



GRASS CEILING

Women-led innovation for rural transformation:
insights from the GRASS CEILING project

Rural Pact Conference

'From vision to action: Empowering rural areas for the future'

17th September 2025

Blanca Casares



The project and its consortium



GRASS CEILING (2022-2025) is a multi-actor project aiming to increase rural women-led socio-ecological innovations.

Specific Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach:

- 25 partners from science, policy & practice
 - 9 living labs with women innovators
- with 72 rural innovators participating
- engaging men innovators
 - engaging relevant stakeholders, also via the European Policy Forum



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Vibrant innovation community across 9 countries



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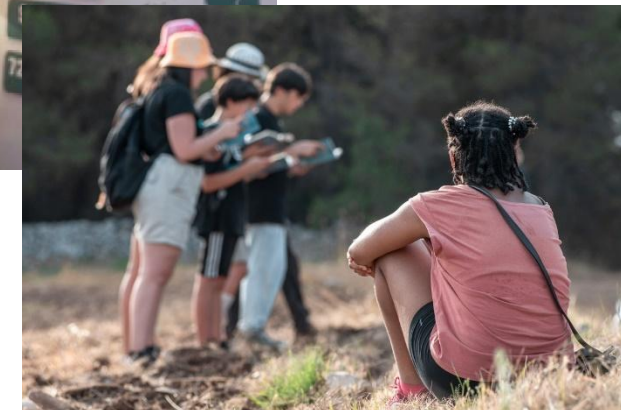
Aileen Barron: Green Acre Marketing, revolutionising agribusiness marketing in Ireland



Marthe Kilen: Frøhnelik - Pastry Chef in Norway



Rosangela Belifemmine: Confabulare- Cultural disseminator. Books & explore rural area with kids in Italy



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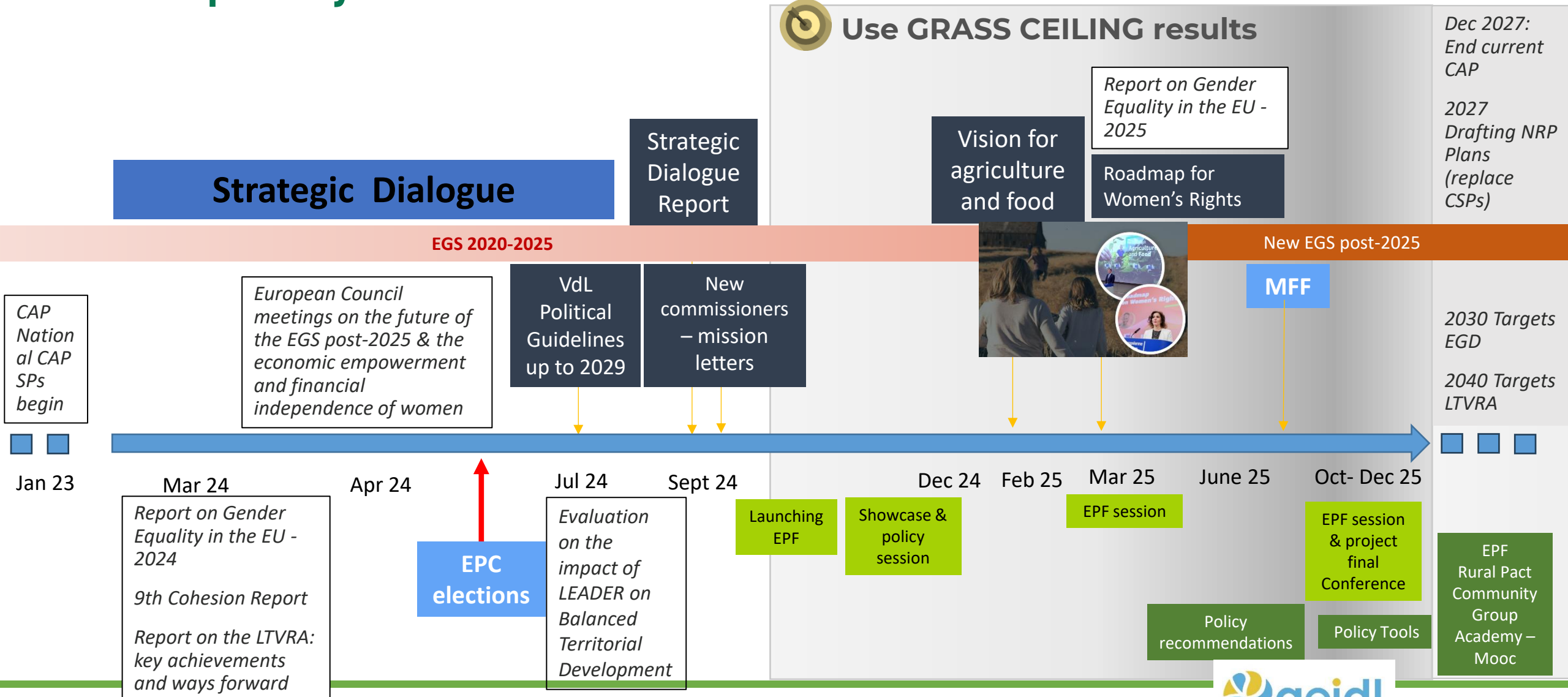
What have we learned?



- Gaps in data/ impact of different gender regimes (diversity within the EU)
- Generating new data: understanding men and women entrepreneurs better
- Training of 72 innovators across 9 countries and learning from them and stakeholder organisations
- better understanding of women's innovation paths & potential, foresight scenarios
- Benchmarking policy documents (do they gender mainstream or sideline?)
- Benchmarking legal frameworks
 - Women & Innovation: Distinctive approach; need mentors & networks & AKIS tools, change of stereotypes/norms
 - Access to land: Rarely inherit land; leaders in regenerative farming
 - Entrepreneurial activities: Small-scale enterprises; need microfinance
 - Community infrastructure: Poor in rural areas; women drive social enterprises



Which policy framework is relevant?



Policy recommendations

2025

2030

2035

2025		2030				2035	
Action	Description	Action	Description	Action	Description	Action	Description
L.1	Establish Women in Agriculture Platform	L.7	Enforce legal gender targets	D.4	Build gender-disaggregated data systems	L.20	Operationalise Rural Vision gender flagship
L.2	Utilise CAP simplification for gender	L.8	Gender in post-2027 EU programming	D.5	Integrate gender variables into major EU monitoring systems	L.21	Develop Rural Women Statutes
L.3	Align CAP and Gender Strategy	L.9	Gender-responsiveness CAP	D.6	Comprehensive EU gender monitoring	L.22	Train land officials, promote rights
L.4	Gender mainstreaming in European Pillar of Social Rights Social Pillar	L.10	Strengthen CAP guidance and oversight	D.7	Use gender tracking in post-2027 National Single Plans	L.23	Integrate gender in demographic policies
L.5	Articulate Women's Rights Action Plan	L.11	Integrated entrepreneurship support programmes	D.8	Gender impact assessments	L.24	Gender in housing strategies
L.6	Gender in Generational Renewal Strategy	L.12	Extend social conditionality rights	I.6	Support Rural Innovation Labs	F.8	Invest in rural social infrastructure
F.1	Dedicated funding for rural women	L.13	Adapt Care Strategy for Rural	I.7	Gender in Smart Specialisation Strategies	F.9	Tailored family support services
F.2	Gender consultation for CAP planning	L.14	Map rural essential services	K.2	Women in Agriculture Platform for capacity building	F.10	Multifunctional rural service centres
D.1	Commissioners report gender impact annually	L.15	Mandatory parental leave and childcare services	K.3	Train institutions and civil servants on gender	F.11	Bridge rural digital divide
D.2	Integrate gender variables in EU observatories	L.16	Guarantee equal land access and ownership	K.4	Design AKIS inclusive and with gender balance	F.12	Gender-responsiveness public & private funding
D.3	Promote gender evaluation practices	L.17	Adopt shared farm ownership laws	K.5	Mentor women in agriculture and entrepreneurship	D.9	Rural proofing with gender lens
I.1	Redefine innovation concept with gender lens	L.18	Expand rural women pension options	K.6	Promote agriculture equally with STEM fields	D.10	Foresight tools with gender view
I.2	Gender in climate transition plans	L.19	Improve rural women social protection	G.2	Inclusive EU fund governance	D.11	Benchmark gender equality regularly
I.3	Articulate Start-up & Scale-up Strategy for rural	F.3	Mandate gender budgeting and targets	G.3	Enforce gender quotas in governance	D.12	Data on underrepresented rural groups
I.4	Targets for EIP-AGRI gender groups	F.4	Develop gender-sensitive finance tools	C.2	Challenge gender stereotypes media	I.8	Document socio-ecological innovations
I.5	Women-led Innovation Focus Groups	F.5	Design rural-focused financial tools	C.3	Gender-sensitive education in different curricula	I.9	Support peer-led innovation models
K.1	Union of Skills & Quality Jobs for rural women	F.6	Gender equality in public contracts	C.4	Awareness campaigns for equality	K.7	Institutionalise rural Living Labs
G.1	Inclusive Monitoring Committees required	F.7	Support young rural women			K.8	Revise extension services and training systems
C.1	Include rural women in EU EGS					K.9	Promote women in innovation
						G.4	Cross-directorate policy coordination
						G.5	Develop Rural Democracy Index
						C.6	Mandatory gender certification for services



Have your say

Contribution to	Date
Social economy action plan – mid-term review	July 2025
Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030	August 2025
Generational Renewal Strategy	August 2025
New Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights	September 2025



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Policy tools - Toolkit



Purpose

- Practical instrument to help policymakers, practitioners & stakeholders design, implement, and monitor inclusive & gender-responsive rural and agricultural policies.

Key Components

- Gender Proofing Template
- Gender Benchmarking Tools
- Data strategy and integration for building a Rural Women Innovation Compass
 - Mapping and gap analysis of monitoring systems
 - Strengthening integration with the EU Rural Observatory
 - Insights from the European Policy Forum



European Policy Forum for women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas



ONLINE

- Bring a pan-European perspective
- Facilitate a space for knowledge exchange
- Discuss and validate project results
- Discuss and co-design recommendations and tools



GRASS CEILING Living Labs



■ Member of the European Policy Forum



■ Be part of the Rural Pact Community Group on Women in Rural Areas



Rural Pact Community Platform

Login or Register to Join this Group

107 Members | 19 Discussions



GROUP

Women in Rural Areas



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Thank you for your attention!

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