

TERA project: balancing professional and private life in the countryside in Slovenia

SUMMARY

Starting with Slovenia's first national study on rural gender equality by Gender Equality Research Institute – IPES, TERA established multi-stakeholder regional systems in Posavje and Pomurje, creating intergenerational mentoring tandems between young women from the Slovenian Rural Youth Association and Association of Women Farmers of Slovenia. Mentors delivered workshops and ongoing support to foster behavioural change and improve work-life balance.

The project engaged over 500 rural residents, mobilised 100 regional stakeholders and trained 40 mentors, demonstrating a replicable model linking research, capacity building and long-term community support.



© IPES

Theme: Women
Country: Slovenia

Organisations:

- > Gender Equality Research Institute – IPES, non-governmental / civil society organisation
- > Development Centre Murska Sobota, public authority
- > Posavje Regional Development Agency, public authority
- > Slovenian Rural Youth Association, non-governmental / civil society organisation
- > Association of Slovenian Women Farmers non-governmental / civil society organisation
- > Eastern Norway Research Institute of the University of Inland Norway - ENRI, academic / research institution

Start & end date: 06/2022 - 04/2024

Budget: EUR 499 750

Funding sources:

- > Norway Grants 2014-2021
- > Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development (national contribution)

Website: <https://projekt-tera.si/en/project-tera/>

Contact: Ana Pavlič, ana@ipes-si.org



CONTEXT

The project took place in the rural regions of Slovenia, where geographic dispersion, limited services and persistent gender norms shaped everyday life and work. Women were central to family farms, households and community life, yet their contributions remained poorly recognised and weakly reflected in economic power.

Strong gender stereotypes continued to assign care, domestic work and family responsibilities primarily to women. Institutional responses to work-life balance were fragmented, while distance from services reduced access to support.

The TERA project built regional partnerships to promote work-life balance, equitable economic participation and shared responsibility for care, supporting women in managing their professional, household and community roles more effectively.



OBJECTIVES

- > Develop an integrated, evidence-based model to improve work-life balance and gender equality in rural Slovenia;
- > Address structural inequalities limiting women's labour-market participation;
- > Generate data through research on rural gender equality to guide policy and programme design;
- > Engage rural residents, regional stakeholders to build capacity and sustain long-term community support;
- > Strengthen women's economic participation, foster intergenerational learning and provide a replicable framework for rural gender equality initiatives.



ACTIVITIES, KEY ACTORS, AND TIMELINE

The initiative unfolded in four interconnected phases combining research, governance, capacity building and community engagement:

- > IPES conducted Slovenia's first national analysis of rural gender equality, while Norwegian partner ENRI carried out comparative research, creating an evidence base on structural barriers, gender stereotypes and limited access to services.
- > Multi-stakeholder regional committees in Pomurje and Posavje translated research into locally relevant strategies and fostered cross-sector cooperation on work-life balance.
- > IPES and partners developed a six-module educational programme addressing gender stereotypes, unequal care burdens and structural barriers, complemented by the TERA online platform offering practical tools.
- > A two-track mentoring scheme trained 40 mentors who delivered workshops and individual follow-up support, enabling participants to improve work-life balance across rural Slovenia.



RESULTS

- > The initiative generated significant knowledge and institutional and community-level outcomes addressing structural inequalities affecting rural women and men in Slovenia. One of its central achievements was the first national analysis of gender equality in rural areas, developed by IPES with comparative input from the Norwegian partner ENRI.
- > Building on this evidence, the project established two multi-stakeholder regional committees in Pomurje and Posavje, bringing together more than 100 representatives of municipalities, public institutions, employers, civil society organisations and local communities. These committees created an institutional space for dialogue and policy experimentation, enabling locally adapted responses to regional challenges.
- > Capacity building formed another key outcome. Through a six-module educational programme and workshops organised across all statistical regions of Slovenia, more than 300 participants were directly engaged. The accompanying online platform, learning materials and public dissemination expanded the reach of the initiative, enabling over 10 000 people to access project knowledge and tools.
- > A two-track mentoring scheme trained 40 mentors, who worked in pairs and provided workshops together with individual guidance for participants seeking practical solutions for work-life balance.
- > Overall, the initiative strengthened institutional cooperation and introduced sustainable tools supporting gender equality in rural development.



SUCCESS FACTORS/LESSONS LEARNT

- > The success of the TERA initiative came from addressing work-life balance in rural areas not as an individual problem but as a structural and cultural issue embedded in everyday rural life. The project deliberately moved beyond awareness campaigns and created spaces where rural communities could question norms long taken for granted.
- > One of the most innovative elements was the creation of safe spaces for intergenerational dialogue among rural women. Young women, mothers and older women from farming households openly shared experiences of invisible labour, economic dependence and the constant compromise between agricultural work, family responsibilities and community expectations.
- > Equally important was the intentional inclusion of men. By inviting men into discussions about care, family responsibilities and gender norms, the project challenged the idea that work-life balance concerns only women. This shift opened new conversations about shared responsibilities and more balanced rural family dynamics.
- > The project also amplified these conversations through national, regional and local media, bringing rural gender equality into broader public debate.



Funded by
the European Union



info@rural-pact.eu



www.ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/index_en