool 7.

Entry points and recommendations	How	Who	
Resources			
	<p>Make use of existing foresight research or resources and gender analyses in a given policy area to inform the impact assessment or evaluation of the initiative in question (avoiding duplication of effort)</p>	<p>Raise awareness of the importance of relevant gender analysis and consult it in the main EU policy areas</p> <p>Consult EIGE’s resources on gender equality in the EU for implementers of strategic foresight</p>	European Commission / private and public contractors
	<p>Revise the Megatrends Hub to make the megatrends more gender-sensitive</p>	<p>Highlight any differences in each megatrend for women and men and signal their different implications for different groups of women and men</p>	Competence Centre on Foresight
Stakeholders			
	<p>Have relevant bodies (e.g. the RSB) offer support in integrating foresight and a gender equality perspective into evaluations and impact assessments at the EU level</p>	<p>Guarantee sufficient diverse expertise on gender equality among members of relevant bodies (e.g. the RSB). This gender expertise can include gender focal points, representatives of units with responsibilities in the area of gender equality, and representatives of EU agencies and bodies</p>	European Commission
	<p>Strengthen gender expertise among evaluation and impact assessment units at the European Commission and contractors</p>	<p>Promote the new tool <sup>(115)</sup> for gender-responsive and intersecting inequalities in EU strategic foresight</p> <p>Provide training on and raise awareness of gender equality and gender mainstreaming</p> <p>Require the use of gender-responsive public procurement, including a gender and intersecting inequalities perspective, in terms of reference for externally contracted foresight research</p>	European Commission

<sup>(115)</sup> EIGE (2024), *Gender-responsive evaluation for a sustainable future for all: GREENA step-by-step toolkit*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, tool 7.

Entry points and recommendations	How	Who
 <p>Have the EU-wide Foresight Network bring together intelligence and foresight expertise from all Member States and the Commission for cooperation on forward-looking issues relevant to Europe's future</p>	<p>Facilitate network members' access to gender expertise or guidance (providing resources, sharing good practices, co-creating content for the Knowledge4Policy platform for gender-responsive and intersecting inequalities foresight)</p>	<p>European Commission / Competence Centre on Foresight</p>
Processes		
 <p><b>Planning</b></p> <p>Incorporate a gender equality perspective into the foresight methods (horizon scanning, megatrends analysis, scenario planning, visioning)</p> <p>Strengthen the use of participatory approaches in which gender expertise and various perspectives are represented</p> <p>Ensure the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex and other intersecting characteristics</p>	<p>Use gender-responsive public procurement and include relevant gender requirements in the terms of reference</p> <p>Follow the new tool<sup>(16)</sup> to make foresight research more gender-responsive and inclusive</p> <p>Ensure the presence of gender expertise in the research process, for example, in scenario workshops, (horizon) scan workshops and participatory foresight</p> <p>Ensure the use of sex-disaggregated data and gender indicators</p>	<p>European Commission / private and public contractors</p>
 <p><b>Implementation</b></p> <p>Engage relevant stakeholders and experts in the field of gender equality</p> <p>Enable the participation of women and men, in all their diversity, in workshops, interviews, etc.</p>	<p>Use inception, interim and final meetings to review the engagement and participation of relevant stakeholders and groups in the research</p>	<p>European Commission / private and public contractors</p>

<sup>(16)</sup> EIGE (2024), *Gender-responsive evaluation for a sustainable future for all: GREENA step-by-step toolkit*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, tool 7.

Entry points and recommendations	How	Who
 <p><b>Content</b></p> <p>Review the extent to which gender-responsive and intersecting inequalities strategic foresight is incorporated into EU impact assessments and evaluations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reviewing the extent to which the report / staff working document uses gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data, a gender and intersecting inequalities perspective, and gender-sensitive language;</li> <li>• reviewing the extent to which gender equality is considered in foresight exercises, including their recommendations, targets and budget allocation;</li> <li>• reviewing the extent to which gender and intersecting inequalities are considered and portrayed in foresight methods;</li> <li>• reviewing the extent to which and if gender-responsive lessons to inform the policy cycle are developed.</li> </ul>	<p>Use opinions of reviewers, including the RSB's opinion, to review the extent to which a gender and intersectional perspective has been taken into account</p>	<p>European Commission / RSB</p>

Source: EIGE.

## Recommended sources

For more about foresight, see the following.

European Commission (n.d.), 'Strategic foresight' ([https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-planning/strategic-foresight\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-planning/strategic-foresight_en)).

European Commission (2021), 'Tool #20. Strategic foresight for impact assessments and evaluations' in *Better Regulation Toolbox*, pp. 155–158 ([https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox/better-regulation-toolbox\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox/better-regulation-toolbox_en)).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (n.d.), 'Strategic foresight' (<https://www.oecd.org/strategic-foresight/>).

United Nations Development Programme (2018), *Foresight Manual – Empowered Futures for the 2030 Agenda*, United Nations Development Programme Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, Singapore.

EIGE (2024), *Gender-responsive evaluation for a sustainable future for all: GREENA step-by-step toolkit*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, tool 7.

## Where to find more from EIGE

**Gender Statistics Database.** Find comparable data on various aspects of (in)equality between women and men from all Member States (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs>).

**Gender Mainstreaming Platform.** Find information on what gender mainstreaming entails, information on the relevance of gender equality and challenges in various policy areas, practical guidance to integrate a gender perspective, information about relevant institutions and structures at the EU and national levels, and more (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming>).

**Gender-responsive evaluation report.** Find help in measuring progress towards achieving intended gender-related objectives and goals set out in policies, programmes and projects or help in evaluating the relevant

processes, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of an intervention from a gender perspective ([https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-responsive-evaluation?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-responsive-evaluation?language_content_entity=en)).

**Toolkit on gender impact assessment.** Find more about this method that should be used early in any policymaking process (i.e. when devising new initiatives) (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-impact-assessment-gender-mainstreaming-toolkit>).

**EIGE's toolkit on gender-responsive public procurement.** Find out how to promote gender equality through the purchase of works, supplies or services by public sector bodies (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/grpp>).

This policy brief is based on EIGE's 2023 research on gender-responsive evaluation for an environmental and sustainable future for all. The practical step-by-step toolkit to implement

gender-responsive evaluations resulting from this research is available online (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits>).

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### EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1951 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu>).

### Open data from the EU

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