



Mobilizing Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities

Work Package 2

Youth Policy Labs Report



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Contents

Abstract.....	5
Introduction to Youth Policy Labs.....	5
Topic 1: How urban public infrastructures do not serve women.....	6
Topic 2: How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility.....	6
Topic 3: How urban planning is not considering women needs.....	8
Topic 4: How women are more exposed to Sexual Assault in urban areas.....	9
Empirical evidence: implementation of the Youth Policy Labs.....	11
Methodology.....	11
Policy Labs on ‘How urban public infrastructures do not serve women’ in Italy	15
Background information:	15
The Policy Labs implementation:.....	16
Policy Labs on ‘How urban public infrastructures do not serve women’ in Serbia.....	20
Background information:	20
The Policy Labs implementation	20
Policy Labs on ‘How urban public infrastructures do not serve women’ in Romania	23
Background information:	23
The Policy Labs implementation	24
Policy Labs on ‘How urban public infrastructures do not serve women’ in Cyprus.....	27
Background information:	27
The Policy Labs implementation	28
Policy Labs on ‘How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility’ in Italy	31
Background information:	31
The Policy Labs implementation:.....	32
Policy Labs on ‘How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility’ in Serbia.....	36
Background information:	36
The Policy Labs implementation:.....	37
Policy Labs on ‘How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility’ in Romania	39
Background information:	39
The Policy Labs implementation:.....	40
Policy Labs on ‘How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility’ in Cyprus.....	43
Background information:	43
The Policy Labs implementation:.....	43
Policy Labs on ‘How urban planning is not considering women needs’ in Italy	45

Background information:45

The Policy Labs implementation: 46

Policy Labs on ‘How urban planning is not considering women needs’ in Serbia.....50

 Background information:50

 The Policy Labs implementation:51

Policy Labs on ‘How urban planning is not considering women needs’ in Romania 52

 Background information: 52

 The Policy Labs implementation 53

Policy Labs on ‘How urban planning is not considering women needs’ in Cyprus.....56

 Background information:56

 The Policy Labs implementation 57

Policy Labs on ‘How women are more exposed to Sexual Assault in urban areas’ in Italy.....59

 Background information:59

 The Policy Labs implementation 60

Policy Labs on ‘How women are more exposed to Sexual Assault in urban areas’ in Serbia 62

 Background information:62

 The Policy Labs implementation63

Policy Labs on ‘How women are more exposed to Sexual Assault in urban areas’ in Romania63

 Background information:63

 The Policy Labs implementation 64

Policy Labs on ‘How women are more exposed to Sexual Assault in urban areas’ in Cyprus67

 Background information:67

 The Policy Labs implementation67

Summary 73

Conclusion 75

References 77

Abstract

Urban infrastructure and urban planning in modern cities often lack a careful consideration of the needs and aspirations of women and LGBTQI+ members. The 'Mobilising Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities' aims at contributing to the mobilization of youth to take action on making their cities Intersectional Gender Inclusive Cities through the implementation of Youth Policy Labs to involve young participants in identifying key issues and solutions in the existing gender gaps in their cities. This report shows the main results of the Youth Policy Labs in each country of implementation (Italy, Serbia, Romania, Cyprus)

5

Introduction to Youth Policy Labs

Youth Policy Labs is a methodology that aims to promote and enhance the active participation of youth in the policy-making process (Gojkovic et al., 2020). Youth Policy Labs provide a safe space for young people to share their thoughts on different topics, and discuss and propose solutions for ongoing problems in their community. Equally, they also offer an opportunity for policy-makers to meet with young people, hear their concerns and suggestions about existing policy gaps, and establish collaborations between the policy-making community and the young population (ibid.). Policy Labs serve as learning, meeting and production spaces that bring together diverse groups of people to work on identifying solutions to societal problems and contribute towards common good (Science Po, n.d.). As a result, communities and local governments are able to make better decisions by identifying the needs of youth in their communities and measuring which solutions work best in solving these needs (University of Michigan, 2016).

The European project, 'MAAT: Mobilizing Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities', has organised a total of 16 Youth Policy Labs in four European countries (Italy, Serbia, Romania and Cyprus). The Policy Labs were divided into four different topics aiming to help youth persons to become actively engaged in their local communities and work towards the creation of gender inclusive cities. Below, you can find information about the different topics of the Policy Labs.

Topic 1: How urban public infrastructures do not serve women

Women's empowerment and gender equality are closely interconnected with urban infrastructure and urban mobility planning (Chopra, 2018). A particular topic of interest is the current lack of recognition of women's unpaid care work and the impact this has on women's various roles, interests and needs (Ibid.). It has been argued that improvements in social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure could contribute towards gender equality and women's empowerment (Asselberg and Strecher-Rasmussen, 2018).

More particularly, the 'Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women' Programme has conducted a study to explore the impact of public infrastructure on women's economic empowerment in low-income contexts (Khan, 2018). According to the study's key findings, basic infrastructure can reduce the time women spend at home, help them balance care work with their social life, and increase their employment productivity (Onaran et al., 2022). However, according to literature, cities' infrastructure planning rarely addresses these needs, downplaying women's economic and social roles particularly in low-income contexts (Lubitow et al., 2017). Research that took place in Portland in 2017, has shed light on the concept of transmobilities, investigating the experiences and discriminations faced by transgender and gender nonconforming individuals in urban spaces and how these incidents shape a broader cultural system that normalises violence and harassment towards gender minorities (ibid.).

Another topic which could be further explored is the movement of women towards the agricultural industry due to the recent advancement in training programmes for women helping them to advance their agriculture knowledge and challenge roles that have been traditionally attributed to men (Bullock and Tegbaru, 2019).

Topic 2: How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility

According to the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, there is not sufficient gender-disaggregated data across Europe to adequately monitor the situation in each member state (Sansone and Davern, 2021/ Kawgan-Kagan, 2020). Women and men have different needs in terms of transportation, but the transport planning in most European Union cities is based on a hypothetical neutral user which in reality reflects the needs of men (Ibid.). As a result, women are left exposed to the worrying phenomenon of sexual harassment while using public transport (Ibid.). Studies that would explore travel behaviour of individuals with respect to gender, occupation and area of residence are critical in identifying ways to address the needs and interests of women and gender and sexual minorities in urban mobility planning (Saigal et al., 2020).

A recent study conducted by the European Parliament in 2023, has revealed that the impact of the current urban mobility policies is not limited only to the potential of

facing a form of harassment when moving from one place to another (Paoletti and Sansonetti, 2023). Rather, it has an impact on the opportunities women have to find a high-quality job, to remain active in the labour market, to balance their professional and social life as well as to access cultural opportunities and to have affordable health services and access to a good educational path (Ibid.). As a result, the fact that public transport does not take into account the gender gap and the different needs of all individual users has another negative impact on the empowerment of women as well as on their independence and access to equal opportunities as men (Borgato et al. 2021). Mobility poverty is a complex phenomenon that leads to social exclusion due to poor accessibility, as the price of the transport and the residential proximity to the travel terminals play an essential role behind the transport choices of individual users (Lucas, 2021). Another new term in urban planning, is the notion of “mobility of care”. This is a new concept that acknowledges the need to explore data and assess the daily travel associated with care work, performed by adults while raising their children or for any other dependants they might have and it also includes labour related to the upkeep of a household (Sanchez de Madariaga, 2013).

A study conducted by the Île-de-France Mobilités Institute and the National Observatory of Delinquency in Transport, showed that four out of ten residents in the Paris Region are afraid of being attacked or robbed when using public transport, with over 63% of the survey’s respondents being women (Institut Paris Region, 2019). Another study that took place in Sweden, explored another dimension of urban mobility that aimed to explore how the traditional gender roles that are deeply rooted within our societal structure constitute an additional barrier for women, limiting their access to equal opportunities as men (Gil Sola, 2016). According to research conducted by the university of Copenhagen, men make linear and longer journeys than those of women, which are shorter and more fragmented, and often in the neighbourhood where they live (Transgen, 2007). Furthermore, men are more likely to use and own a car, while women are more likely not to own one and to travel by public transport (Ibid.). The explanations for these differences are related to unequal gender relations in the care management of dependent family members, but also to their position in the labour market and to different socialisation habits (Ibid.). A one-size-fits-all approach cannot address the existing problems in urban mobility; improvements can only be achieved through targeted actions that address the specific needs, challenges and interests of women and gender and sexual minorities on a local, regional and European level (Ari et al., 2022). According to some surveys that took place in Austria, womens’ behaviour regarding transportation and movement is changing based on their personal experiences (Stark and Meschik, 2018). For example, women who experienced frightening situations tend to avoid certain destinations, routes and travel modes, more than other women. The results also confirm that women in general have constrained travel behaviour because of fear about their personal security (Ibid.). When it is impossible to change route or travel time e.g., due to personal restraints, or when simply no other transport mode

is available, women will have to use unwanted transport options, even when they have to reckon with frightening situations (Ibid.). The conclusions summarise that women's personal security plays an important role in terms of travel behaviour and increased attention should be paid by authorities as well as city- and transport planners striving for sustainable transportation environments (Ibid.).

Another issue that remains hugely overlooked is the lack of active participation of women in urban planning. This is highlighted in the work of the late Jane Jacobs who argued about the insertion of gender differentiated notions in the practical aspect of urban planning (Bittencourt, 2019). One of the main reasons behind the failure to address women's needs in urban transport systems, is the fact that although there are various studies proving that women's needs are not addressed in the existing urban transport systems, there is a general lack of an in-depth understanding of the reasons leading to this outcome (Uteng, 2019). Mobile data have been extensively used to study urban mobility and provide an insight into the reasons women's needs and challenges are often overlooked (Gauvin et al., 2020). However, studies based on gender-disaggregated large-scale data are still lacking, limiting our understanding of gendered aspects of urban mobility and our ability to design policies for gender equality (Ibid.).

Topic 3: How urban planning is not considering women needs

According to the Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design created by the World Bank (2020), there is a historic exclusion of women, girls and sexual and gender minorities from the process of urban planning and design which creates negative social and economic impacts on these groups. Women's priorities have often been ignored in the design of human settlements, the location of housing, and the provision of urban services (Beall, 1996). New forms of urban partnership are needed to develop participatory processes which include women and men at all stages of urban development (Ibid.). If the process of planning and designing a modern city becomes more gender-inclusive and more accessible, connected and safe for all gender and sexual minorities would make a significant change in the daily lives of women, girls and gender and sexual minority groups and it will contribute towards the sustainable development of modern societies (World Bank, 2020). The UN's Flagship initiative for Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls offers practical guidelines and support for the implementation of a range of practices, strategies and tools for the creation of accessible and safe cities and public spaces (UN Women, 2019). Many of these initiatives suggest the creation of women-led organisations and teams to support cities' reforms and offer a fresh understanding to the needs and aspirations of women in modern societies (ibid.). Although in recent years the planning industry has been adapting, adopting more inclusive leadership and management approaches and becoming more feminised, patriarchal relationships continue to remain strong (Sahama et al., 2021).

In addition, back in 2016 the Council of European Municipalities and Regions had signed the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, in an

attempt to promote gender equality in local governments (CCRE, 2006). Nevertheless, equality in urban spaces remains a challenge for many modern societies. There are various organisations and initiatives that aim to find ways which could help make cities and urban spaces safer for women, girls and sexual and gender minorities (Action Aid, 2013). Throughout the years, many European cities have adapted various policies to promote and achieve a gender inclusive and equal city. The municipality of Berlin created in 2011 a Handbook that explored social diversity and gender planning (City of Berlin, 2011). Another example is the city of Vienna, which in 2021, it was recognised as one of the top European cities in the field of gender planning (City of Vienna, 2021). Similarly, the Barcelona City Council is also working to promote an urban planning which follows a gender perspective, which aims to put the challenges, needs and inspirations of all genders and communities in the centre of its policies (Barcelona City Council, 2017).

Feminist scholars within the field of urban planning is another way to practically promote the needs and interests of various gender and race identities within this field (Beebeejaun, 2022). The UN Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda are offering a new generation of gender equality policies and tools which should be advanced in all UN member states as part of their sustainable development (Sanchez de Madariange and Abril, 2019). A key challenge in this approach is adequately addressing “care work”, which has been repeatedly neglected by urban planning throughout history, consistently developing cities adapted to optimise “paid work” activity and forgetting the needs of women performing “unpaid work” tasks in their cities (Plana, 2022). Another issue that hasn’t been extensively studied are urban green spaces and their proximity from residential blocks (Ode Sang et al., 2020). Previous studies have shown that there is a gender and age dimension in visual perception, audio experience and recreational activities linked to the use of urban green spaces but these studies remain very limited and do not lead to adequate conclusions (ibid.).

Topic 4: How women are more exposed to Sexual Assault in urban areas

Gender-based violence is evident all over the world with international statistics showing that more than 84% of women (younger than 17 years old) across the globe have experienced some form of physical or sexual harassment in the streets (ILR Worker Institute, 2015). It is worth noting that more than 82% of transgender women have reported harassment due to their gender identity (ibid.). These incidents are part of women’s and gender and sexual minorities’ daily lives and they often force them to take different routes to reach their destination, and report feelings of anxiety that impact their social life. To address these numbers and help create safe urban and public spaces for women, girls and gender and sexual minorities various NGOs and non-profit organisations are operating in this field. Some examples include the [Stand Up training programme](#) designed to prevent harassment in public

spaces as well as the [Stop Street Harassment](#), organisation dedicated to documenting and ending gender-based street harassment worldwide.

There is a clear need for feminist scholars to engage with sociologists to critically assess the behaviour of urban crowds and the critical geographies of public transportation and movement in an attempt to investigate further sexual assaults on public transportation (Chowdhury, 2022). An interesting study that took place a few years ago in China, aimed at creating links between sexual assaults and the factors increasing the risk of urban females becoming victims of such assaults (Shuang-Ge et al., 2011). The findings of this study suggest that more years of education, more trauma events and lower subjective support may be factors that increase risk of sexual assault among urban females (Ibid.). Another research that took place at the University of Zagreb in 2019, aimed at finding out if the university's students have recently been exposed to sexual assault and what were their views on sexual harassment (Antunovic, 2019). The study has shown that the majority of the respondents had experienced sexual harassment in public areas, including night clubs, public transportation, and parks (Ibid.). In addition, the findings suggested that there is no difference in the feelings of the victims during sexual harassment cases by a known harasser compared to an unknown harasser (Ibid.).

A breakout study was published in 2006, establishing a connection between women police officers and sexual assault reports and arrests (Meier and Nicholson-Crotty, 2006). This study has explored cases in more than 60 urban areas and within a timeframe of 80 years to conclude that there is a positive correlation between the number of reports of sexual assault and the number of arrests for sexual assault (Ibid.).

Empirical evidence: implementation of the Youth Policy Labs

Methodology

Under the context of the 'MAAT: Mobilizing Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities', five organisations from four EU countries (Italy, Serbia, Romania and Cyprus) organised Youth Policy Labs with young people across the EU, discussing gender inclusion and urban city planning.

The Policy Labs were structured in such a way as to offer a space for young participants to share their thoughts on gender equality and act as inspiration for young women to participate in the policy-making processes of their local communities ([Gojkovic et al., 2020](#)).

Some of the Policy Labs were organised live and they took place in university halls, youth centres and open spaces, while others were organised online to reach participants from wider regions and countries. The hybrid implementation of Policy Labs was avoided due to the limited interaction it allows between the in-person and online participants and the complications that might arise in facilitating such events. Nevertheless, a combination of in-person and online Policy Labs was implemented to facilitate the needs of all participants and ensure that a diverse group of young people could participate in the Labs.

The preparation, organisation and facilitation of Policy Labs includes several steps to ensure smooth implementation and encourage the active engagement of the participants:

Step 1: Identify the topic and invite participants

In the case of the 'MAAT: Mobilizing Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities' project, the topics were pre-conditioned. Nevertheless, in-depth research was conducted by all involved organisations to ensure a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the topics of the Policy Labs.

Once the topic is chosen, it is important to identify the target audience and find appropriate means to reach them and invite them to join the Policy Labs. 'MAAT: Mobilizing Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities' organised local social media campaigns in each country of implementation and they used their local networks and connections as a potential pool of recruiting participants.

Step 2: Plan for the actual day

In the planning phase, it's important to identify the location of the Policy Labs and decide if they will be implemented in-person, online or in a hybrid format. Some potential locations include the headquarters of local non-governmental organisations, youth centres, universities or other public spaces. During planning, it's important to know how many participants you are looking for and make sure the

chosen location can accommodate the needs of all participants, including transportation and accessibility needs.

It is also crucial to decide the duration of the Policy Labs. It is suggested that these types of events should last approximately three hours to offer some time for ice-breakers and familiarising with the topic. You should avoid extensively long Policy Labs as the productivity of the participants will lower with time.

Some additional suggestions for the organisation of Policy Labs include:

1. Inviting a guest speaker related to the topic of the Policy Lab (i.e., policy-makers, activists, researchers).
2. Combining more than 1 Policy Lab in a half-day workshop. In this case you should aim to have more participants, to ensure that 10 participants are actively involved in each topic. Similarly, it is suggested to have more than 1 facilitator to make sure you can monitor the process and take notes for the Policy Labs reports.
3. Host a Networking event after the workshop with light snacks, offering the space and time for informal discussion between participants, facilitators and guest speakers.

At this stage, the organiser should create an Agenda, the registration forms and official invitations and any other relevant dissemination material (including flyers and social media posts).

Step 3: Facilitating the Youth Policy Labs

During the facilitation process, it is suggested to follow a DEI policy (diversity, equity and inclusion), aiming to include a diverse group of participants, including women, transgender, gender fluid, etc. (Forbes, 2022). In addition, aim to include migrants, people with disabilities as well as other vulnerable groups to help towards the creation of a diverse network of participants who will contribute in the creation of more inclusive and accessible policies in their local communities.

The facilitation process of the Policy Labs is one of the most crucial moments in the organisation and implementation phase as it's the time to engage your participants, inspire them and help them contribute in the creation of social change in their communities. The main facilitation steps include:

1. Setting up the room: It is important for the facilitator to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled time at the location, to set up the room and make sure there are enough seats for all the participants.
2. Welcoming the participants: It is suggested that you organise some icebreakers to give some time to the participants to get to know each other and familiarize with the space.

Suggested Icebreakers:

- The Human Bingo: this is an icebreaker that allows the participants to get to know each other. To implement this activity, you need to pre-define questions that are relevant to the workshop's topic and funny in nature.

Questions should be added to a table and printed for each participant to use.

Instructions to Participants: explain the aim of this activity and ask them to walk around the room and identify people that might identify with a question on the Human Bingo table. More guidelines for the Human Bingo can be found [here](#).

- The Arts Effect: in this activity, the participants should use their creativity and cooperate to create a drawing that best addresses the topic of the workshop. The participants can separate into smaller groups, or they can try to complete this activity all together. More information [here](#).
3. Presenting the topic of the Policy Lab: It is suggested offering a short introduction of the topic of the Policy Lab at the start of the session, using a PPT or an informal talk.
 4. Divide the participants into groups: It is suggested that you inform the participants that the Youth Policy Labs will include group activities as some people might want to join with their own group. If your participants have not formed their own groups prior to the Policy Lab, you should divide them into groups.
 5. Group work: Participants will be given approximately 1 hour to work within their groups to answer the relevant questions and prepare a short presentation on their chosen topic.
 6. Group Presentations and Group Discussion: Each group will be given approximately 15 minutes to present their solution and/or suggestions, followed by an additional 15 minutes for questions. At the end of all the presentations, you should spend approximately 30 minutes debriefing, asking the participants to share their thoughts on the overall process and any moments they particularly enjoyed. It is also important to hear the challenges or any parts that the participants did not like, to make sure they won't get repeated in the remaining Youth Policy Labs.
 7. Evaluation of the Policy Labs and Networking: At the end of the Policy Labs, you should allow approximately 15 minutes so that participants complete the evaluation questionnaire. Upon completion, informal networking opportunities should be provided. There is no specified time for this activity, but you could use this time to discuss with the participants and inform them about the remaining Policy Labs as well as the project more generally (or any other upcoming activities you would like to disseminate).

Step 4: Keeping in touch with the participants after the Policy Labs

It is suggested that after the completion of each Youth Policy Lab, the organisers should send a follow-up email to the participants to thank them for their

participation, inform them about the upcoming Youth Policy Labs and form a network that could potentially take part in additional activities.

Policy Labs on ‘How urban public infrastructures do not serve women’ in Italy

Background information:

Rome’s population hasn’t grown in the past years as a big proportion of its population chooses to move abroad for study and work while young people seem sceptical to start their own family (Bettio et al., 2023). It is important for the Italian government to allocate more funds on education, healthcare and better employment opportunities in order to offer a better quality of life to citizens (Rosselli et al., 2016). The covid-19 pandemic has affected women in Italy, much more than men. Priority must be given to those services that will meet the collective interests and needs of women and free up women’s time (Corsi, 2020). These services include improving full-time education, kindergartens, facilities and services for the elderly and home care services.

A study conducted by the Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP), an Italian financial institution, concluded that social infrastructure plays an important role in the pursuit of the goals defined by the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development (CDP, 2022). Social infrastructure, in this sense, is understood as the set of goods functional to the satisfaction of the essential and collective needs of all community members, particularly in education, health and housing (ibid). Italy suffers from serious shortcomings in educational infrastructure, as evidenced by the low coverage rate of early childhood services and the high rate of school drop-outs (ibid.). Similarly, housing deprivation shows that there is a lack of housing infrastructure (ibid.).

Early childhood care services are a key issue in the present context (Bettio et al., 2015). Despite the EU attempts to promote the improvement of early childhood care services, early take-up of these services remains low in most European countries and Italy is no exception (Brilli et al., 2018). In Italy, pre-school services are used by almost all children aged 3-5 years. On the contrary, children who attend a nursery school before the age of 3 represent a much smaller percentage (ibid). In Rome, however, the rate of children under 3 years old attending a nursery school has exceeded the EU average (Bettio et al., 2023). The most updated statistics from the Italian Institute for Statistics, showed an improvement on the early child care services (crèches), but they also showed that there are two different ‘speeds’ in Italy (Kenny, 2021). There are regions in Italy with above 40% of coverage levels in regards to the amount of child care services in relation to the number of children, while there are regions with a coverage of just 11% which makes it very challenging for young parents to receive enough support (ibid.).

These issues have been present in Italy for many years, but the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought them to light and actions have already started to tackle them. The main problem is that for decades cities and governments failed to realise that women and men experience a city in different ways (Brun, 2021). The

principal idea is that psychological barriers, constituted by the social organization of a place, and physical barriers, given by the shape of a town, hinder the advancement towards gender equality and limit the accessibility of a city (ibid.). The absence of gender-disaggregated data has led to the development of cities based on the idea that daily life is the same for everyone, something that limits the accessibility and inclusion of many individuals within contemporary cities and increases gender inequality (ibid). Barcelona is pioneering in this space by using a new approach that respects the opinion of all genders in reshaping the cities' main public spaces (ibid.).

After the pandemic, there has been an increase in new activist groups and movements which aim to develop mutual aid networks and help create communities based on the collective interests and needs of all their members (Rispoli, 2020). One example, are the new transfeminist groups that are currently active in Italy which aim to help the transformation process and set new goals for urban spaces to fit the needs of all genders (Bonu et al., 2023).

The Policy Labs implementation:



The Italian organisation responsible for implementing the Policy Labs on urban public infrastructure was Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini and they organised two Policy Labs focused on how existing gender gaps in urban public infrastructure affect women's safety, movement and income.

The Policy Labs were delivered in the format of two webinars titled "URBAN INFRASTRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES FOR AN INCLUSIVE CITY". The first one was organised on the 21st of June 2023, and it was presented by Alice Buzzzone – expert in urban regeneration. Alice has been actively involved in eco-design, public space, urban and social studies since 2011 and she is the coordinator of the Rome Architecture Festival, as well as the founder of the master's program in eco-design, lifecycle and urban regeneration at the University of Rome. The second webinar took place on the 25th of September 2023 and it was facilitated by Dr Azzura Muzzonigro,

who holds a PhD in Urban Studies from the University of Roma Tre. Azzura is an architect, curator, independent urban researcher and co-founder of the social promotion association Sex & the City. The webinars were joined by a total of 26 participants.

Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini invited the two experts, Alice and Azzura to facilitate the webinars as a way to inspire the participants to explore gender gaps in their cities and explore the link between urban public infrastructure and gender equality further. The guest speakers, started the webinars by delivering a short presentation on their background and then, discussing the existing gender gaps in urban public infrastructure in Italy. The discussions involved reference to available data and statistics, the challenges as well as potential strategies and policies to overcome them. The material used by the guest speakers were also available for the participants to use during the workshop phase to help them create their own action plans and solutions to the existing gender gaps in urban public infrastructure.

Both webinars lasted for approximately 3 hours and they were divided into two parts; the presentation by the experts, which included a discussion with the experts; and an interactive workshop at which participants worked in groups and tried to identify ways to improve collective experience within their city.

During the webinar, the project and its results were also presented and the organisers share templates and working documents with the participants to help them structure their action plans and policies.

The main focus of the webinars was the development of local action plans aimed at editing existing policies and proposing new policies for gender inclusive cities and participants worked well in their groups to achieve this result. The participants were mainly young women, with an interest in politics and civic engagement. They mentioned that they rarely participated in similar participatory models on policy-making and action plans' drafting as these activities are not very common. The webinars were also joined by eight participants who self-identified as male participants. All participants showed considerable interest in diversity and the willingness to change and improve current conditions through critical thinking and curiosity. One of the male participants, an architecture student at the University of Messina, pointed out how some universities do not offer architecture students modules on inclusive urban planning and design and how this prompted him to participate in the Policy Labs.

To help participants work in groups and learn more about each other, the webinar moderators from Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini played the role of icebreakers, joining all the Zoom groups, trying to find common interests between the participants and help them start their action plans drafting. For example, a group of young women students in Rome discussed how the insufficient night bus services in Rome and the lack of safety in public transport limited the opportunities for women who don't drive to enjoy the nightlife of the city.

The participants discussed a variety of topics on urban public infrastructure and how these reinforce gender inequalities and affect women's daily life. The first webinar emphasized how, contrary to popular belief, as many as 10 per cent of the world's population suffers from motor and sensory disabilities and how these persons are excluded from many public spaces. For women, fear is the first obstacle to freedom of movement, while for people with disabilities, it is the structure and development of public spaces that are often a source of preclusion. The participants were divided into three groups and they discussed about:

- **Fermento Urbano, an inclusive city research centre in Catania (the region of Sicily).** The group used this case study as an example and source of inspiration to think about new initiatives that could contribute towards the development of gender inclusive cities.
- **Inclusive mobility in the historic center of the city of Pisa.** The group examined the reality of an Italian city, Pisa, where the mobility issue for people with mobility difficulties is particularly acute, especially in pedestrian areas such as squares and sidewalks. They underlined how the local administration needs to pay more attention to the importance of pedestrian mobility. Although sidewalks in low-traffic areas have been restored, busy pedestrian zones in the city centre have been ignored.
- **Citizens with reduced mobility; challenges and opportunities.** The group focused on how freedom of movement within the city is only sometimes autonomous and how this impedes the development of the life of people who find daily barriers along their routes to home, work, and leisure.

The second webinar emphasized on the close relationship between gender and public space, explaining that when city planners, architects and other relevant stakeholders fail to take gender into account, public spaces become masculine spaces resulting to discrimination and the existing gender inequalities. The participants were once again divided into three groups and discussed:

- **How to project an inclusive public toilet system.** The group explored different ideas on how to design accessible, inclusive and safe public toilets based on the needs of different Italian cities.
- **Are gender-neutral toilets safe?** The second group analysed how necessary it is to create gender-neutral toilets and it aimed at identifying ways to make these spaces safe for all genders. They also discussed the ethical quandary of how technology can be deployed as a safety aid and what dangers this might entail.
- **Women's freedom of movement within cities.** The group looked at the limitations to the autonomy and the freedom of movement that certain groups of the society are facing in their daily life. For example, women often find it more challenging to walk alone and use public transportation means at night due to the lack of proper lighting in critical areas in the cities and the suburbs.

To conclude, the participants of the webinars argued that change in the public urban infrastructure can be achieved by involving local stakeholders in the policy-making procedures; exchanging best practices between different areas and regions and promoting co-planning with the active participation of the residents of each city/ neighbourhood.

In addition, the webinars shed light on the need for more research and new studies on the collection of data focusing on intersectional perspectives in the development of cities, and more particularly on the role of public administrations and the engagement of local residents. There has been a consensus that change and reforms require a bottom-up approach.

DIFFERENZE DI GENERE

«Le donne continuano a svolgere **la maggior parte del lavoro non retribuito** da cui dipende il benessere della popolazione».

«A causa delle loro responsabilità di cura, molte donne si limitano a un **lavoro vicino a casa, con orari flessibili** e che non richiede tempo fuori casa.»

Riattiva l'audio (CTRL+MAIUSC+M)

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GENERE E LAVORO DI CURA

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Azzurra Muzzonigro / Sex & the City (Guest)

Policy Labs on ‘How urban public infrastructures do not serve women’ in Serbia

Background information:

Industrialisation and infrastructure development have underpinned economic growth for decades and allowed for major improvements in many aspects of well-being across all segments of the population. Infrastructure is essential for gender equality, as it provides women with better access to essential services and fosters economic opportunities (OECD, 2021). Yet, industrialisation and infrastructure have also been the source of major health and environmental disasters which often impact women more than men (Ibid.). As a result, applying a gender lens to infrastructure development is essential to close persistent gender gaps in the daily living conditions as well as in employability (Ibid.).

The recent publication, "Mainstreaming Local Sustainable Development Policies in Užice", is a local initiative in Užice to analyse the existing local development policies and examine the data in regards to social and economic development with a particular focus on gender equality (Bradaš, 2021). This paper has been the result of the joint work conducted by two local organisations Užice Women's Centre and Užice Centre for Democracy and Human Rights. Based on the findings of the analysis, recommendations have been formulated to contribute to the integration of a gender perspective in all phases of planning and drafting the future Development Plan of the City of Užice (Ibid.).

The Policy Labs implementation

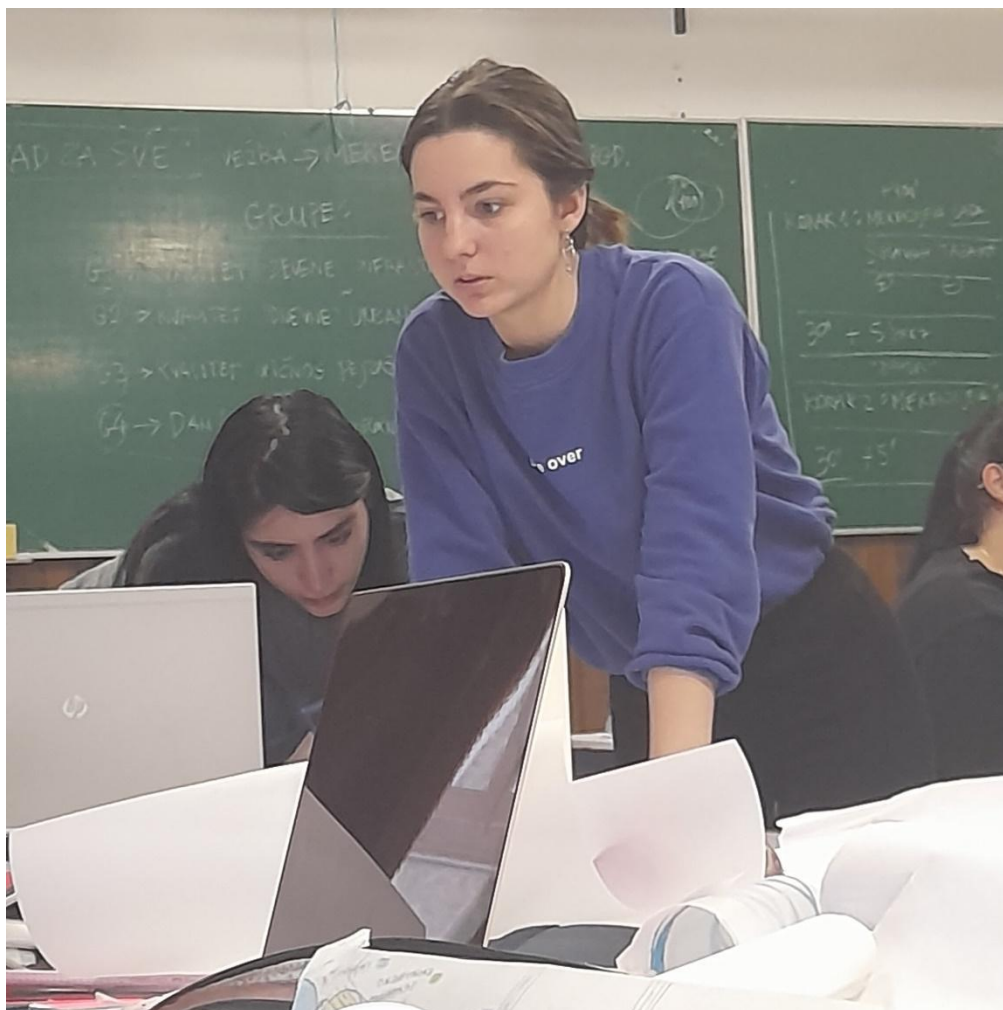
In Serbia the Policy Labs were organised by Placemaking Western Balkans on the 19th of May 2023. Placemaking Western Balkans delivered one half-day physical event at the Faculty of Landscape Architecture in Belgrade, where they organised and facilitated four different Policy Labs, one on each of the ‘Mobilizing Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities’ thematics.

There were 40 participants, mainly students between 20 to 22 years old, studying Landscape and Public Space Design MA and about 2/3 of the participants were young women. The dissemination of the Policy Lab took place mainly internally within the university, as students were invited to participate in the Policy Labs through the Faculty’s announcement Board.

During the Policy Labs, the participants had the opportunity to gain new knowledge on gender and public space planning, increase awareness of the importance and relevance of this topic and learn about the benefits of inclusive urban planning and policy-making process. Participants, and particularly young women, were also empowered to openly express their personal observations and experiences regarding gender equality and the relationship between gender and city planning.

The event was divided into two main parts. Firstly, the facilitators introduced the project to all the participants, offering an introduction on gender-responsive

planning and gender-inclusive planning as well as on the four different thematics of the 'Mobilizing Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities' cities. Then the participants were divided into four groups and each group focused on one particular topic. During the Policy Labs, the participants used the Mekenzijska Street as a tangible physical framework for their group discussions. In order to explore each topic with more detail, the participants were asked to mark areas on the technical drawings of the Mekenzijska Street based on the challenges and potentials they identified for each topic.



More particularly, for the Policy Lab on urban public infrastructures the participants focused on analysing and discussing the quality of green public infrastructure in the Mekenzijska Street and the surrounding neighbourhoods, with a particular focus on women's needs. With the moderators' guidance, participants discussed the existing green spaces in the city, the routine of people living in the neighbourhood and particularly caregivers who used to mainly be women. Another topic of discussion was the current state of pedestrian infrastructure of the Mekenzijska street, and

more particularly: the width of the pedestrian areas, the quality of ground-floor levels, the presence of art and graffiti, public lighting, waste management etc.

During the group work phase, the participants of the Policy Labs identified the following risks and limitations in regards to gender equality and urban public infrastructures. While identifying a variety of risks, the participants have also suggested some potential solutions:

- **Lack of responsibility and action from the local authorities to provide adequate and functional green spaces in the city:** the participants have argued for the need of additional action from the local municipal service to provide better and more functional green spaces. They suggested that interviewing women, and especially younger women living in the area would greatly help to discover their daily needs and ways of using the street and public space of the neighbourhood.
- **Very little physical spaces:** the students felt frustrated that there is so little actual physical space for improvements and were doubting which public service should actually take action when it comes to gender-balanced planning and implementation of new policies, since it seems that relevant planning departments are looking for quick solutions within limited budgets, which makes gender-balanced prioritisation and decision making difficult.
- **Existing green areas are not maintained or they are occupied by cars:** the participants argued that the lack of parking spaces has led to the occupation of the city's green spaces, small squares and parks from cars. Green areas, however, are essential for the wider wellbeing of the neighbourhoods and its residents. There should be more interviews conducted with families in the area, to understand their needs and their daily routines, particularly those of women going to work, taking care of children or the elderly, or doing daily shopping.
- **Too narrow sidewalks:** the participants have argued that whenever possible the narrow sidewalks should be reconstructed. This is particularly important for people with disabilities, families with young children and for all residents who want to enjoy easy access to public spaces without using a car to move around.

Overall, all the participants agreed that the neighbourhood lacks informal public spaces for young people and particularly vulnerable groups to meet, socialise and exchange knowledge and ideas. The students concluded that a more balanced approach is needed in urban planning and design and that the city needs to be designed with a fresh approach to cover the needs of all genders.

Policy Labs on 'How urban public infrastructures do not serve women' in Romania

Background information:

Research conducted between 2014 and 2019 in Romania, aimed at analysing the lack of adequate infrastructure to address the needs of women (Măriuca et al., 2019/ Regio, 2014). The research has identified a number of obstacles and deficiencies that negatively affect women's access to essential opportunities and services. One of the key issues that were identified during the research is the lack of childcare infrastructure; nurseries and kindergartens are insufficient and inaccessible in many areas, causing significant difficulties for women who want to work or continue their education (Ibid.). This limits women's options and can contribute to increasing gender inequality in labour market participation. Public transport and accessibility are also a major issue. Transport infrastructure is not adapted to the needs of women, especially in rural or less developed areas. This creates difficulties in ensuring safe and efficient travel to workplaces, educational institutions or medical services, which has a negative impact on women's mobility and autonomy.

The findings have also highlighted the lack of adequate medical infrastructure for women (Ibid.). Access to reproductive health services, especially family planning or maternal care, is limited in many regions. The lack of specialized centres and trained personnel in the field of women's health negatively affects their health and well-being. Another important aspect addressed in the study is the lack of infrastructure to combat gender-based violence. Specialized resources and services for victims of domestic violence, such as emergency drop-in centres, safe shelters, and specialized counselling, are insufficient. This situation creates significant difficulties for women experiencing violence and limits their access to support and protection. The research also highlighted discrepancies in digital and technology infrastructure. Access and use of technology is unequal among women in Romania, which can contribute to the amplification of gender inequalities and their marginalization in the digital society.

The Policy Labs implementation



24

In Romania, the Policy Lab on 'How urban public infrastructures do not serve women' was organised by Helixconnect and it involved 12 young participants from Timisoara. The group of participants was consisting mainly by female participants (10 out of 12) and they were actively engaged in their local communities either as volunteers, youth workers and/or members of youth organisations.

Helixconnect planned a dissemination strategy ahead of the Policy Lab implementation to reach the local community and target young persons with expertise on urban public infrastructure and on gender studies to invite them to the Lab. The Policy Lab was then implemented on the 21st of June 2023, and it was divided into two parts: a) the introductory phase at which the facilitator introduced themselves and provided a brief overview of the 'MAAT: Mobilising Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities', as well as a short introduction on the existing situation in Timisoara in regards to public urban infrastructure and gender inclusion; b) the group work phase at which participants conducted their own research and presented the key issues they identified, potential solutions for the creation of a gender inclusive society, and ways in which the local community could become more actively engaged in policy-making.

During the group discussion, some of the main topics that were raised included concerns about the lack of public bathrooms and the bad condition and

maintenance of the existing ones, the inadequacy of the public lighting system throughout the city, the lack of video surveillance in public spaces and the poor maintenance of the existing public facilities.

Some of the solutions that were proposed included:

- **Equal representation of all genders in governmental positions in local councils and city halls:** this idea suggests ensuring equal representation of men and women in decision-making bodies. By implementing an equal gender distribution, this policy aims to promote gender balance and inclusivity in local governance.
- **Consultations between local authorities and women:** This involves creating opportunities for women to voice their concerns and opinions directly to local authorities. Through regular consultations, women can actively participate in shaping policies and initiatives that address their specific needs and challenges.
- **Integrated urban development strategies:** This idea emphasizes the importance of considering gender perspectives in urban planning and development. By integrating gender-sensitive approaches into urban policies, infrastructure projects, and public services, cities can become more inclusive and responsive to the needs of women.
- **Increased police presence on the streets at night:** This idea highlights the need for enhanced safety measures in public spaces during nighttime. Increasing police patrols and visibility can help create a safer environment, particularly for women who may feel vulnerable when walking alone at night.
- **Pharmaceutical ATM - Menstruation vending machine:** This idea proposes the installation of vending machines that dispense individual sanitary products. These machines can be strategically placed in public spaces, allowing individuals to purchase menstrual hygiene products conveniently when needed.
- **Physical panic buttons in hazardous areas:** This idea suggests installing physical panic buttons in locations prone to safety risks, such as bus stops, traffic lights, and parks. These buttons can be easily accessible and connected to emergency services, enabling individuals to seek immediate assistance when feeling threatened or in danger.
- **Provision of menstrual hygiene products in public restrooms:** This idea emphasizes the importance of providing free or affordable menstrual hygiene products in public restrooms. By ensuring the availability of these essential items, it addresses the needs of women and promotes menstrual health and dignity.
- **Sports halls exclusively for women or separate areas for women in general sports halls:** This idea recognizes the significance of providing safe and inclusive spaces for women to engage in sports and physical activities. It suggests either establishing sports halls exclusively for women or creating separate areas within existing sports facilities, ensuring privacy and comfort.

- **Parent-child toilets, clearly indicated at building entrances:** This idea focuses on the need for designated toilets equipped for parents with children. By clearly indicating these facilities at building entrances and providing necessary amenities, it ensures convenience and accessibility for parents to attend to their children's needs.

The participants of the Policy Lab recognised that these suggestions would require interest and investment from the local authorities, but they also emphasised how the successful implementation of these policies and suggestions could help create an equal and fair society where both women and men will feel safe.

During their group work, the participants faced various challenges until they eventually reached their proposed solutions. The first challenge was to find information about the existing policies and to try to identify gender gaps in existing urban infrastructure policies. Then, the participants had to identify solutions which are feasible and practical and which could help establish long-term strategies on gender equality and inclusion. One of the key issues they found during their research is the lack of representation of women in local decision-making bodies.

Overall, the Policy Lab was a success in bringing together a group of active and engaged young participants from Timisoara. Throughout the workshop, significant ideas and solutions were discussed to address the gender disparities and challenges faced by women in the city.

The participants proposed a range of practical and innovative solutions, such as gender distribution in decision-making positions, improved safety measures, enhanced accessibility, and provision of menstrual hygiene products. They believed in the potential success of these solutions, highlighting the importance of support and investments from local authorities.

The workshop provided a platform for open discussions and fruitful exchanges of ideas. The participants actively contributed their perspectives, experiences, and aspirations. Despite facing challenges in finding viable solutions, they displayed determination and enthusiasm to create a more inclusive and equitable urban environment.



Policy Labs on ‘How urban public infrastructures do not serve women’ in Cyprus

Background information:

Although in Cyprus there are legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality under the UN SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) indicator, there is still much work that is needed to attain gender balance. In particular, there is a lack of policies and monitoring tools addressing unpaid care and domestic work, gender and poverty, physical and sexual harassment, women’s access to assets and topics related to gender and the environment (UN Women, n.d.). As indicated by the UN report on Cyprus, there are no clear indicators regarding Gender and Zero Hunger, Health and Wellbeing, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Work and Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure, Reduced Inequalities, Sustainable cities, Climate Action, Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions and Partnership for the Goals.

According to the most recent Gender Equality Index, Cyprus has an overall score of 57.3%, which is below the EU average (68.9%) (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022). There is a particular low percentage of women involved in politics, policy-making and holding positions of power – currently getting an average score of just 30% regarding gender equality in the local power measures (Ibid.). Two

domains that Cyprus scores particularly well, are the domain of Money, which relates to monthly earnings, net income and the risk of poverty, and Health, which measures gender equality in three health -related aspects: health status, health behaviour and access to health services (Ibid.).

An issue that is very particular to the Cypriot context and in relation to the Cyprus Issue, is the gender equality aspect of a settlement. Amongst local women's group, in both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, there is a concern about the differentiated impact that a settlement could have between men and women (The World Bank and OSASG Cyprus, 2020). A settlement could spur investment, boost trade, create jobs, and thus support improvements in standards of living; gender equality could be promoted by new solutions to the continuous economic and social impacts of the existing inequalities which are partly imposed by the current political situation (Ibid.).

The Policy Labs implementation

In Cyprus, the Policy Lab on Public Urban Infrastructure and how public infrastructures do not serve the needs of women was organised by Citizens in Power on the 24th of September 2023. The Lab involved eight participants and two facilitators and it took part at Zouhouri Square in Larnaka during a local festival, the 'MAZ(ouhour)!' festival which aimed to promote inclusion and interculturality through civic engagement, art, music and theatre workshops. The participants were recruited on the day, and they were young people who joined the festival. The location of the Policy Labs was chosen strategically to serve as a case example of how public urban infrastructure and urban planning can contribute in creating gender inclusive cities. The Zouhouri square has opened approximately two years ago, whereas beforehand the area was used as a public parking lot.

The participants included six young women; working in local organisations and some university students, and two young men working as software engineers. The diverse professional backgrounds of the participants brought a valuable and insightful discussion which highlighted various problems as well as possible solutions to issues related to inclusion, accessibility and active participation within a community.

The Policy Lab on Public Urban Infrastructure was organised jointly with the Policy Lab on Urban Planning with the participants engaging in three different phases:

- **Phase One:** The participants were recruited amongst the people who joined the 'MAZ(ouhour)!' Festival. Although the Policy Lab was disseminated through social media and online campaigns prior to the festival, the final participants were recruited on the actual day. Once a small group of participants was formed, the facilitators delivered a short presentation of the project and the aims of the Policy Lab, and then there was a short introduction on issues related to public urban infrastructure, inclusion and accessibility.

- **Phase Two:** After the introduction, the participants were given one hour to on their own to walk in groups around the square and the surrounding area, explore the centre of Larnaka, discuss with each other and identify issues as well as key examples related to urban infrastructure, that contribute towards a more inclusive and accessible city.
- **Phase Three:** In the final phase, all participants came back together as a group to discuss about the issues they identified and think about potential solutions to these problems.

The participants worked well together throughout the three phases of the Policy Lab and into their smaller groups as they explored the centre of Larnaka and the area that surrounds the Zouhourri square. Particularly interesting and helpful were the contributions of participants that live or work in Larnaka and who knew how Zouhourri was as a parking lot, before becoming a square. They discussed the changes they see, and how these could potentially contribute to the future development of the city around the Zouhourri square.

Some of the key considerations that the participants have identified in the Zouhourri square as positive factors contributing towards the creation of a more inclusive and accessible city centre are:

- **Adequate Lighting:** the lighting in the square contributes towards a safe space that makes people feel safe to visit from the morning until later in the evening/night.
- **Green space:** sports withing the square have been used to plant trees and add green in the square to create a more relaxing and friendly environment. These spots are limited and it would be nice if more green was present within the square.
- **Accessibility ramps and slopes:** all parts of the square are fully accessible.
- **Public Toilets:** there are clean, public toilets; no gender-neutral toilets.

During the workshop, the facilitators shared with the participants the architecture study that was created before the creation of the square. Using this study, the participants were able to explore further on the inclusion and accessibility measurements they identified and analyse what changes need to take place in the surrounding areas to contribute towards creating a safer, more friendly and accessible city. At this stage the participants shared their concerns that although the Zouhourri square was created with inclusion and accessibility in mind, the surrounding area does not have the same elements:

- **Lack of adequate Lighting:** the centre of Larnaka (and particularly the older neighbourhoods) has a lot of places that are very dark, and there isn't enough lighting; walking at night might cause stress and a feeling of being unsafe/vulnerable.
- **Parking lots:** not enough parking lots; not enough lighting.

- **Accessibility:** unfortunately, the old neighbourhoods of the centre of Larnaka are not accessible to disabled people; no pavements; the streets are partly destroyed etc.
- **Transportation means:** although there have been attempts to increase public transport, with the use of technology (apps, live schedule etc.); and more modern buses etc. there are still not many night buses, and the schedules are not frequent and flexible enough to cover the needs of citizens.

While discussing these elements, some of the participants realized that although these issues are part of their daily lives, they never thought about them in such detail, neither were they ever asked to propose solutions (or even think that citizens can and should have) an active role in discussions and local developments related to public infrastructure in their cities. What most of the participants stated, is that the problems that they have identified in the surrounding area (the old town/centre of Larnaka and an area also known locally as Tourkomahallas) are only a few of the wider problems that the town is facing. They have also observed houses that need renovation, pavements that are broken or incomplete, a lack of general green spaces around the city and these are just some of the examples that need to be improved in the centre of Larnaka.

Some of the potential solutions that the participants discussed included:

- Creating a safe space for citizens to discuss issues in their local communities and share their experiences on how urban planning infrastructure affect their daily routines.
- Creating local committees to map areas with specific concerns and issues such as the lack of adequate lighting in some parts of the town, buildings that need renovations etc.

The Policy Lab served as a way for the participants to interact with their local environment and explore the city centre of Larnaka, exploring things related to the urban infrastructure of their city. The Policy Lab had a 'practical' and more 'hands-on' character which enabled the participants to engage with the topic of discussion, contribute positively in the identification of possible solutions and familiarise

themselves with some of the existing gaps in the inclusion and accessibility of their city.

Policy Labs on 'How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility' in Italy

Background information:

Italy is facing similar issues to the ones observed in other European countries in regards to promoting and creating a gender inclusive environment in urban

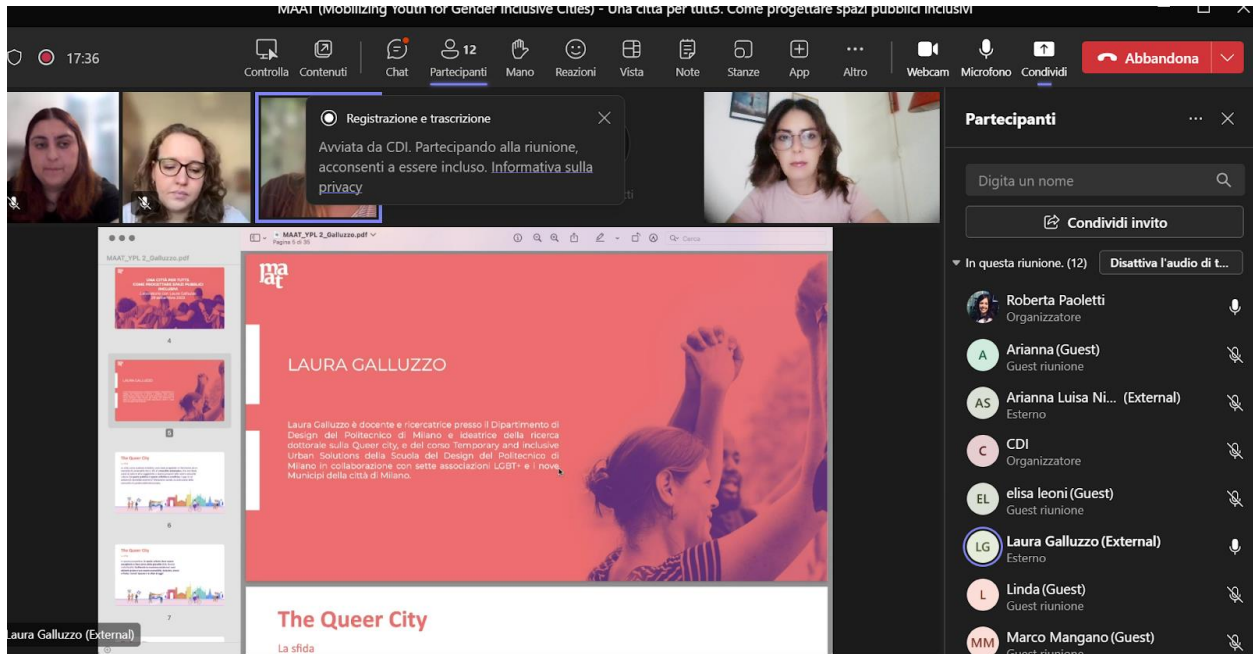


31

mobility. The covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted the national transport system in Italy. Physical spacing, transport restrictions and stay-at-home guidelines have highlighted a pre-existing unfairness and discriminatory system, which followed a pro-car culture, that defined a century of Italian urban planning (Nikitas et al., 2021). Some of the most positive outcomes in regards to urban planning is the introduction of pro-bicycles policies that took place as a result of the increase in using bicycles as a means of transportation during (and after) the outbreak of the global pandemic (Ibid.).

In addition, Italy has followed Sweden's example in exploring the role of women as agents for sustainable transport (Kronsell et al., 2015). This is because recent studies have shown that women's transportation behaviours, on average, have lower environmental impact than men's (Ibid.). It has also been observed that women have a stronger preference in improving sustainability and tend to be more active in initiatives and groups that work towards this goal (Ibid.).

The Policy Labs implementation:



32

In Italy two policy labs were held on 'How women are penalised in terms of urban mobility', with a total of 24 participants. The Policy Labs were organised and delivered by Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini in the format of webinars.

The first webinar 'A CITY FOR ALL. HOW TO DESIGN INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES' was delivered on the 29th of September 2023, and it was facilitated by Laura Galluzzo – a lecturer and researcher at the Department of Design of the Politecnico di Milano. Laura is also the creator of the Queer City Laboratory, a co-design workshop collaborating with nine city halls in Milan.

The second webinar 'MOVING FREELY IN THE CITY' took place on the 2nd of October 2023, with the participation of Chiara Belingardi – lecturer on 'Post-metropolitan Territories as Emerging Urban Forms: the Challenges of Sustainability, Habitability and Governability' at the University of Florence. She is also a lecturer at the Sapienza Faculty of Engineering at the University of Rome, teaching a course on Sustainable Community Planning.

The experts were chosen with the aim to inspire participants to express themselves at the Policy Labs and learn more about urban mobility and gender inclusion. The experts discussed their own projects, and offered insights to existing data and statistics on public transportation in their cities, as well as challenges in creating gender inclusive cities and potential ways of overcoming these challenges.

Both webinars lasted for approximately three hours each and they were divided into two main parts: a) the initial presentation and speech of the guest speakers/ experts;

b) followed by an interactive workshop at which the participants worked in groups. Elaborating further on topics related to urban mobility, transportation and gender inclusion.

To recruit participants Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini used the Eventbrite platform, the largest online platform for organising and promoting events. In addition, they organised online social media campaigns to share information about the webinars and recruit young participants. Instagram posts about the Policy Labs have reached 872 accounts, while the Instagram stories reached over 2400 views.

There was a total of 24 participants that took part in the webinar; 22 women and 2 men. The participants had a particular interest in politics and social and civil engagement and their background was in fields like political science, international cooperation, gender studies, architecture and design. Many of the participants have studied or worked abroad which gave them a broader idea of critical issues in regards to urban mobility and gender inclusion and accessibility in other cities and in comparison, to Italy.

The participants focused mainly on group discussion and group work and the participants explored a variety of critical issues related to urban mobility in their cities and ways to help create a more inclusive and accessible transportation system. All participants showed a spontaneous interest in engaging in the group discussions and the facilitators and guest speakers played the role of icebreakers

On the first webinar 'A CITY FOR ALL. HOW TO DESIGN INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES', the participants examined how urban space should embrace diversity to give the possibility of enjoying the space to as many people as possible. An inclusive city facilitates social cohesion among its inhabitants and is consequently safer.

Designing with diversity in mind requires a bottom-up approach in which the final users become co-designers. The best way of achieving this is to involve members of the local community in the creative process. Information about a design-for-all approach is fundamental in teaching professionals, students, and institutions about urban planning and urban mobility to achieve inclusion and accessibility. The participants in the first webinar focused on identifying ways to improve women's experience in public transport:

- How cities can improve safe public transportation for women.** The participants discussed about different Italian cities, including Rome, Bologna, Milano, Torino and Messina. Then they were separated into groups and investigated ideas and solutions for improving public transportation safe use for women from the point of departure until the point of arrival; they focused on how raising awareness of gender-based violence can improve perceptions of danger within cities and facilitate nighttime travel (for women and LGBTQIA+ people). The Group also compared the tools active in different Italian territories to reduce gender-based violence and their potential improvement.

The second webinar 'MOVING FREELY IN THE CITY' explored how well-designed mobility can enable people experience their cities in a different way and help create more positive opportunities for urban living. Unfortunately, the current experience of freedom of movement is not equal for all community members and this is a phenomenon observed throughout Europe. It would therefore be beneficial to explore this topic further. Women's mobility, for example, differs from men's in terms of modes of transportation used (care mobility vs production mobility), routes taken, and safety requirements. During the second webinar, the participants were divided into groups and each group focused on a particular issue:

- **Designing an awareness campaign on social media to encourage the use of public transport among women.** The participants discussed about three Italian cities; Rome, Padova and Bergamo. The group worked towards identifying ways to challenge existing gender stereotypes and explore the reality of women travelling alone at night and find out more about their experiences in public transportation means. An awareness campaign that will highlight women's experiences and offer an understanding of how different members of a local community experience public transportation is necessary to show that these issues are real and many people experience them in their daily lives. In addition, an increase in night buses is also necessary to make transportation easier at night. The participants have also explored ways to create a green and sustainable transportation system by exploring ways to reduce pollution.
- **How can spaces in a school be inclusive?** The participants of this group have focused primarily on Bologna and they discussed transportations and disabilities. The group was created by a local teacher and her students. They explained how their school administration reconstructs outdoor areas by paying attention to those with limited mobility and specific gender needs. Their aim was to promote the development of a sense of community and raise concern for outdoor space and the need to understand space as a shared benefit among students in schools rather than as a benefit for only some of the students.

At this stage it is important to note that the majority of the participants of the Policy Lab reported some form of direct or indirect experiences of sexism, racism, and homophobia in public spaces. They explained that despite these experiences they were never given the opportunity to think about concrete ways to contribute to a better inclusive city, through a bottom-up approach.

The participants have also stated that societies must move away from the existing, almost universal masculine politics and spread awareness amongst the policy making community about the need to create more inclusive and open societies.

In regards to accessibility and transportation more particularly, developing solutions for inclusive mobility necessitates a multifaceted approach. To begin with, a community must identify its target groups and understand the needs of vulnerable

population using surveys, interviews, and focus groups to collect data on the unique mobility issues these groups experience. Stakeholders' engagement is also essential through collaboration with local organizations and government agencies responsible for transportation.

Data collection and analysis, as well as measurable goals, are required to define and achieve specific objectives. In this regard, it is vital to prioritize areas of focus:

- **Determine which critical areas or neighbourhoods require the most urgent mobility enhancements.** The evaluation must be continuous to improve strategies, and new technologies could support this evaluation. Participants also feel that conducting pilot initiatives in specific locations is beneficial for evaluating their viability and impact and gathering feedback from users and stakeholders to modify the solutions.
- **Accessibility is a matter of infrastructure enhancements and affordability:** implementing fare subsidies for low-income individuals and financial incentives for using accessible modes are some strategies.
- **Monitoring the enforcement of accessibility laws and regulations:** to guarantee equitable access to transportation services, expanding successful programs and initiatives to cover more areas and reach a wider audience, and pursuing grants and funding from government agencies, philanthropic organizations, and private sector partnerships to support expansion can be valuable solutions.

Overall, participants have shown a positive attitude toward the concept of inclusive cities. They strongly believe this could promote social equity, reduce inequalities, and increase personal and professional growth opportunities.

They also embrace digital mobility solutions, but they remain sceptical about AI and the implications it might have on privacy. They have also raised concerns in regards to the inefficient management of public funds and the high costs of living which result in exclusion and bad education and health benefits for many community members.

Particularly interesting is the fact the Policy Labs in Italy have served as the beginning of new collaborations. More particularly, the Istituto Enrico Mattei (San Lazzaro di Savena - Bologna, Italy), will work with the students who participated in the Policy Lab webinars on the creation of an outdoor study space handed over by the municipality to entrust the school with an urban redevelopment project.

The inclusive garden study room will include ramps for people with disabilities, toilets for all genders, and spaces dedicated to health information for those students who may have health-related impediments but still want to feel free to participate in an open-air work group.

The inclusive garden study room will focus on accessibility and environmental sustainability by using energy-saving lighting and QR codes for civic education

signage (all-gender bathrooms, respect for garden biodiversity, separate waste collection, and reuse of materials).

Inclusivity in urban transport systems means guaranteeing fair opportunities for all commuters; these include reducing violence and harassment on public transit, ensuring safer nighttime commutes, and providing clear, targeted, effective communication among all the stakeholders.

As stated by the participants, a future well-functioning transport system should be eco-sustainable and support social equality by supporting all people to access work and education opportunities, healthcare, social services, culture, and entertainment.

Therefore, a gender-sensitive approach to transport policy is necessary to achieve sustainability in transportation, enhance social inclusion, and contribute to social justice.



Policy Labs on ‘How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility’ in Serbia

Background information:

Active transport has numerous environmental and health benefits. However, these benefits are not evenly distributed across the population because its utilisation is strongly linked to a person’s socioeconomic and cultural factors. Through the lens of intersectionality, recent studies have analysed how gender and interactions with other socioeconomic and cultural factors influence a person’s decision to utilise

active transport in urban settings (Yuan et al., 2023). In general, women with lower socioeconomic status tend to walk more out of necessity (Ibid.). Women with higher socioeconomic status, higher education level, more free time, and access to safe and convenient infrastructure tend to cycle more (Ibid.). Gendered social and cultural factors might also deter some women from active transport (Ibid.). Taking these results into account to advance urban planning policies could help the development of community-based programmes that would empower women and girls, build safer environments for all individual users and adapt more inclusive cultural narratives around active transport campaigns.

A report conducted by the Serbian Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, titled as “Gender Equality in Transport in Serbia”, aims to provide evidence-based policies to address gender inequality in transport (Republic of Serbia, 2019). Transport is one of the key sectors that influences access to resources. Consequently, gender specific capacities for mobility are critical for participating in the economic and social aspects of a community as well as for the personal wellbeing and the quality of life of a city’s citizens. Implementing a gender perspective in transport policy planning is a pioneering approach in the Serbian context (ibid.).

The Policy Labs implementation:

As previously mentioned, in Serbia the Policy Labs were organised by Placemaking Western Balkans on the 19th of May 2023. Placemaking Western Balkans delivered one half-day physical event at the Faculty of Landscape Architecture in Belgrade, where they hosted and delivered four different Policy Labs, one on each of the ‘Mobilizing Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities’ topics.



For the Policy Lab on gender equality, women and urban mobility more particularly, the group of participants focused on discussing the use of many public transport lines (by women) which run through the Mekenzijeva Street. In addition to that, the group was discussing the presence (or absence) and quality of other mobility modes, such as cycling and driving, also from women's perspective.

During their group discussion the participants have identified some major risks and issues in the neighbourhood, in regards to urban mobility, studying their effects and impact on the life of women:

- **Public transport misbehaviour:** the participants have discussed that behavioural change is difficult to achieve, but they identified a crucial need for the creation of safe spaces in public transport, particularly for women and young girls.
- **Better equipment and spaces:** in addition to the existing environment and behavioural linked conditions, spaces and equipment connected with public

transport such as stop signs, lanes, sidewalks, waiting rooms are not in good condition. There is a very important need to provide new, more pleasant spaces and transportation related means to help passengers, particularly women, disabled people, the elderly and families, to feel more welcome and benefit from using public transport. During their group work, the participants suggested and drew some infrastructure solutions which could be used to improve the existing conditions.

The participants of this Policy Lab are mainly engineering students, and they showed the willingness to continue their involvement with gender-responsive urban mobility although they shared their concern that bringing a social, and more particularly a gender-related aspect, in the field of engineering might be challenging.

To conclude, the participants have raised some major issues in regards to public transport and gender equality, such as the lack of safe spaces, the lack of adequate equipment and the lack of areas where people can walk and move around without using a car. To address these issues, the participants have sketched new designs and infrastructure which could help the creation of a more friendly, safe and accessible neighbourhood.

Policy Labs on 'How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility' in Romania

Background information:

Sustainable urban mobility is one of the main challenges and a topic of concern for many EU cities. There are strong links between increased sustainable urban mobility on the one hand, and economic growth and reduced environmental pollution, on the other. According to a study from the European Court of Auditors (2020), there are various factors that contribute to the unequal and inequitable urban mobility for women. A significant factor discussed in the study is personal safety. Women often face risks and threats in public spaces, such as sexual harassment, assaults and other forms of crimes (Ibid.). These aspects are negatively affecting women's freedom of movement and force them to adopt self-improvement strategies, avoiding certain areas or refrain from moving on certain hours of the day. Thus, women are penalized in terms of their access to jobs, services, education or other social activities (Ibid.). Another important aspect that was identified during the research is the lack of availability and good quality of public transport infrastructure. Women face difficulties in ensuring efficient and convenient mobility because transport networks are not sufficiently accessible or adapted to their specific needs (Ibid.). For example, deficiencies in public lighting, bus stations or trains without facilities for women, such as toilets or safe waiting areas, prevent women from feeling safe and using public transport effectively.

The study also highlighted inequality in the distribution of urban infrastructure and services. Women's residential areas, especially the most disadvantaged, may be located at great distances from urban centres, educational institutions, workplaces or other essential facilities. This creates an increased reliance on public transport or other modes of transport, which may be expensive and unsuitable for their needs.

It is essential for more women to take an active role in the urban planning and decision-making process in order to help take into account the specific perspectives and needs of women in urban mobility and planning.

The Policy Labs implementation:

In Romania the Policy Lab on 'How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility' was organised by Helixconnect, in Timisoara on the 21st of June 2023. The Policy Lab took place in person and it brought together 12 young people, actively engaged in their local community as volunteers, youth workers and as members of local youth initiatives.

During the recruitment phase, Helixconnect used particularly the social media as these are tools used by young people on a daily basis. As a result, a Facebook event was created and it was promoted using Facebook and Instagram. In addition, Helixconnect sent some targeted invitations to local stakeholders and youth workers to ensure the participation of people with diverse backgrounds.

It is important to note, that Helixconnect organised all its Policy Labs on all topics on the same day and as a result the participants knew each other already and there was no need for additional ice-breakers and introduction sessions. In regards to urban mobility and gender inclusion, the participants did not have prior knowledge and they spent some time at the beginning of the Policy Lab to research existing policies and become more informed about the links between the urban mobility mechanisms and planning of a city and gender inclusion, accessibility and safety within the city. Some of the topics the participants discussed in their groups include:

- Women-focused options in ride-hailing apps: The inclusion of features like "Women for Women" in platforms such as Bolt, Uber, or other ride-sharing services was mentioned as a good thing.
- Lack of street lighting in certain areas, such as the Soarelui zone, leading to safety concerns.
- Safety in taxis and ride-hailing services: Participants expressed the need for protection measures for both drivers and passengers, such as physical barriers between front and back seats. The absence of surveillance cameras in public transport was also noted.
- Inadequate spaces for parents with strollers or pregnant women in public transportation.
- Concerns about safety and harassment in taxis and ride-hailing services. Lack of support or initiatives explicitly focused on women's safety, like "Bolt for Women."

- Women needing to take longer routes on foot to avoid unsafe areas.
- Issues of catcalling and harassment.
- Longer travel times due to cautious driving, stopping for errands or dropping off children at school.
- Challenges with harassment in taxis and ride-hailing services.
- High steps on trains and trams.
- Need for more resting/feeding areas in public spaces.

The discussion revolved mainly around the challenges and issues faced by women in urban mobility, although more broader topics in regards to accessibility, particularly for older people and persons with disabilities were also discussed. Participants highlighted various areas where improvements and interventions are needed to ensure safer, more inclusive, and accessible urban transportation systems. The observations and suggestions made during the workshop shed light on the need for policy changes, infrastructure modifications, and awareness campaigns to address the specific challenges faced by women in urban mobility. Some of the main solutions and suggestions for further policy medications include:

- **Different colour and sound for seats designated for pregnant women on buses:** This idea suggests introducing visual and auditory cues to indicate seats reserved for pregnant women on buses. By making these seats easily identifiable, other passengers can offer their seats to pregnant women, ensuring their comfort and well-being during the journey.
- **Baby carriage ramps with buttons in buses:** This idea aims to improve accessibility for parents with baby carriages when using public transportation. Installing ramps with buttons in buses would make it easier to board and disembark with baby carriages, ensuring a more inclusive and user-friendly public transportation experience.
- **Surveillance cameras in public bathrooms and public transportation:** This idea proposes the installation of surveillance cameras in public bathrooms and on public transportation to enhance safety and deter potential incidents. By ensuring a monitored environment, it can help prevent harassment and improve overall security.
- **Walking buddy:** Establishing a walking buddy program where individuals can volunteer to accompany women who feel unsafe walking alone, providing them with a sense of security and companionship.
- **Neighbourhood watch:** Encouraging the formation of neighbourhood watch groups to promote safety and vigilance within communities, creating a network of support and reducing the risk of harassment or incidents.
- **Restructuring public transportation for safety and efficiency:** Implementing measures to improve the safety and efficiency of public transportation systems, such as increased lighting, surveillance cameras, and security personnel. This would enhance the overall experience and ensure a safer environment for women.

- **Identifying unsafe areas and increasing police patrols:** Conducting assessments to identify areas with high rates of harassment or insecurity and increasing the presence of police patrols during nighttime in these locations to deter potential incidents.
- **Implementation of "Women for Women" in ride-hailing services:** Advocating for the implementation of features like "Women for Women" across all ride-hailing platforms, ensuring that women have the option to request female drivers for increased safety and comfort.
- **Positive examples from other sectors:** Drawing inspiration from successful accessibility initiatives in other sectors, such as electric ramps at malls or staircases with wider spacing, and adapting them for public infrastructure to enhance accessibility.
- **Street curbs at road level:** Redesigning curbs to be level with the road surface, making it easier for individuals with strollers, mobility aids, or luggage to navigate without barriers.

To identify these solutions participants engaged in brainstorming sessions and they conducted research on policies and mechanisms that exists in other cities and which could potentially be adapted in their own community as well. They explored various aspects of urban mobility, identified key issues and challenges and then they collectively generated policy ideas to address them. During this process, the participants displayed a strong sense of concern and empathy towards the issue of how women are penalized in terms of urban mobility. They recognized the experiences of women facing safety risks, harassment, and accessibility challenges, and expressed a shared commitment to creating a more equitable and inclusive urban environment. The solutions they suggested aimed to provide safer transportation options, enhance infrastructure accessibility, and promote awareness and positive role modelling.

Also, the participants emphasized the importance of engaging in dialogue, raising awareness, and advocating for policy changes and infrastructure improvements to address the identified issues.

To conclude all participants expressed a desire to continue working on this topic. They recognized that addressing the challenges faced by women in urban mobility requires ongoing efforts and sustained advocacy. They expressed interest in further collaboration, participation in relevant platforms, and engagement with decision-makers to ensure the implementation and monitoring of the proposed solutions. Overall, the Policy Lab was a productive and enlightening experience and the solutions discussed during the workshop hold great potential to create positive transformations in urban environments, ensuring that women can move freely, safely and with dignity. It is important to reach out to stakeholders and work with them to implement necessary changes that will lead to more equitable and inclusive urban mobility for all.

Policy Labs on ‘How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility’ in Cyprus

Background information:

Cities have been designed to fit the needs of able-bodied, generally male, users. Women, however, experience a city differently than men. As a result, women and young girls often find it more difficult to access employment, education, care services and often even leisure activities (Kouame, 2023). This is because urban mobility systems and public spaces in most countries are not safe and inclusive. Nicosia is currently working on plans to revamp its urban mobility, aiming to create more attractive and inclusive public transport in order to connect the historical centre of the city with the surrounding urban areas (Kollinger, 2021). Under this plan, Nicosia is gradually changing its Public Transport system additional bus lanes as well as campaigns to promote the use of bikes and other means of transport (Ibid.). Traffic congestion, particularly during rush-hours, is a problem that affects the quality of life of many citizens in Nicosia (Andreou, 2021). As a result, a new Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan is under development with the aim to meet the mobility needs of people and ensure a socially equal structure for all, particularly for vulnerable groups that might face additional challenges in their daily life (Ibid.).

In an attempt to promote sustainable means of transport, a set of workshops were developed in Nicosia to promote cycling as a healthy and sustainable mode of transportation (Philippou, 2022). What made a real difference in these workshops, was that cycling was promoted as a symbol of freedom, safe and inclusive communities that could promote and protect women’s rights (Ibid.). The workshops were delivered with the participation of women from both Cypriot communities, the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, which offered an even more inclusive character to this initiative (Ibid.).

The Policy Labs implementation:

In Cyprus, the Policy Lab on ‘How women are penalized in terms of urban mobility’ took place at a youth centre in Ayios Dometios with the involvement of 11 participants. Citizens in Power chose the location strategically as in Ayios Dometios public transportation means are limited and it’s a place where many families of migrants and young asylum seekers are residing.

The participants of the Policy Lab involved mainly young people with an interest in the arts, including some theatre and music young teachers and students, as well as one architect and one civil engineer. All of them knew each other from previous activities they did at the youth centre and as a result, there wasn’t a need for an ice-breaker activity. Interestingly, some of the participants have taken part in other Policy Labs as part of the ‘MAAT: Mobilising Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities’, which highlight their engagement with the project and their willingness to remain involved with the upcoming developments.

The Policy Lab was delivered in three parts. Firstly, the facilitator presented the project and the aim of the Policy Labs. Then the participants were divided into two groups and they spend approximately 30 minutes familiarising with the neighbourhood around the youth centre. As they were walking in the neighbourhood, they were instructed to map the area, find close stops for transportation means, identify places that could help increase socialisation in the area and find potential obstacles and challenges that young women and vulnerable community members might face in their daily routine.

Following their walk around the area, the participants returned and they were tasked with discussing about the issues they identified and create an action plan with solutions which the local administration could follow to help create a more inclusive and accessible community. The group work lasted for approximately one hour and then there was an additional, 30 minutes for both groups to present their action plans.

Some of the main problems in regards to urban mobility and how it affects inclusion and the accessibility of the neighbourhood of Ayios Dometions are:

- **Absence of pavements:** the participants have noted that they saw many people walking in the street, as there are no pavements next to main roads which makes it dangerous for the local residents, especially for children, older people and disabled persons.
- **Absence of bicycle routes:** There are no spaces dedicated to bicycles, which makes it more difficult and dangerous for anyone who want to use a bike as transportation means.
- **Bus stops are located only in the main street:** there aren't any bus stops in the neighbourhood. The only bus stops in the area are the ones in the central road. This is particularly challenging if you consider the lack of pavements which make it more difficult to move around the area. There are places that require more than a 30 minutes' walk to be reached from the bus stop in the central road of Ayios Dometions.
- **Not enough buses:** bus routes are limited and the timetable is not very flexible, which requires very careful planning. There are approximately 40 minutes between each bus that stops at Ayios Dometions, and the last bus is at 21.40. There are no night bus services in the area.
- **Not enough lighting in the streets:** this offers an additional challenge for people leaving in the Ayios Dometios neighbourhood, as they are often forced into walking as their only option of moving around the area. Yet, there are no pavements and not enough lighting which makes it more challenging and often exposes local residents to real risks and dangers as they have to walk in the road next to the traffic.

In their action plans to address these challenges, the participants suggested:

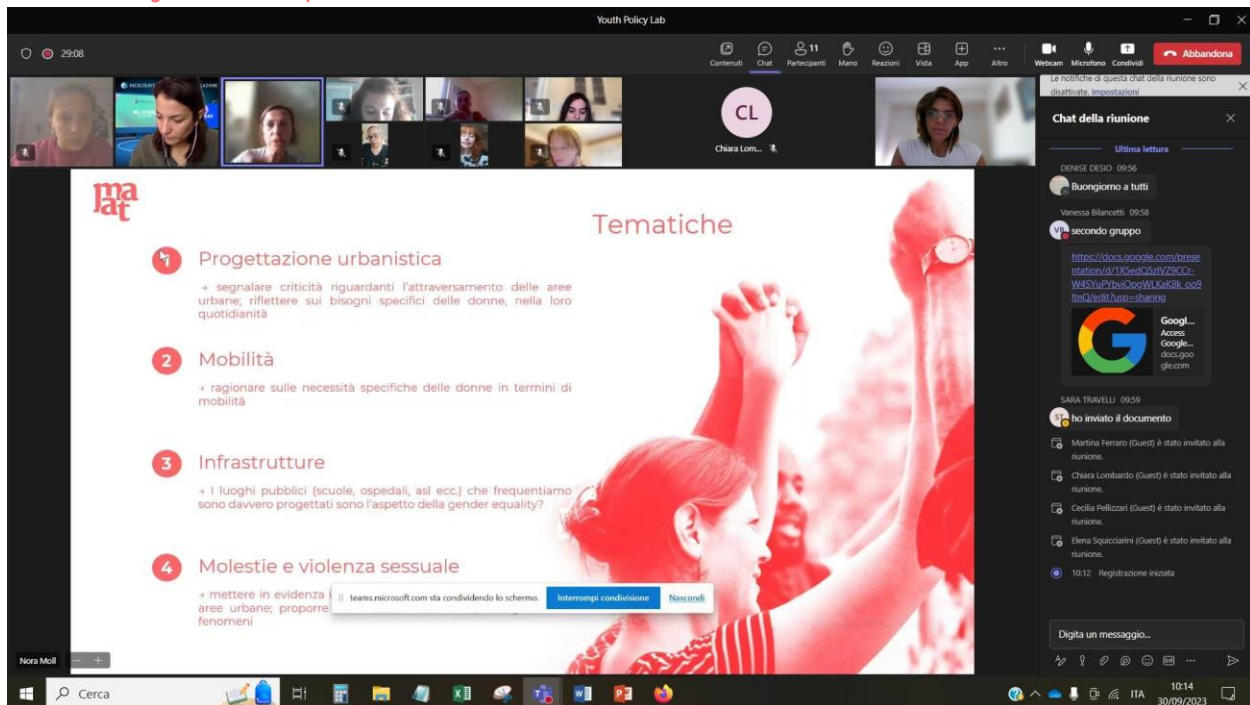
- **Consultation meetings between the local government and municipal services and neighbourhood residents:** by bringing community members together with the policy making community will help policymakers and professionals in city planning and designing to realise some of the issues and needs that community members experience in their daily lives.
- **A fresh approach in re-designing parts of the neighbourhood:** it is crucial to create new infrastructure and create pavements and sidewalks in the main roads of the area. There are many residents in Ayios Dometions, particularly young migrants, who are forced to walk in the street as there are no pavements in the main streets of the area.
- **More frequent transportation service:** one of the major issues that need to be resolved, not only in Ayios Dometions but in Cyprus more widely is the frequency of transportation means and the increase in their route. More connections are needed between the main cities as well as more frequent buses reaching all parts of local neighbourhoods.

Policy Labs on 'How urban planning is not considering women needs' in Italy

Background information:

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected women and gender and sexual minorities in Italy. The current situation led Italy to be the first recipient of the Next Generation EU Funding, which was set by the EU to help countries recover from the pandemic. As part of this process, the Economic and Finance Ministry conducted a gender assessment study, which identified a particular challenge in promoting a gender inclusive society in the Southern part of Italy (Ministero dell'economia e delle finanze, 2021). Some of the topics that were discussed in this study included the participation of women in the labour market, the employment of mothers, the asymmetry in family work, female graduates in STEM areas as well as women in situations of severe housing deprivation and the healthy life expectancy of women (ibid.).

The Policy Labs implementation:



46

In Italy, three Policy Labs were organised by Uninettuno; the two of them were delivered online and one was in-person. In total, 16 participants took part in the Policy Labs and 15 of them were women and the majority of them were students at Uninettuno and at the La Sapienza universities and they were studying Philosophy, Cultural Heritage, Engineering, Architecture and Psychology. As an introduction to the Policy Labs, the facilitators presented a Lab that took place in Vienna, investigating gender-friendly city planning as an example to help set up the discussion and engage the participants in peer-group discussions. The video can be accessed [here](#).

The first Policy Lab was delivered in-person on the 22nd of June 2023, with four participants. The other two Policy Labs took place online, in the format of webinars on the 27th and 30th of September.

During the first Policy Lab the participants have identified key main issues affecting women's inclusion and active participation in the society as a result of the existing urban planning mechanisms:

- **Rome is a big and extended city:** In Rome, crucial public services are not within walking distance from each other and there isn't an adequate public transportation system in place to help people move around. In addition, using the bus or the metro often involves delays and malfunctions. At the same time, using the bike as a way to move around in the city is not very recommended due to the traffic and lack of bicycle routes, particularly in the centre of the city.

- **Evident socio-economic differences in different parts of the city:** A key example of this issue, is seen in the quality of public schools in different parts of Rome. There are areas that schools are not adequately equipped, with destroyed infrastructure and a lack of space spaces for students and the education staff. These creates different experiences for students in each part of the city, with potential implication in their wider integration into the society.
- **Lack of public spaces where young people can come together:** Rome has promoted most of the city's public spaces, such as parks and squares, as touristic destinations which led to most areas being packed with tourists all year round. As a result, there are less cultural activities and free spaces local youth can use to meet and socialise in a calm and green space.
- **Time dedicated on personal free time is limited:** Rome had turned into a busy city, and local residents are forced into a fast-paced lifestyle which often leaves them with very little time to spend on themselves. For example, it takes a long time to commute between neighbourhoods and business centres, resulting into less time to relax and undertake hobbies-related activities. These phenomena lead to higher stress and anxiety levels and they show the need for a balance between work and social life.
- **Obstacles in boosting social life:** The streets in Rome are packed with cars, with limited space for walking, meeting new people and socialising. As a result, social interaction and contact on a daily routine is more difficult.
- **Many residents have reported feeling unsafe:** Rome has many streets in the city centre that don't have adequate light and there are always signs about the name of the streets or directions towards public transportation stops. These create a feeling of unsafety, particularly for women and vulnerable communities.

Once they identified these key problems on the existing urban planning policies and mechanisms in their city, the participants decided to focus on one of these problems to explore further weaknesses and create their action plan for a more gender inclusive city. They decided to choose the lack of public spaces as their main topic to be addressed. As the participants explored this problem further, they discussed how public squares should become green spaces where people can hang out, meet and socialise instead of parking lots like the Piazza dei Sanniti. In addition, new campaigns are needed to direct tourists in other areas of the town that are less known, and create a new form of creative tourism industry that will allow to the existing tourist spots to breathe, become multi-cultural centres and help towards the development of a gender-inclusive, accessible and friendly city centre. Overall, there is a clear need to foster social interaction through new urban planning related policies in Rome; creating more green spaces, adding benches throughout public squares for people to sit and socialise, promote active participation through art and other activities.

The second Policy Lab focused on different problems throughout Italy which, again, show that many Italian cities are still far from becoming gender-inclusive cities:

- In Agrigento (Sicily) there is a lack of social services;
- In Brescia (Lombardy) the urban design is not well organised, there are narrow streets, with not enough lights and a lack of control by the police;
- In Montecatini (Tuscany) there is a lot of illegal forced prostitution on the streets, led by criminal organisations, which fed a sense of insecurity in the streets during night time.

Using different Italian regions and cities as examples, the participants of the second Policy Lab identified a variety of challenges and obstacles women face in their daily lives in Italy. Some of these examples include the lack of adequate lighting in parking lots and in electric and gas stations; no street lights at public transportation means' stops; no coffee shops or any other open service at the late evenings/nights for commuters to wait from busses, metro and trains; a lack of public toilets and a bad condition to the existing ones. Another topic that was particularly emphasised by the participants is that police is not visible in the streets and citizens do not feel they can trust the police with their safety, particularly for women and vulnerable population.

Some suggestions for addressing these issues, and promoting the active engagement and participation of young women in urban planning include:

- Cleaning and lighting the urban areas;
- Raising awareness especially of young people and having gender and sexual education in schools;
- Having more space for political debate to stimulate participation.

Despite their willingness to find out ways for youth to participate in the policy making process in their cities, the participants of the Policy Lab were aware that for such a solution to be feasible and successful there must be a change within local administrations. Currently, the majority of local administrators in most Italian cities are men and there is a general lack of diversity within the policy-making communities. The participants have called for more diversity in urban planning decision-making stating that women will be able to design different toilettes, taking into consideration the needs of women for clean and safe public toilets. In addition, more women within the police force will help women trust the police more and become open to talk about safety issues and share some of their personal experiences to help the police develop new policies to address criminal activity in the Italian streets. Another key challenge that affects the active participation of the youth in local urban planning is the general lack of funding for local infrastructures and an evident lack of interest for women's challenges and problems in urban spaces. Nevertheless, the participants argued that "an insecure city is a problem for everyone, not just for women". As a result, allowing residents and members of local communities to contribute to a positive change is necessary for the creation of



gender-inclusive and accessible cities. These Policy Labs offered an opportunity to young people to think about the problems women face in their society and identify possible solutions. For a successful change to be eventually achieved similar activities should continue to take place: workshops in schools; youth trainings; workshops at life-long learning centres and VET schools; local consultation sessions; interactive and participatory workshops within city centres.

In the final Policy Lab, the participants focused on additional problems which also contribute in the existing gender gaps in many Italian cities. Some of these include: insufficient police control; lack of preventative interventions in schools; dark streets; a lack of social and health services; inefficient public transports. As the participants argued all these issues nurture a widespread sense of insecurity and lack of safety and trust in the police and in the local governments, particularly for women and vulnerable population. It is also evident that different parts of cities, create different feelings and experiences for their residents. In some parts of the city, for example, places like train and metro stations; public toilets; parks might feel more dangerous.

Some of the problems in regards to urban planning and gender inclusion, have been discussed in all Policy Lab. Yet, each Policy Lab gave some unique solutions to these problems. The third Policy Lab proposed: new trainings for police officers and local legal services to be able to offer more support to vulnerable population and tackle crimes like sexual assault; renovation and reorganisation of urban areas, including adding more street lights, larger and more clean sidewalks etc.; create awareness campaigns in school and working places as well as online and media campaigns to help create safer streets and public transportation means.

Before these Policy Labs, the majority of the participants did not engage in political participatory workshops, which shows once again the lack of opportunities for the young people to participate in the policy-making process of their local community. In addition, thinking about and exploring issues related to urban planning through gender lens was challenging at first, but the participants managed to identify different solutions. One of the main solutions calls for the active involvement of community members and local residents in the work of public institutions and public fundings, so that they can be aware and contribute towards the developments of their city. As argued by the participants, the local government and public institutions need to invest in policies addressing the challenges of vulnerable people in the community as in the last thirty years social services, social housing and public education have received zero attention and they have been vastly defunded. Participants also expressed their feelings, saying that the dynamics in the local society have a patriarchal and individualistic structure, that needs to change through local initiatives and community-based actions.

Overall, the participants were engaged in the group discussions and they showed a willingness to continue working with the project and organise additional local actions to promote gender inclusion. The main outcome of the Policy Labs discussions was the fact that urban planning in Rome and in other Italian cities need

to take into consideration the construction of public spaces, to enable women and members of the LGBTQI+ community as well as disabled persons and older persons to move freely and safely across their cities. Gender neutral toilets, more street lights and better transportation means could be the main starting points for the improvement of local cities and urban spaces. In the long term, local governments should focus on improving social services, school education and adult training centres to spread awareness about gender inclusion and accessibility and enable the local community to engage with local policies.



Policy Labs on ‘How urban planning is not considering women needs’ in Serbia

Background information:

A gender-sensitive analysis of urban planning and design could encompass a range of existing local processes and practices, starting from decision-making and goal-setting processes, through conceptualization and development of planning solutions, to the practical inclusion and participation of all groups and communities of the public (Lalic et al., 2021). A new survey conducted by the UN Women, with a particular focus on Belgrade, titled “Cities for Women!”, contributed towards the mapping of the existing gender challenges and practical examples and helped the analysis of current policies and guidelines with the aim to promote gender-sensitive urban planning (Ibid.).

The objectives of the analysis of urban planning and design from a gender equality perspective are (Ibid.):

- Increasing understanding and knowledge of gender aspects in urban planning and design among all stakeholders (professionals, citizens, media).
- Clarifying and raising awareness about the specific needs of women, as well as other user groups, in the urban environment.
- Promoting and raising awareness about the need to integrate gender perspectives into urban planning and design.
- Analysing the applicability and adaptation of contemporary urban planning methodologies to the local context.
- Enhancing the capacity of urban planners to address gender challenges in the planning and design of public spaces.
- Encouraging urban planners, public services, and decision-makers to integrate mainstreaming principles into policies, projects, and sustainable urban development programs.

The Policy Labs implementation:

As previously mentioned, in Serbia the Policy Labs were organised by Placemaking Western Balkans on the 19th of May 2023. Placemaking Western Balkans delivered one half-day physical event at the Faculty of Landscape Architecture in Belgrade, where they hosted and delivered four different Policy Labs, one on each of the ‘Mobalizing Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities’ topics.

In regards to the Policy Lab on ‘How urban planning is not considering women needs’, the group of participants focused on discovering the insufficient of missing elements in public spaces in the Mekenzijeva Street which are not answering women’s needs, and sometimes even negating those needs. Some of the main topics discussed were urban furniture elements such as benches, accessibility ramps, and public space amenities such as public toilets.

More particularly, the Policy Lab participants created several design sketches of green areas identified as currently spots at which women feel unsafe. At the new sketches, attention was given to children’s playgrounds, public spaces for socialising and walks, re-designing main squares with adequate public space furniture and amenities that would consider the needs of women and vulnerable communities. The participants tried to address degraded and unsafe space and find solutions for re-designing and re-creating areas with currently poor architectural results, such as unlit passages, staircases and garages. Much of the current public lighting has been labelled as unsuitable and substandard from a safety point of view, making it stressful and unpleasant for women walking at night. Other parts of urban planning were also discussed, such as adapting new policy-making measures for gender-responsive spaces, and undertaking new and more detailed research to provide concrete data in Belgrade’s context in regards to urban planning and women needs.

To conclude, the Policy Lab realised that the topic of gender inclusive planning in cities’ design and planning is lacking and more gender-related data are needed to help improve the existing public spaces and create new areas which will cover the

needs, aspirations and possibilities of women in their local communities. The participants have expressed their motivation and willingness to remain involved with the project to understand better how to collect the right data on women needs, and how to apply that kind of knowledge in creating more gender-sensitive urban planning strategies.



Policy Labs on ‘How urban planning is not considering women needs’ in Romania

Background information:

A recent study conducted by the Government of Romania in 2020 has pointed out that women often face inadequate and unsafe public spaces, which limit their freedom of movement and active participation in city life (Government of Romania, 2020). Lack of adequate lighting, narrow or poorly maintained sidewalks, lack of rest spaces and interruptions in routes, as well as the lack of feeling of safety due to harassment and sexual assault, are all aspects that penalize women in using and accessing urban public spaces. The report also highlights inequality in access to urban infrastructure and services. Women may be disadvantaged in terms of the location of their homes in relation to centres of work, schools or essential services. This can create dependency on public transport or other forms of transport, with additional financial and time costs for women. Urban planning may also neglect the specific needs of women in terms of nurseries, kindergartens, health centres or other essential facilities for childcare and women's health. Decisions regarding urban development are often made without taking into account women's perspectives and experiences. This can lead to ignoring their needs and preferences and

perpetuating gender inequalities in urban space. To address these issues, this report emphasizes the need for an integrated and gender-sensitive approach to the urban planning process.

The Policy Labs implementation

In Romania, the Policy Lab on 'How urban planning is not considering women needs' was organised once again in Timisoara, with the same participants who took part in the other Policy Labs. So, there was a total of 13 participants, 11 of which were women and all of them were actively engaged in the community as volunteers, youth workers and/or members of local initiatives and groups.

In regards to the main topic of the Policy Lab, the participants did not have much previous knowledge about urban planning mechanisms and policies in regards to gender inclusion and accessibility. They therefore spent the first half of the Policy Lab looking into the existing policies, trying to identify their implications on gender inclusion. Some of the main topics and issues raised in the group discussion include:

- Reference at *Law No. 350/2001* on territorial planning and urbanism. In most local governments' policies, there is no specific mention of improvements tailored to the needs of women in cities, despite provisions addressing the creation of conditions to meet the special requirements of children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.
- The general urban development plan of Timisoara emphasises creative, sustainable, and inclusive development as a result of participatory efforts at the community level. However, the specific needs of women and LGBTQI+ members are not taken into specific consideration and they are not included in local action plans.
- Similarly, there is a lack of local action plans to enhance security measures, such as the placement of cameras and street lighting, to ensure safer urban environments for women, LGBTQI+ members, disabled people and other vulnerable community members.
- There is no mention of designated drop-off zones in front of local schools, where parents can safely drop off or pick up their children.
- The safety of parks and parking areas was also discussed as an important aspect that needs to be considered in urban planning to provide secure and comfortable spaces for women.

Once the participants identified these issues, they investigated and developed a list of potential solutions to these problems. Some of the solutions that were discussed in the Romanian Policy Lab on urban planning are:

- **Inclusion of women's specific needs in laws and urban development plans:** This involves the process of identifying and explicitly stating the requirements for creating urban spaces that cater to the needs and safety of women. It includes provisions for accessible infrastructure, well-lit public areas, and the integration of gender perspectives in urban planning policies.

- **Safe spaces for women in markets:** Markets play a crucial role in the local economy, and women are often active participants in this sector. Creating safe spaces for women vendors, such as incorporating anti-theft measures or panic buttons, can enhance their security and well-being while conducting business activities.
- **Gender-inclusive urban planning teams:** It is essential to have diverse representation in the teams responsible for developing urban planning strategies. Including women professionals with expertise in urban design, architecture, and community development ensures that women's perspectives and needs are incorporated into the decision-making process from the initial stages.
- **Designated drop-off zones near schools:** To address the challenges faced by parents when dropping off or picking up their children from school, designated areas should be created near educational institutions. These zones would allow parents to park for a short period, ensuring the safety of their children and reducing traffic congestion around school premises.
- **Improved maternity facilities:** Building new maternity facilities and renovating existing ones can provide better access to quality healthcare for women. These facilities should be designed to accommodate the specific needs of pregnant women, providing a comfortable and supportive environment for prenatal and postnatal care.
- **Childcare facilities in university campuses:** Establishing on-campus childcare centers can support young parents, especially mothers pursuing higher education. These facilities would provide a safe and nurturing environment for children, enabling parents to balance their academic pursuits with their parenting responsibilities.
- **Enhanced amenities in parks:** Parks should be designed to be more inclusive and family-friendly. This includes the provision of hygienic restrooms equipped with diaper-changing stations and designated areas for breastfeeding. Such amenities ensure that women, particularly mothers, can comfortably enjoy public spaces while attending to the needs of their children.
- **Promoting women's employment in construction and urban planning:** Encouraging job opportunities for women in traditionally male-dominated fields like construction and urban planning can promote gender equality and diversity in the workforce. This can be achieved through targeted recruitment programs, vocational training, and mentorship initiatives to support women's career advancement in these sectors.
- **Accessibility improvements in historical city centers:** Rehabilitating public spaces in historical city centers involves making them more accessible and user-friendly. This may include replacing uneven cobblestones with smoother pavements, eliminating obstacles, and ensuring that sidewalks and pathways are accessible for individuals with mobility challenges or parents with strollers.

- **Pedestrian overpasses with improved accessibility:** Constructing pedestrian overpasses with stairs and lifts in highly congested areas addresses the safety and mobility concerns of women. These overpasses provide safe and efficient options for crossing busy roads, accommodating individuals with strollers and those with mobility limitations.
- **Dedicated parking spaces for women:** Designing or renovating parking lots to include dedicated spaces for women can enhance their safety and convenience. These spaces should be strategically located closer to entrances, well-lit, and easily accessible, reducing the need for women to walk long distances in dimly lit or isolated areas.

During the Policy Lab, the participants gained a thorough understanding of the links between urban planning and gender inclusion and accessibility within a city which enabled them to offer in-depth solutions addressing various aspects of the daily life and routine of women within a society. Although in the beginning the participants faced challenges in finding possible solutions, they explored various aspects of urban mobility and they managed to identify feasible and impactful solutions drawing inspiration from existing initiatives in Timisoara, and from the EU more broadly.

To conclude, the Policy Lab on urban planning identified several solutions to help create a more inclusive and accessible city for women, which included the inclusion of women's needs in laws and urban development plans, active consultations with women in the community, the creation of safe spaces for women in markets, gender-inclusive urban planning teams, designated drop-off zones near schools, improved maternity facilities, childcare facilities in university campuses and enhanced amenities in parks amongst others. The group discussions were engaging and productive, with participants sharing personal experiences, concerns and innovative ideas to help create a gender inclusive society.



Policy Labs on 'How urban planning is not considering women needs' in Cyprus

Background information:

The new 2020-2025 EU policy for gender equality, aims to promote gender equality within city planning to address different problems and challenges that different genders might face in their everyday life ranging from violence and stereotypes, inequalities and pay gaps in the labour market, the health sector as well as in education and in policy-making (Michianakis, 2021). A public space is a form of a community which mirrors all the forms of discrimination and inequalities that exist within a society, and Cyprus is just the same (Kathimerini, 2023). A simple example is the fact that even the names of the roads are taken by famous men and the names taken by women are very limited (Ibid.).

To design cities that will work for women, it is important to understand all the different perspectives of urban life and consider women from a range of backgrounds to identify their problems and find ways to make cities better for everyone (Thompson, 2022). It is also important to remember that equality in numbers does not always lead to equity in the outcome, that's why more women are needed in leadership roles to address the real needs and problems that women face in contemporary cities from their root and not with numbers that might not address the real problem (Ibid.).

The Policy Labs implementation

The Policy Lab on ‘How urban planning is not considering women needs’ in Cyprus took place at the same day as the Policy Lab on ‘How urban public infrastructures don’t serve women’, on the 24th of September 2023, at Zouhouri Square in Larnaka. The Policy Lab was organised as part of a local festival, the MAZ(ouhour)I Festival, which aimed at promoting inclusion and interculturality through civic engagements, art, music and theatre.

The participants were recruited from the crowd that visited the festival and they were the same participants who took part on the Policy Lab on public infrastructure. The team of participants included university students, a civil engineer, an architect and two software engineers.

The Policy Lab was delivered in three stages:

- **Phase one:** the participants were recruited amongst the people who joined the MAZI festival. Although the Policy Lab was disseminated prior to the delivery day, there were no registration forms; so, we didn’t know from before who the participants would be. Once we formed a small team of participants by asking them if they would be interested in taking part in the Policy Lab, we introduced the project and the aim of the policy lab, giving them a basic introduction on issues relating to public infrastructure and urban planning, as well as on the links between these two topics and how solutions can contribute towards inclusion and accessibility – firstly on the policy level and then implemented on the infrastructure development of the city.
- **Phase two:** Then, we asked them to spend approx. 1 hour on their own (or in smaller groups) to walk around the square and the surrounding area, explore the centre of Larnaka, discuss with each other and identify issues as well as key examples that contribute towards a more inclusive and accessible city.
- **Phase three:** after that, we all came together as a group to discuss about the issues they identified and think of potential solutions to these problems.

The participants worked together throughout the three phases of the Policy Lab. Firstly, they were divided into smaller groups and walked around the centre of Larnaka to explore the area that surrounds the square; they tried to find green spaces; smaller squares that could be used by the citizens to promote interculturality; ways the citizens could actively engage in the policy-making procedures; street art etc.

Then they came back together as one group to discuss what they observed and explore some of the main issues they identified. At this phase, the participants were also asked if they know about local groups that represent the citizens to the local administration. Identifying the lack of representation of certain groups in policy-making procedures was one of the main things that was discussed during the Policy Lab although the participants were a bit reluctant at first to realise the lack of

representation of women and vulnerable community members in the local and national policymaking process.

This was quite surprising because the participants were able to identify many issues in Urban Planning during Phase 2, but they found it more challenging to identify solutions. They argued for the need for the active participation of under-represented communities in policy-making, as one of the primary and most important steps that should be taken for the creation of more inclusive communities.

The participants had time to observe the Zouhouri Square and familiarise with the peripheral area before joining the group discussion and thinking about possible solutions and action plans that could lead to a more inclusive and accessible city. While observing the inclusion and accessibility measurements that are currently in place at the square, the participants had access to the architecture study that discussed these issues and also explained the plans of the local government to use the square to promote inclusion, art, representation of different groups of the community and help their city become more open and accessible.

Nevertheless, the surrounding area lacks these elements and although the local government has stated that it aims to make changes throughout the centre to create a more accessible and sustainable city, there is a lack of transparency as to what steps are taken; if all genders are represented in policy-related meetings; if the citizens contribute actively in these decisions etc.

This issue is not observed only in the city of Larnaka. Cyprus has received a very low rate in relation to other EU countries on the inclusion of women and vulnerable groups in Policy and Governance related fields. According to the participants this is a problem that exists for many years in Cyprus and although they want to see a change, they didn't seem very positive that something would happen in the near future.

When asked to propose their own solutions and action plans, the participants have argued that the best solution would be to start by engaging the citizens in local initiatives and actions that could contribute in promoting or arguing for new policies on urban planning and development.

A key player in this process are schools, universities, local NGOs and initiatives etc. Creating awareness campaigns, interactive workshops, group discussions, and policy labs in public spaces could help citizens to feel more confident and safer in expressing their thoughts and representing their community.

Once these groups are established, they could request meetings with local government representatives or invite them to these meetings to establish a dialogue and ongoing communication between the citizens and the people living in the city, under-represented groups and the local government.

This solution would also be beneficial for the local government as it will offer them insights into the real needs of the city in regard to urban planning policies to promote inclusion, accessibility and sustainability.

Hopefully, a solution like this one would eventually lead to more women, members of the LGBTQI+ and members of other under-represented communities (i.e., migrants, disabled people) to become official members of the local government and undertake policy-making related positions.

Overall, the Policy Lab on Urban Planning was successful in identifying ways the city could create more policies to promote inclusion and accessibility, while also suggesting ways for citizens to become more actively involved in local policy-making and the urban planning of their city.

During this Policy Lab, participants realized that the representation of women, members of the LGBTQI+ communities as well as of other groups is a very real and present issue that has practical implications on how the local governments are formed and on the policies that are in place in regards to the planning and sustainability of cities. There is also a lack of transparency as to the conversations that take place when deciding new policies and strategies and on the steps that are currently taken to solve some of the existing issues.

What made this Policy Lab a success was the fact that the participants had the opportunity to interact with the environment, move around the area on their own and explore things that relate to the topic of discussion. As a result, the Policy Lab had a 'practical', more 'hands-on' character, and it wasn't purely based on a theoretical level. This contributed positively to the identification of possible solutions; because the participants were able to see and familiarize themselves with the problems on the ground, they could relate to these problems and think of innovative and realistic approaches to solve them, taking into consideration the citizens of the city.

Policy Labs on 'How women are more exposed to Sexual Assault in urban areas' in Italy

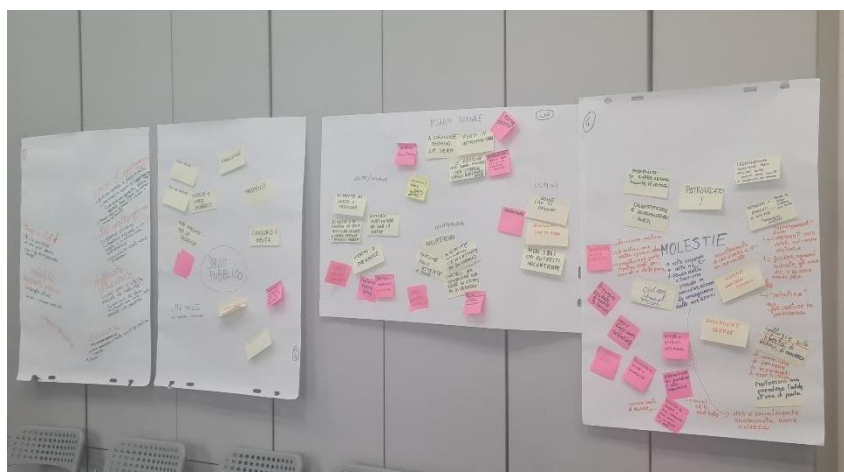
Background information:

Italy has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in 2013. In addition, the country has introduced and implemented a set of legislative measurements to fight against gender-based violence and tackle its roots (Greivio, 2018). Yet, according to the most recent statistics on violence against women, domestic abuse and femicide, more than 31% of women between 16 to 70 years old have experienced some form of sexual or physical violence in their lifetime (Istat, 2014). During the lockdowns that were imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic (March to June 2020), there was an increase of 119,6% compared to 2019 to the phone lines and online chats of anti-violence centres (Bertolucci, 2021).

Gender-based abuse is something that takes place everywhere. Recent studies found that street harassment represents one of the most pervasive forms of sexual violence, with close links to racism, homophobic and transphobic behaviour (Fileborn and O’Neil, 2023).

The Policy Labs implementation

The Policy Lab on women and sexual assault in urban areas in Italy was organised by Uninettuno. As previously described, Uninettuno organised a total of three Policy Labs, one physical event and two webinars. During these events, the participants discussed two topics from the ‘Mobilising Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities’ thematic areas; a) urban planning and women needs; and, b) sexual assault and women in urban areas. In total, 16 participants took part in the Policy Labs and 15 of them were women and the majority of them were students at Uninettuno and at the La Sapienza universities and they were studying Philosophy, Cultural Heritage, Engineering, Architecture and Psychology.



For the Policy Labs on women and sexual assault more specifically, the discussions evolved around the personal experiences of the participants. In the beginning, the participants tried to define urban harassment and discuss how it influences women’s life and their behaviour and actions within a community. Some of the words that came directly from the participants are:

- “Harassment is not simply physical; it can be a grope or just ‘feeling the presence of a man nearby’”;
- “It is any invasion of my personal spaces”;
- “It is any kind of comment which was not previously allowed, any sort of insult based on your gender”.

Participants had particularly discussed the phenomenon of catcalling, which is defined as a form of sexual assault that includes ‘compliments’, whistles, comments

on someone's body or clothes, staring at women, gazing, weird looks, men turning around as women pass by etc.

The participants have stated that these actions have a profound influence on women's freedom of movement, the decision of what to wear, where they choose to walk, how they think and reflect about their day, how they express themselves and how they act more broadly. For example, women participants said that sometimes they avoid using the bus during rush hours, or they refrain from participating actively in various conversations in their social circle, work or university.

Due to the time constraints of the Policy Labs, the participants discussed these three topics in more detail:

- **Night and Day time:** The night is felt as an unsafe time for most young women, especially if they are alone or they pass by isolated and dark places. Long waits at night buses are also creating a feeling of being uncomfortable, especially because the area or the people passing by might be perceived more as a threat rather than a support for women. In addition, it was argued that some bars and nightclubs where people hang out are not always safe for women and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Day time is not always a solution to these stressful feelings, as women have stated that they do not feel safe using public transport during rush and peak hours either. Some of the **solutions** that were discussed include:

- Reduced taxi fare for women at nights
- Better public transport system; more routes, increasing number of busses/metros
- Awareness campaigns about sexual assault particularly in bars and nightclubs
- Self-defence lessons offered by local authorities
- **Social hardship:** In central stations it is common to see people who experience social marginality, economic fragility, mental health problems, and situations of social hardship. Being a woman alone passing by stations during night time, or even at day, can be frightening and lead to additional stress.

Some of the **solutions** suggested by the participants include:

- More social programmes to help marginalised and vulnerable communities
- Improving social services to avoid social hardship
- Increasing salaries
- Creating new job opportunities
- Adapting new social housing policies
- Economic and social support for persons with lower salaries, homeless people and other members of the community who need more support
- **Indifferences:** In the majority of Italian cities there is a lot of indifference towards gender issues. It was argued that there is a general lack of awareness

or attempts from local governments to spread awareness and organise campaigns to promote women's' needs and enable a discussion on gender inclusion and the existing gaps. The participants offered various thoughts and potential **solutions** to help create a more inclusive and equal society:

- Signposts to raise awareness on gender-related issues but also to inform vulnerable community members about what to do in dangerous situations
- Communication campaigns to raise awareness on gender inclusion
- Counselling and support centres for women

Furthermore, the participants explained that urban spaces are invaded by sexualised women's images, evident at shop windows or ads, around the city. Hence, women's bodies are exploited on a daily basis, often without even realising the impact of these actions on women. Harassment and catcalling are a cultural legitimisation of virility as power on women's and LGBTQIA's bodies, and they are actions which reinforce the patriarchal system, which objectifies and sexualises women's bodies. For this reason, education, training programmes, and communication campaigns on sexual and gender issues have been strongly supported by all participants, as many issues are still a taboo in Italian society. It was also added that it is necessary to offer support to women, vulnerable population and minorities who experience sexual violence and harassment, increase funding for anti-violence programmes, women's houses and shelters for women and LGBTQIA+ people as well as offer better education from a young age.

A topic that led to disagreements between the participants was the role and the actions that the police should take in ensuring women safety. Some of the participants argued that the police lack training to deal with issues like women's safety and protection while others argued that the police often resort to violence and aggression which might intensify particular incidents.

To summarise, all the participants were actively involved in the discussion and they expressed their interest in remaining in touch with the project as they explained that there is a general lack of awareness about the challenges and pressures that women face in their daily life, and the youth does not have many opportunities to engage in policy-making and other local meetings to discuss gaps and brainstorm solutions for a more inclusive community.

Policy Labs on 'How women are more exposed to Sexual Assault in urban areas' in Serbia

Background information:

Sexual assault against women and gender and sexual minorities is a common incident in Serbia, just as it is across the globe. In 2007, a team of psychology students from the Philosophy Faculty in Belgrade, conducted a survey to explore some real-life cases of sexual assaults and try to identify measurements which could

prevent this form of violence and ways to offer support to the victims (Tanaskovic and Raceta, 2007).

The Policy Labs implementation

In Serbia all the Policy Labs were delivered at the same event by Placemaking Western Balkans on the 19th of May 2023. Placemaking Western Balkans delivered one half-day physical event at the Faculty of Landscape Architecture in Belgrade, where they hosted and delivered four different Policy Labs.

During the Policy Lab on women and their exposure to sexual assault in urban areas, the participants discussed the daytime/nighttime rhythms of the Mekenzijska Street, as a paradigm for the general perception of safety and security in urban areas. Phenomena such as whistling, catcalling, assaults and unwanted physical contact in public transport or pedestrian underpasses were pointed out, as some of the phenomena women experience as they move around in the city. Young women participants, raised their concerns over the growing number of negative incidents related to sexual assault they are dealing with on a daily basis.

The main part of the conversation focused on women's personal experiences, as the participants argued that behavioural change within a society is difficult to achieve. The key ideas discussed involved suggestions for improving the general perception of safety and security by organising awareness campaigns and reconstructing existing 'unsafe' places like garage entrances and underpasses. In regards to the general design and planning elements of the Mekenzijska Street, the participants focused on trying to figure out the "preventive design" measures, which will discourage the opportunities for sexual assault. Some of those ideas were quite simple e.g. better maintenance of the outgrown greenery in the squares and better maintenance of the public lighting.

To conclude, one of the main reasons for the existing gap in policies and awareness campaigns about sexual assaults and women's safety, according to the participants, is the lack of proper understanding of the relationship between unwanted and dangerous behaviour towards women and urban planning. It is necessary to define the obstacles in implementing and creating new policies for women's safety within the local community and all participants shared a common interest to remain connected and involved with the project to try to influence local policymakers and create a positive change in their city.

Policy Labs on 'How women are more exposed to Sexual Assault in urban areas' in Romania

Background information:

Recent research in Romania analysed the factors and mechanisms that contribute to the alarming phenomenon of sexual assaults (OSCE, 2019). Through the research carried out, a number of aspects have been identified that expose women to a

greater risk of sexual assaults in urban areas. A key factor discussed in these is the presumption of safety in public spaces. Women may feel less safe in urban areas because of the sexual assaults and verbal or physical harassment they may face. This may result in restricting their movement, avoiding certain areas, avoiding travel at certain times of the day, or taking extra precautions. Thus, women are exposed to an increased risk of sexual assaults and are limited in their freedom of movement in the urban environment. Another important aspect addressed is lighting and urban infrastructure. Areas with low or poor lighting, dark or poorly lit sidewalks, unpaved parks, or lack of safe and well-travelled routes can create opportunities for sex offenders to operate unnoticed and intimidate women. Inadequate urban infrastructure can increase women's vulnerability to sexual assault and perpetuate gender inequalities in the urban environment. It also emphasizes the role of gender attitudes and stereotypes in the perpetuation of sexual assaults. Prejudices and social norms that blame victims and justify the behaviour of perpetrators can create a climate that favours sexual assault. This can include patriarchal attitudes, rape culture or stigmatization of victims. These aspects can contribute to the increase of women's exposure to sexual assaults in urban areas and to an insufficient reaction of society in combating this phenomenon. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated effort between local authorities, the community and civil society. It is recommended to implement integrated strategies that address both aspects related to physical safety and urban infrastructure, as well as those related to changing mentalities and social norms. This may include investing in public lighting, creating safe and well-circulated public spaces (OSCE, 2019/ CCSAS, 2021/ Lamandi Et Al, 2016).

The Policy Labs implementation

Following the example of some of the other countries implementing Policy Labs under the 'Mobilising Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities' project, the Romanian partner Helixconnect organised all the Policy Labs on the same day, with all participants being involved in all of the Labs. As a result, the Policy Lab on women and sexual assault was attended by a total of 13 participants, 11 of which were women, actively engaged in the community as volunteers, youth workers and/or members of local initiatives and groups.

More specifically, the group discussed the following topics in regards to women's safety in Timisoara:

- **Easy access to pornography in urban areas:** easy access to pornography, according to the participants, is leading to aggressive behaviours as well as to the objectification and sexualization of women. This often results in verbal or physical harassment, particularly during warmer seasons when clothing is lighter.
- **Lack of comprehensive sexual education in schools:** the lack of sexual education from an early age is leaving individuals ill-equipped to navigate healthy relationships and boundaries.

- **Limited representation of women as role models:** often, women's value is reduced to their physical appearance rather than their skills and achievements. It has been observed that throughout education, women role models are not widely promoted.
- **Insufficient surveillance:** cameras, police presence, and street lighting in public spaces is very limited, creating an unsafe environment.
- **Complex and ineffective legislative procedures:** these often result in the societal and justice system failing to hold perpetrators accountable.
- **Absence of psychologists:** psychology-related professions are not adequately represented within police departments to provide necessary support to survivors of sexual assaults and violence.
- **Lack of self-defence training programs:** self-defence knowledge could empower individuals, and more particularly women, young girls and other vulnerable communities, with techniques for self-protection.
- **Inadequate options for reporting incidents to the police:** it was stated that women often do not have the option to choose the gender of the officer handling their case, which does not create a safe space for women to feel comfortable and talk about what they have experienced.
- **Absence of a dedicated safe spaces:** there is a general lack of safe spaces observed at the city level to provide support and resources for survivors.
- **Attitudes of teachers and school staff regarding sexual harassment behaviours:** the educational system and employees often might perpetuate a culture of silence and victim-blaming instead of empowering young girls to talk about their experiences and defend their rights.
- **Inadequate presence of school psychologists:** there aren't enough psychologists and trained educators who can educate students on consent, healthy relationships, and appropriate behaviour.
- **Sexual harassment in the workplace:** this is a very common factor often contributing to a hostile and unsafe environment for women.
- **Catcalling and street harassment:** these incidents are common event that women experience in public spaces.
- **Child abuse:** incidents of child abuse and inappropriate touching have been observed and reported in public spaces or public transportation.

After identifying these issues in regards to sexual assault incidents, participants discussed about potential solutions and policies which could help create a safer environment for everyone, and particularly for young girls and women:

- **"Sexual predators near me" app:** A mobile application developed by the police that provides information on the location of individuals with a history of sexual offenses, helping people stay informed and take precautions.
- **Partnerships with specialized NGOs for sexual abuse education in schools:** Collaborating with organizations experienced in this field to provide comprehensive education and awareness programs to students, teachers, and school staff.

- **Streamlined reporting procedures for sexual abuse:** Simplifying the process of reporting incidents of sexual abuse, ensuring that survivors feel supported and encouraged to come forward.
- **Creation of a platform or "safe site" for reporting dangerous areas:** Establishing a dedicated platform where residents can report and share information about unsafe locations, helping authorities take appropriate measures to enhance safety.
- **Education programs for teachers and school staff:** Implementing training programs that educate teachers about identifying and addressing sexual harassment, fostering a safe learning environment for students.
- **Stricter implementation of harassment laws:** Enforcing existing laws related to sexual harassment with greater rigor and ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.
- **Increased patrols in parks and neighbourhoods:** Deploying police patrols to enhance security and deter potential perpetrators in public spaces.
- **School psychologists as points of contact for harassment cases:** Designating school psychologists as primary contacts for students experiencing harassment, providing guidance, support, and resources.
- **Facilitated sessions by psychologists on harassment awareness:** Conducting sessions facilitated by psychologists to raise awareness among students about what constitutes harassment and how to protect themselves.
- **Dedicated spaces for women in fitness centres and bars to be mandatory:** Allocating specific areas within fitness centres and bars that cater to the needs and safety of women.
- **Security training for bar staff to be mandatory:** Providing training for bar staff on recognizing and addressing instances of sexual harassment, creating a safer environment.

Overall, the participants were challenged at first, as identifying potential solutions to the rising concerns over the growing numbers of sexual assault in modern urban places was not an easy task to do. They emphasised the importance of engaging in dialogue and other similar activities, like these Policy Labs, to raise awareness and advocate for policy changes and infrastructure improvements to help address the issue of sexual assaults. All the participants expressed a desire to remain involved with the project and continue working on all the topics, to contribute towards a more safe and equal community. The topic of women and sexual assaults, although not the main focus in all the Policy Labs it was always raised and discussed as links were identified with the other thematic areas, which is also a sign that sexual assaults are a very real and crucial topic that needs to be further explored in Timisoara.

Policy Labs on 'How women are more exposed to Sexual Assault in urban areas' in Cyprus

Background information:

A sexual assault is any form of unwanted sexual behaviour and which leads to a feeling of discomfort and stress for the person receiving the assault. It is also a form of lowering the self-esteem of the victim and showing a form of control and power over them (The Impossible Works Team, 2018).

Sexism refers to all forms of behaviour, acting and thinking that show that someone believes one gender is better than the others (morally, ethically, socially or in any other way) (Ibid.).

Only 15 out of the 31 European countries have a clear definition for rape. These countries include Belgium, Cyprus, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Luxemburg, Malta, Spain, Sweden and the UK (Amnesty International, 2022). All other countries define rape by other measures, such as whether violence or threat for potential violence was present (Ibid.). According to the most recent European Union figures, 1 in 20 women aged 15 and over have been raped, which equals to 9 million women, while 1 in 10 women aged 15 and over have experienced some form of sexual violence (Ibid.).

There are still different forms of gender inequalities present in contemporary Cypriot society, including a pay gap, unpaid domestic care for women, increasing numbers of trafficking and sexual assaults against women (Reporter, 2023). There are various steps that need to take place to achieve an inclusive and equal society, such as creating and implementing a more cohesive system to protect victims of sexual assault and organizing local campaigns to raise awareness and empower women to speak up (Ibid.).

The Policy Labs implementation

The Policy Lab on women and sexual assault in Cyprus was organised on the 5th of August at Fig Tree Beach at Protaras, a premier summer destination, that draws both Cypriot residents and tourists. Unfortunately, it has been marred by recurring incidents of sexual assault, violence, and rape accusations. Recognizing the urgency of the issue, Citizens in Power decided to convene a Policy Lab focused on Women and Sexual Assault in Protaras. The primary objective was to create a safe and supportive platform for women to share their experiences, collaborate in devising strategies for raising awareness, and engage in meaningful discussions about



potential prevention measures and safety enhancements to foster a greater sense of security among women.

The Policy Lab included a diverse group of 16 participants who actively engaged in the event and contributed to the group discussion. The participants represented a wide spectrum of ages and professions, reflecting the inclusivity of the local initiative. Of the 16 participants, 14 were women, and 2 were men. Additionally, 2 individuals were members of the LGBTQI+ community, one woman and one man. The professional backgrounds of the participants were equally diverse, encompassing various sectors. Our participants included university students, Erasmus+ volunteers, members of the CIP team, professionals from the private sector with roles in advertising, news media channels, and consultancy, as well as

members of other NGOs. Furthermore, one participant had expertise in the security field, bringing valuable insights to our discussion.

CIP's primary concern when organising this event was the safety of all the participants and as a result, precautionary measures were taken. While the organising team initiated a social media campaign and established a Facebook event to promote 'Women Reclaim the Night,' they deliberately shared the final event location and agenda exclusively through email, ensuring that this information was accessible solely to registered participants. The aim was to foster an inclusive and supportive environment during the Policy Lab, allowing all participants to express their opinions, share their personal stories, and actively engage in the discussion. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, the primary focus was on creating a safe and non-judgmental space where participants could choose to share their personal experiences and collaborate on finding solutions for addressing issues related to sexual violence in Cyprus.

Recognizing the sensitivity of the topic at hand, the organisers made a deliberate choice to conduct the Policy Lab as a single cohesive group. All 16 participants gathered in a large circular arrangement, allowing for open and informal interactions, where everyone could maintain eye contact and engage comfortably.

The 'Women Reclaim the Night' event was structured around three key stages. Initially, a member of the CIP team actively involved in the 'Mobilising Youth for Gender Inclusive Cities' project provided an introduction to the project and the broader subject of women's safety. This served as the foundation for the discussions that followed.

Following the introduction, participants embarked on a brief reflective walk. During this time, each participant had the opportunity to contemplate cases of sexual assault they had encountered, reflect on their personal experiences, and brainstorm potential measures and policies aimed at fostering a safer and more inclusive society. This interactive activity allowed participants to engage in introspection and contribute to the dialogue in a meaningful way.

After the walk, facilitators continued with the Policy Lab phase providing each participant with the opportunity to share their personal experiences and offer their insights on the topic of discussion. Throughout this phase, the facilitators utilized guiding questions to enable meaningful dialogue. Some of the key questions that guided the discussion included:

- What is the current situation in regard to recent statistics on sexual assault and rape in Cyprus?
- What are the existing laws and policies? What are the main organisations, governmental and non-governmental, working in this field?

- How does sexual assault intersect with other forms of oppression, such as racism, and LGBTQI+ discrimination, and how can policies address these intersections?
- What are the best practices for supporting survivors of sexual assaults, including access to counselling, healthcare and legal assistance?
- How can workplaces, educational institutions, and other organisations create safe and inclusive environments to prevent sexual assault?

During the Policy Lab phase, a profound sense of respect prevailed among all participants, even when differing viewpoints emerged on the topic. It was evident that everyone approached the discussion with a spirit of understanding and collaboration.

A significant consensus among the majority of participants was the gap in trained personnel within the Cypriot police to effectively support victims of sexual assault and address such cases with the requisite sensitivity and expertise. This issue stood out as a central concern and highlighted the pressing need for comprehensive reforms and improvements in this critical area.

The discussion started with a mention to some statistics regarding rape and sexual assault cases in Cyprus. Over the past six years, there were a total of 138 rape cases investigated by the police. Even more alarmingly, sexual assault cases were far more prevalent, with the year 2022 alone witnessing 233 reported cases of sexual assault.

A prominent topic that emerged during the conversation was the absence of supportive groups for victims of sexual assault, which often results in many cases going unreported, as victims struggle to find a platform to discuss their traumatic experiences. In terms of safety, most participants agreed they, at some point, felt unsafe walking the streets at night. Furthermore, some participants shared distressing incidents that had occurred to them during daylight hours, highlighting a vulnerability that women experience on a daily basis. Incidents and concerning behaviors were described as commonplace occurrences that women witness regularly, yet many choose not to speak out, often due to a perception that little action will be taken to address these issues. Consequently, women have learned to live with a persistent sense of unease and concern for their safety.

Participants shared distressing accounts of sexual assault cases occurring in various settings, including workplaces, streets, and even shops. Particularly troubling were the experiences recounted regarding the responses of law enforcement to these incidents. Victims often found themselves subjected to insensitive and inappropriate questions from police officers, such as:

- "What were you wearing?"
- "Can you explain exactly what happened?"
- "What actions did you take?"

These questions, posed by members of the police, added an additional layer of distress for the victims and underscored the need for improved training and sensitivity within the law enforcement community when handling cases of sexual assault.

The participants have put forth a range of practical proposals and policy recommendations aimed at raising awareness, enhancing the safety of women, providing protection and support for victims of sexual assault, and ultimately preventing such incidents. These proposals include:

- **Educational Initiatives:** Implement educational programs targeted at children, with a particular focus on educating young boys about respectful behaviour towards one another and women.
- **Specialized Police Training:** Develop specialized training programs for law enforcement agencies to effectively address sexual assault and sexual violence claims, ensuring that officers are better equipped to handle such cases sensitively and professionally.
- **Institutional Reforms:** Advocate for institutional changes within local governments to establish support mechanisms specifically tailored to women's needs.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Organize and execute comprehensive awareness campaigns at both local and national levels, targeting various settings such as neighbourhoods, universities, and schools to disseminate information and promote a culture of safety and respect.
- **Corporate Policies:** Encourage companies to adopt and enforce new policies and laws aimed at combating sexual harassment within their organizations, fostering safe and inclusive workplaces.
- **Improved Street Lighting:** Enhance public safety by installing additional lighting in streets, parks, and parking lots, helping to create well-lit environments that deter potential assailants and improve overall safety.
- **Local Support Groups:** Establish local support groups dedicated to empowering women to share their experiences and speak out against sexual assault, fostering a sense of community and solidarity.

These proposals reflect a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of sexual assault, encompassing education, law enforcement, institutional reform, public awareness, workplace policies, environmental improvements, and community support.

The participants highlighted the positive impact of events like 'Women Reclaim the Night' in raising awareness and empowering women to reclaim their safety and voices. However, they also acknowledged a significant challenge: the need to effectively communicate their proposals and policy reforms to governmental and law enforcement bodies.

One potential solution discussed was the inclusion of representatives from these governmental and law enforcement agencies in future Policy Labs. This collaborative approach could yield more effective results by fostering better communication between women, civil society organizations, and the relevant governmental bodies. By involving these stakeholders directly in the discussions, it becomes possible to bridge gaps, gain a deeper understanding of the issues at hand, and work together to implement meaningful changes.

In summary, the participants emphasized the importance of engagement and collaboration with governmental and law enforcement agencies as a crucial step in turning their proposals into actionable policies that enhance the safety and support systems for women in society. The Policy Lab provided a platform for diverse voices to address the critical issue of women's safety. It generated practical proposals and highlighted the need for collaboration with governmental and law enforcement agencies to turn these proposals into actionable policies that enhance the safety and support systems for women in society.



Summary

The policy labs conducted in Italy, Serbia, Romania, and Cyprus were all hugely successful, uncovering common challenges in public infrastructure and urban planning in relation to gender issues and problems faced in these countries. While each country has its unique context, there are several shared concerns and opportunities for improving the construction for gender-inclusive cities and infrastructure. In each country, four policy labs were implemented, addressing different topics: how public infrastructures are failing to serve women, how women are penalized in terms of urban mobility, how urban planning is not considering women's needs, and how women are more exposed to sexual assault in urban contexts. The participants in the policy labs were primarily women, with active involvement from men as well. The LGBTQI+ community also participated, ensuring that the policy labs' outcomes captured the diverse needs and constraints of their community, thereby aiming to provide valuable and inclusive results.

A common challenge identified during the policy labs is inadequate urban lighting in the streets, which not only fails to meet the needs of women but also contributes to negative outcomes. Other issues, such as the lack of convenient public toilets and unsafe public transportation systems, were highlighted in almost all countries, especially public transport being a particular concern. Inconvenient routes and stops, lack of accessibility and fear, especially during nighttime, create obstacles to women's freedom of movement, safety, and their ability to easily access public spaces and services, which are often not conveniently located.

It is evident that inclusive urban planning needs to address the diverse experiences and requirements of women and other gender minority groups, who often find themselves marginalized, victimized, and penalized. This is something which leads to another shared and central theme which is the underrepresentation and lack of participation of women in decision-making procedures. Participants from all countries discussed how gender bias and exclusionary practices hinder the development of gender-inclusive policies and initiatives within urban contexts, infrastructure, and planning. There is a consensus that increasing the involvement of women in decision-making, along with education and awareness programs, is vital for promoting gender equality in urban life and settings.

On the other hand, each country also faces unique challenges within their urban contexts, with different priorities. In Italy, Rome, participants emphasized the need for more education on inclusive urban planning and design, as well as the demand for safer and more inclusive public transportation. In Serbia, concerns were raised about the lack of green spaces, transportation misbehaviour, and inadequate public lighting as substantial issues. The policy labs in Romania highlighted concerns about the lack of quality surveillance in public spaces (such as cameras and police presence), insufficient public toilets, poor maintenance of existing facilities, and the

need for equal gender representation in governmental positions. While other countries acknowledged that police presence and greater involvement of police units will act as preventive and protective measures, in Cyprus, the issue of inadequate education within the police unit was raised, and in general, the lack of training and sensitivity within the law enforcement community was stressed. Participants criticized the unit's inability to handle cases of sexual assault in a sensitive and efficient manner, leading to further psychological and social problems for the victims and, in some cases, hesitation from women to report or trust in a thorough and sensitive examination or protection.

However, a shared vision emerged from all the policy labs, advocating for more inclusive and gender-sensitive cities. Participants expressed enthusiasm for creating safe urban environments that promote social equity, reduce inequalities, and provide opportunities for personal and professional growth. They stressed the importance of a bottom-up approach, engaging with local communities, and prioritizing the voices and experiences of women and marginalized groups.

In conclusion, the policy labs have shed light on the similarities and differences in urban infrastructure and gender issues across various countries in the European Union. The identification of common experiences and significant challenges, such as public transportation, inadequate street lighting in urban areas, and limited women's representation in decision-making processes, offers a starting point for finding solutions. Expanding the methodology of our policy labs throughout Europe can raise awareness, foster critical thinking, and provide education on the matter, ultimately leading to the development of comprehensive and inclusive urban planning policies and infrastructure. By addressing these challenges collaboratively and taking into account the specific needs of each context, it is possible to create gender-inclusive cities that prioritize the safety, mobility, and well-being of all residents.

Conclusion

The Youth Policy Labs in all European countries have shed light on the lack of interactive and participatory opportunities for young people across Europe. Particularly for women and LGBTQI+ groups, which have much fewer opportunities to participate in local decision-making. Similarly, disabled persons and other vulnerable communities often do not have the chance to actively participate in their communities. During the Policy Labs, the participants identified policies and existing practices in their cities, that show how women's needs are not taken into consideration in urban planning and designing of modern cities. Interestingly, yet not surprisingly, the majority of the participants in all Policy Labs were women.

It is important, however, to note that these claims are not solely the opinion of the participants of the Youth Policy Labs, but they are also evident in official statistics. The role of women in policy-making in Cyprus, for example, has received a particularly low rate in the EU Gender Equality Index (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).

The personal experiences of the Policy Labs' participants in all countries, offered insights into the existing gender gaps in different European cities and served as the basis of the Policy Lab discussions to identify existing issues and potential solutions to address the needs of women in urban public infrastructure, urban mobility and urban planning. A general lack of understanding of the needs of women in regard to urban planning has been identified in all regions, with issues like the lack of lighting, not enough measurements for pedestrians in the main neighbourhoods, bad conditions of public transport, and a lack of green spaces have been some of the issues identified in most places. A key part of the discussions was also the limitations and challenges faced by disabled persons in urban places, whose needs are often not addressed during urban planning and policy-making.

The most challenging discussions were held during the Policy Labs on women and sexual assault. Almost in all countries, women participants had experienced a form of sexual assault at some point in their life. Catcalling has been identified as one of the most common forms of sexual assault in many European countries.

When participants were called to identify solutions, there was much diversity in the opinions and solutions suggested in each country with some of the participants raising their concern that a behavioural change within the communities is difficult to be achieved, which makes it difficult to address the roots of these problems. Other have argued that women, LGBTQI+ and other groups that have so far been undermined and underrepresented should be more actively involved in the policy-making process in order to help create gender inclusive cities.

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Work Package 2

Youth Policy Labs Report



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