



FEMACT-Cities 4th Quarterly Report

October- December 2024

Wrapping up our drafting process

URBACT



Co-funded by
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1. The FEMACT-Cities Network

Gender equality has been enshrined in EU law for nearly 25 years, however, implementation on a local level remains uneven. The role of gender equality as a cross-cutting topic which is vital to all policy areas remains poorly understood and work on gender equality implementation on a local level continues to be hampered by knowledge and data gaps, lack of dedicated personnel, lack of awareness, lack of political support and both active and passive resistance.

The FEMACT-Cities network is therefore focusing on the **implementation gap** in gender equality policy across a wide range of topics. The network's goal is twofold: to **improve the implementation of gender equality on a local level** and to **increase innovation and knowledge sharing in gender equality** in topics shared by the partners.

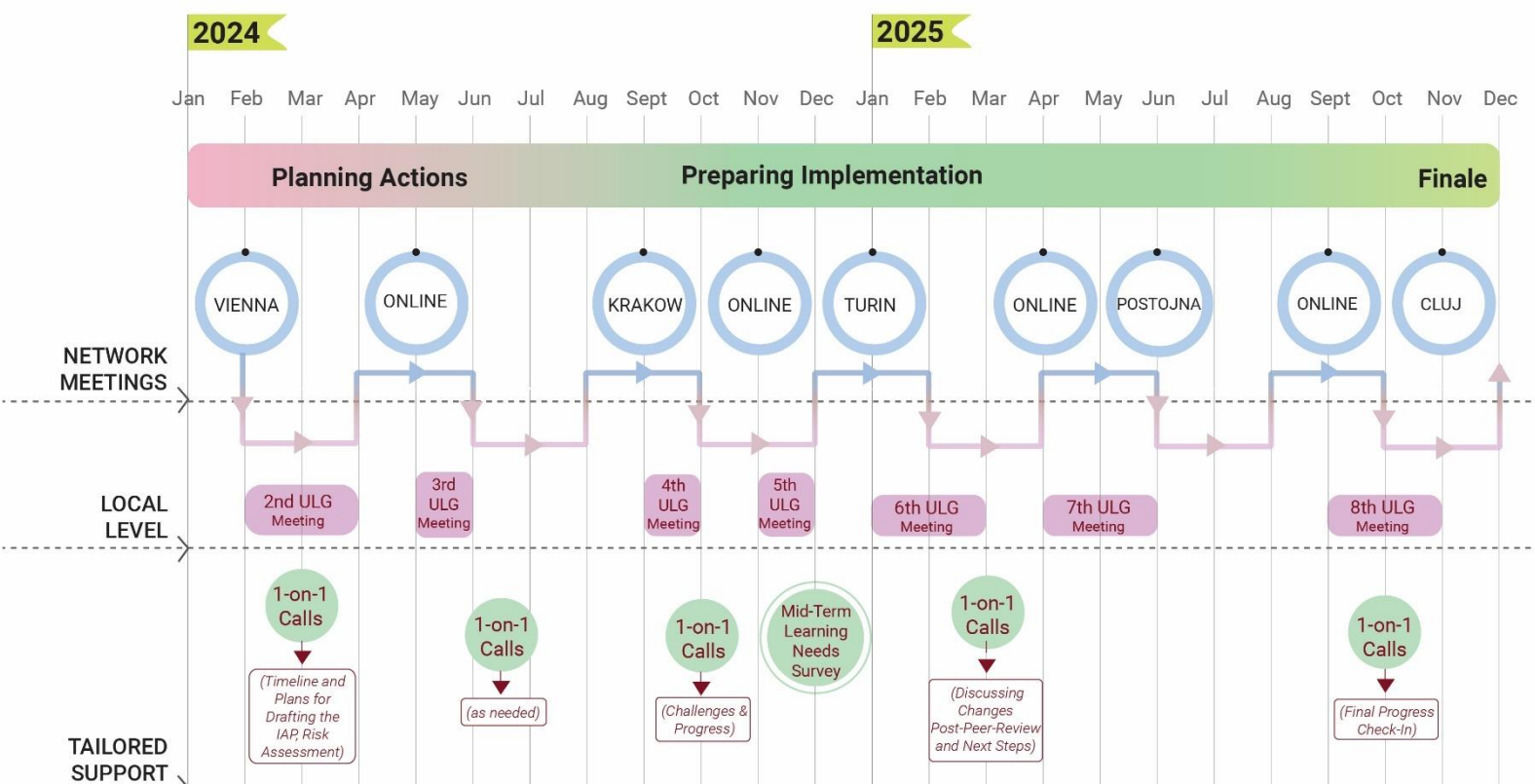
To do this, the bespoke network curriculum focuses on both factors which help and hinder implementation, from plans to data to political support, and sharing knowledge from best practices outside the network and between the network partners. The goal is to empower the partners and a wider audience not only in the “what” but also the “how” of gender equality on a local level.

The FEMACT-Cities partners are

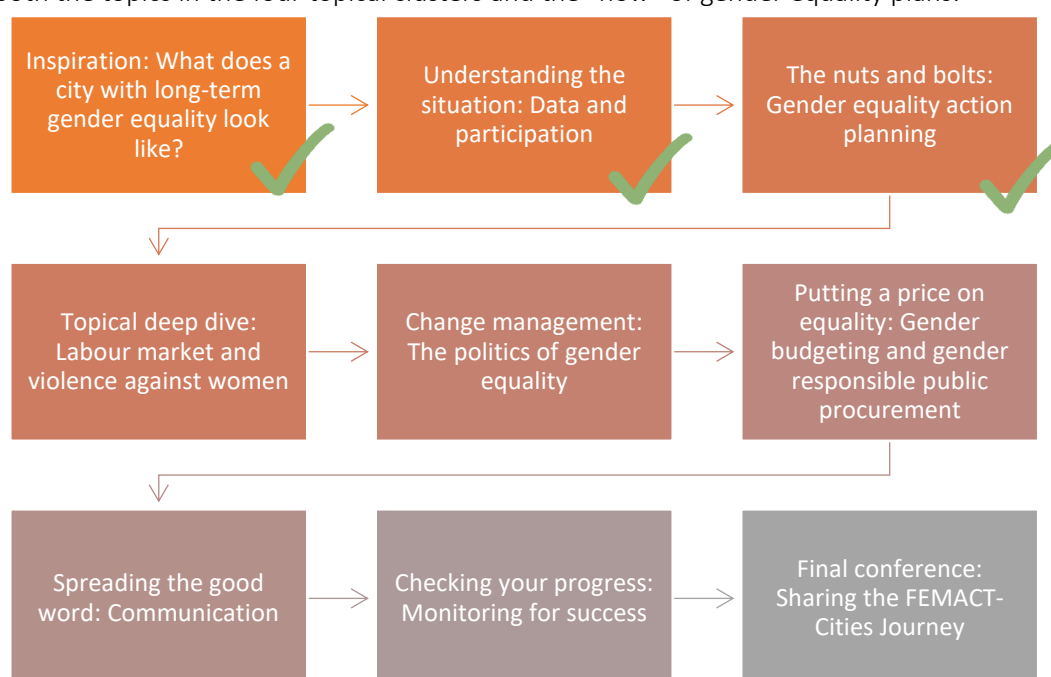
- Clermont Auvergne Métropole (FR) (Lead Partner)
- Länsstyrelsen Skåne (SE)
- Comunidade Intermunicipal da Região de Coimbra (PT)
- City of Kraków (PL)
- City of Turin (IT)
- Municipality of Postojna (SI)
- Cluj Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association (RO)
- Szabolcs 05 Regional Development Association of Municipalities (HU)



2. The FEMACT-Cities Journey – A Path to More Equality



Over the course of the two-year network journey, the partners will meet at nine transnational meetings, which will give them the topical inputs, peer learning and exchange, and methodological tools to be able to move towards the network vision in their local context. The bespoke network methodology will cover both the topics in the four topical clusters and the “how” of gender equality plans.



3. What is going on in our URBACT Local Groups?



Clermont Auvergne Métropole (France)

The French partner has set the goal of moving from a multitude of scattered projects to a coordinated action by the whole. On 5 November they visited the Gisele Halimi women's centre with the ULG. They have also conducted a number of testing actions, described below.



Länsstyrelsen Skåne (Sweden)

The Swedish partner hosted a ULG meeting on 24 September on female entrepreneurship incubators in the county of Skåne which was well visited. They have also funded two masters theses as their testing action, described in more detail below.



Comunidade Intermunicipal da Região de Coimbra (Portugal)

On 24 October, the Portuguese partner participated in the Municipal Day of Equality by organizing an awareness-raising campaign on gender equality and parity. They have also implemented three testing actions, which are described in more detail below.



City of Kraków (Poland)

The Polish partner's main activities in the last quarter were to complete their research report and conduct online meetings with their ULG subgroups. In addition, they are currently organising a conference round table for Polish cities about gender equality.



City of Turin (Italy)

In the past quarter, the Italian partner organized a ULG meeting with 45 municipal colleagues featuring interactive activities—such as an icebreaker on discrimination, film clips on stereotypes, and group exercises to visualize leadership—to raise awareness and foster inclusive leadership practices. They have also worked on developing testing action ideas.



Municipality of Postojna (Slovenia)

The Slovenian partner had a fruitful meeting with ULG on 18 September on topics about IAP progress and pilot actions with an external expert. They are excited to report that the ULG members are getting more active as things become more concrete. They have also conducted multiple testing actions, described in more detail below.



Cluj Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association (Romania)

The Romanian partner was very busy in the fourth quarter, as they are organising a fifteen-day awareness-raising campaign around the 25th of November, the international day for the elimination of violence against women. They also conducted a number of testing actions.



Szabolcs 05 Regional Development Association of Municipalities (Hungary)

The Hungarian partner was featured in their National URBACT Point newsletter, and implemented their testing actions, which are described in detail below.



4. A Focus on Testing Actions

The FEMACT-Cities partners have developed a wide range of different testing actions, which they presented and discussed at our online meeting in November 2024

→ Clermont Auvergne Métropole (FR)

The French partner implemented three testing actions to promote gender equality. The first was a communication campaign centred around the message “Women have their place everywhere, all the time.” The second involved a poll surveying 150 young people on gender equality, particularly those engaged in voluntary civil service. The third action, inspired by the Krakow Women’s Tour, will be the creation of a guided tour during the upcoming Clermont Innovation Week. Additionally, the testing phase includes monitoring how many ULG members adopt and utilize the communication campaign developed by the Metropole.

→ Länsstyrelsen Skåne (SE)

The Swedish partner’s testing actions centred on supporting research into gender disparities in startup funding, featuring two degree theses: one from the Stockholm School of Economics on gender gaps in angel and venture capital financing, and another from Lund University examining gender’s impact on access to equity-based funding in the ICT sector.

→ Comunidade Intermunicipal da Região de Coimbra (PT)

The Portuguese partner carried out three testing actions focused on visibility, safety, and innovation. The first highlighted the role of women in local government over the past 50 years through a digital exhibition, aiming to inspire future female leaders. The second involved safety training for municipal workers and police, targeting crime prevention and improved urban safety. The third, in collaboration with the Pedro Nunes Institute, was a matching event

at the Coimbra Space Training Camp to connect local needs with innovative solutions from enterprises.

→ **City of Kraków (PL)**

The Polish partner's testing action focused on integrating gender mainstreaming into urban policy. This process includes conducting a comprehensive diagnosis through a research report, collaboratively designing participatory guidelines, and actively promoting the gender mainstreaming approach to other cities across Poland.

→ **City of Turin (IT)**

The Italian partner proposed three testing action ideas to promote gender equality within the municipality. The first involves conducting 30-minute recorded interviews with managers on gender issues. The second and third focus on appointing ambassadors to engage municipal staff in remote locations and providing training to improve data collection and database updates.

→ **Municipality of Postojna (SI)**

The Slovenian partner carried out a series of testing actions aimed at promoting gender equality and empowerment across different community groups. These included four interactive trainings for municipal administration employees, starting on 22 November, and an awareness event for the professional public scheduled for 16 January 2025. They also organized six interactive workshops for primary school students and six for secondary school students. Additionally, a specialized workshop for kindergarten teachers took place on 6 November 2024, focusing on overcoming gender stereotypes in early education and attracting 120 participants.

→ **Cluj Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association (RO)**

The Romanian partner carried out a comprehensive set of testing actions focused on enhancing the safety and empowerment of women and girls. These included a prevention campaign in public transportation, aimed at increasing protection in these spaces, and the development and delivery of bystander intervention training. They also established a clear procedure and referral pathway to support women and girls facing safety-threatening incidents. Additionally, efforts were made to mainstream gender equality across public policies within the Cluj Metropolitan Area.

→ **Szabolcs 05 Regional Development Association of Municipalities (HU)**

The Hungarian partner's testing actions focused on supporting Roma girls and young women facing severe educational disadvantages. They conducted both a workshop in the community centre involving the target group and a focus group interview involving teachers working with disadvantaged girls. The work in the focus group revealed that over one-third of children at a participating school live in highly disadvantaged conditions, and only 70% of Roma girls complete primary school, with few continuing to secondary education.

5. Our Fifth Transnational Meeting: A Balance of Structural and Thematic Work

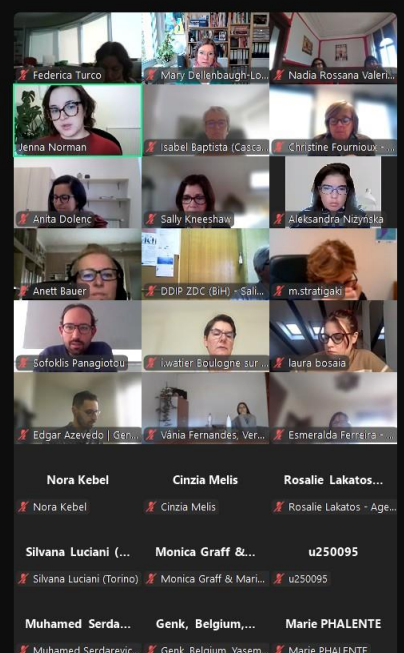
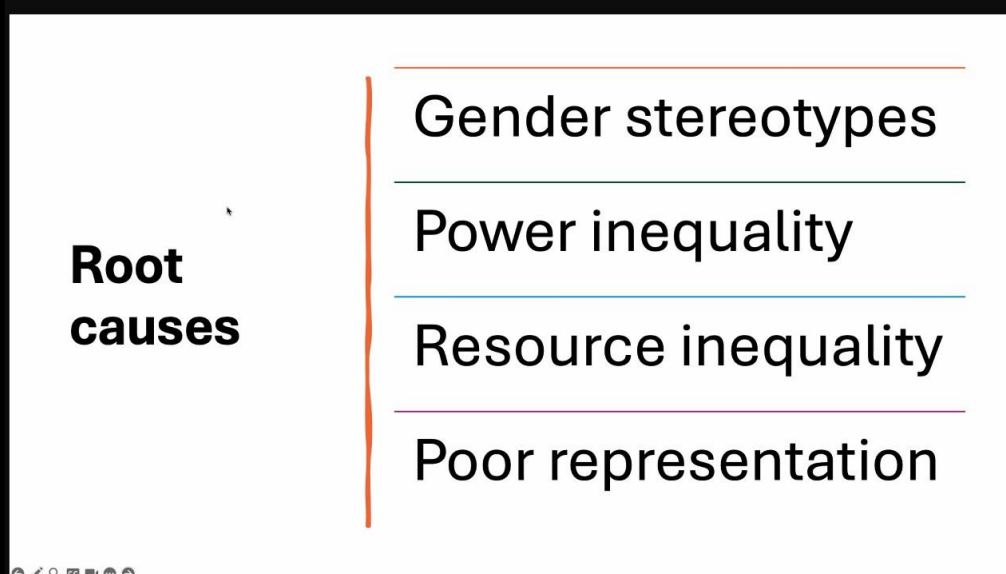
On 12th and 13th November 2024, the FEMACT-Cities URBACT Action Planning Network held its fifth transnational network meeting, once again online. Despite the virtual setting, the meeting offered rich opportunities for exchange and learning across all partner cities. The agenda was shaped around peer updates, a mid-term review, and thematic sessions focused on gender-based violence and female entrepreneurship—two core concerns in fostering inclusive and safe urban environments.

Day 1: Testing Actions, Mid Term Review and a Closer Look at the Integrated Approach

The meeting opened as always with updates from all partners on their ULG (URBACT Local Group) progress and their testing actions. This offered valuable insights into the range of interventions being explored across cities, and created space for feedback and shared learning.

The morning continued with a Mid-Term Reflection (MTR) session which allowed all partners to reflect critically on their current trajectory and make adjustments in preparation for the upcoming project phase. The MTR session confirmed that the network is progressing well towards its goals. Partners reported strong advances in developing their Integrated Action Plans (IAPs), with thematic knowledge and network support described as highly valuable. While most partners are on track or ahead of schedule, challenges around resources, stakeholder engagement, and time constraints were acknowledged. The session emphasized reprogramming priorities and made minor thematic adjustments to the 2025 work plan, ensuring continued support for partners' evolving needs.

In the afternoon, Ed Thorpe facilitated an Integration Workshop, helping partners to identify cross-cutting themes and align their local action plans more closely with the project's overarching goals. The day concluded with a short session on preparing for the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) Peer Review in Torino, as well as a final administrative check-in.



Day 2: Thematic Dives: Gender-Based Violence and Female Entrepreneurship

The second day of the meeting focused on deepening thematic knowledge and inspiration through two key sessions.

Panel on Municipal Responses to Gender-Based Violence

Timed in connection with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November), this panel was curated by the insightful Jenna Norman and brought together a range of municipal perspectives:

Greater London Authority (Puja Parmar) presented the “Have a Word” campaign—an innovative awareness-raising effort targeting men and aiming to disrupt harmful behaviours early. The campaign includes educational tools, public messaging in male-dominated spaces such as football stadiums and pubs, and a strong focus on peer accountability.

Isabel Baptista from the Municipal Council of Cascais and Maria Stratigake and Soloklis Panayiotou from the Municipality of Athens shared further examples of local strategies. In Athens, the need for cultural mediators when working with women from diverse cultural backgrounds was highlighted as a crucial factor for effective support services.

Jenna also presented a wide range of good examples in her own presentation. For example, in Milan, the local anti-violence centre has produced flyers in eight languages using clear, accessible language and including direct contact information—ensuring that help is genuinely reachable for all. In Murcia, a city-wide awareness campaign was launched, using four different posters to sensitise the public to various forms of gender-based violence.



These examples demonstrate both the diversity of approaches available to cities and the ongoing need for further action. True gender equality in urban environments will only be achieved when all women feel safe at any time of day, able to move freely through public space and use public transport without fear of violence. While architecture and urban planning play a vital role in creating inclusive environments, these spatial changes must go hand-in-hand with wider societal transformation. This requires cross-departmental collaboration and joint problem-solving—just as we aim to foster within the FEMACT-Cities network.

Panel on Female Entrepreneurship

The afternoon session led by Sandra Rainero focused on tools, frameworks, and policies that support women's economic empowerment at the local level. In her presentation, Sandra explored the structural, cultural, and policy-related barriers to female entrepreneurship, drawing on OECD data and historical context. She emphasized that women comprise 73% of the “missing” entrepreneurs across OECD countries—a gap with significant economic implications, potentially boosting GDP by 6–12% if closed. Sandra outlined how gender roles, social expectations, and stereotypes—such as perceived lower risk tolerance and financial acumen—continue to shape women’s entrepreneurial pathways. She also offered six tailored recommendations for fostering female entrepreneurship in smaller cities, stressing the need for inclusive urban environments and supportive public policies.

Her presentation was followed by three inspiring case studies. Prof. Susana Sargento from the Aveiro STEAM City Project, which fosters digital and scientific career pathways for women and Cinta Arasa Carot from the Barcelona Activa’s Lidera Programme, aimed at leadership development and business support for women; as well as Françoise Belet who presented the new French law on professional equality, illustrating the potential of national frameworks to support local action.

This session stressed the importance of structural enablers and support systems in unlocking women’s entrepreneurial potential, particularly in male-dominated sectors.

Resumée


The November 2024 transnational meeting once again highlighted the power of peer exchange and shared learning across European cities. The sessions on municipal responses to gender-based violence and on female entrepreneurship brought both inspiring examples and sobering reminders of the work still to be done.

The discussion made it clear that gender equality in urban life cannot be achieved through infrastructure alone. While inclusive planning and design are essential, they must be accompanied by cultural change, education, policy shifts, and inclusive public services. From multilingual anti-violence materials in Milan to the use of cultural mediators in Athens and awareness campaigns in Murcia, it is evident that cities have a wide range of tools at their disposal—but must also coordinate across departments and sectors to create real impact.

As FEMACT-Cities moves forward with finalising its Integrated Action Plan Drafts, these conversations serve as an important reminder: truly gender-just cities are created when people, policies, and places come together—with safety, empowerment, and inclusion as shared priorities.

6. Where do we go next?

As the year draws to a close, the partners will work on finalising their IAP drafts in time for our peer review session. In the next quarter, the network will meet in person again, this time in Turin, Italy. The sixth transnational network meeting will offer partner deep dives into the work being conducted in Hungary and a number of site visits to case studies in Turin. A tiramisu-making competition will be a memorable (and delicious) team-building event. More about that in the next report! Stay tuned!



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