

The importance of gender equality in Architecture and Civil Engineering for the New European Bauhaus approach:

Who we are:

The Project „YesWePlan! Promoting Women in Architecture and Civil Engineering” aims at sharing experiences and best practice examples for closing the gender gap in the field of Architecture and Civil Engineering.

Methods and tools are a country situation analysis and the development of a Career Tracking System that is able to give insight into career decisions and motives of a representative number of professionals. Based on these information tools and on a collection of gender equality best practise examples in the partner countries a compendium will be developed that will not only provide tools but also recommendations for practical measures to improve gender equality in Architecture and Civil Engineering to different relevant stakeholders.

Project partners are the Austrian Federal Chamber of Architects and Chartered Engineering Consultants (BKZT) the Chamber of Architecture and Spatial Planning of Slovenia (ZAPS), the Polytechnical University of Valencia in Spain (UPV), the Association for the Research on the City and Housing (ARVHA) in France and the Federal Chamber of German Architects (BAK) and the German OXYS Management UG.

The **YesWePlan!** partners have already discussed and developed – on basis of the country situation analyses, exchange of Best Practise Examples and first results of Career Tracking done within the **YesWePlan!** project – first approaches for measures to promote gender equality in Architecture and Civil Engineering and other technical professions.

Why this is important for the success of the New European Bauhaus initiative:

Gender equality in Architecture and Civil Engineering is an essential factor for a sustainable and inclusive development of the built environment and thus for the success of the New European Bauhaus approach. Although it is well known that there are gender specific needs and requirements in regard to the built environment (e.g., the famous toilet example: how the different waiting duration in front of men or female toilets can be solved by intelligent and gender sensible planning) this is not taken into account automatically. In practise this means that although more than half of the world population is female, the built environment is far from reflecting female requirements accordingly.

Therefore, the better inclusion of women in the planning and building processes – both on the side of the users as well as on the side of the planners – has a huge potential to increase sustainable living quality in our build environment:

- **Justice:** New European Bauhaus has to flag EU aspirations to justice and better opportunities for all, so it is expected this new institution to contribute to human rights through its work regarding architecture and urbanism. Women’s rights are human rights so reflecting on how achieve or contribute to human rights through architecture and urbanism means thinking in all human diversity, and that includes thinking in women diversity, when designing and including them as designers.
- **Exemplarity:** New European Bauhaus is going to serve as a role model for many other institutions and stakeholders that are involved in architectural and urban issues. Therefore, the way it acts should be exemplary regarding EU global goals. These EU global goals also

include UN SDG [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals] in which gender mainstreaming plays a key role. That is to say, including equality in each EU policy reverts in a closer and better approach to SDG. NEB will need to tune to EU global goals and that means NEB ought to include clearly gender mainstreaming in all its decisions, normative and projects.

- **Efficiency:** New European Bauhaus is going to propose new alternatives, new approaches and new proposals regarding our common built environment. Research has demonstrated that diversity and inclusion, at any scale, from team formation to bibliography selection, produces better results. Including women at all decision levels and at all work stages contributes to diversity and inclusion that is to say, to efficiency and better investments return. Promoting women architects and women civil engineers at all level decisions and work would revert in better solutions.
- **Future:** New European Bauhaus aims to configure the spaces as medium where we will spend our common future. This goal needs knowledge and imagination. Not including women's knowledge and women's imagination is a loss of resources but even more is a lack of other possible futures, other possibilities that remain unexplored.

Aspects to consider:

1. Reassessment and Revaluation of (professional) success

The EU value system currently focuses on a traditional understanding of efficiency, on economic growth and GDP value as the sole factors of success. Based on this, STE(A)M¹ professional success reflects a one-direction approach that is not compatible to meeting important life requirements relating to caring activities, inclusion, diversity, time, sharing time, enjoying time, participation etc. This means that the currently it is almost impossible for a person – independent of gender – to combine professional success and the fulfilment of other important life requirements. Currently, due to traditional roles and systems, it is mostly women who take over the fulfilment of other life requirements. So, without closing the gap between professional success requirements and other life requirements, it will be very difficult to close the gender gap. The idea of the gross national happiness index of Bhutan that is based on the collective happiness and well-being of a population and also measures positive social impact of a person to his environment that is either social, human, built or natural is a thought-provoking idea to take into consideration. In a society that appreciates the contribution of each individual and in which the question of gender diversity is a natural thing that encourages better quality of living, space, environment, society and happiness, etc quality is not possible without equality.

Regarding these aspects, we propose making a 'wider picture' by:

- 'opening space' for other ways to understand the professional development and acknowledging and **supporting this new space by new kind of awards, publications, etc.**
- acknowledging and accepting **this other (new) criteria for accreditations or professional or academic merits and supporting its inclusion in official scales and contracts.**
- supporting the incorporation of a gendered approach to architecture and civil engineering; that is to say, incorporating daily life and care as a basic issue to tackle when designing, defining it and quantifying the way of incorporating it.
- supporting its general inclusion in academic programs.

¹ STE(A)M = Science, Technology, Engineering, (Architecture) and Mathematics
<https://yesweplan.eu/>
info@yesweplan.eu

2. Access to the market

Due to the reasons explained above the access to the market is often more difficult for women. This problem should be made more visible on the base of statistical data about public procurements procedures, access to Architectural Design Competition etc. Combating this problem will require awareness raising as well as different form of support measures to enhance gender equality as regards procurement procedures related to the design and construction of our built environment.

3. Pay Gap

Employers should be obliged to inform transparently about salary ranges in their company in order to give applicants an orientation for realistic pay. This encourages women to negotiate their own salary based on this salary range. This measure helps ensure that women's salaries are equal to those of men.

4. Gender equality in educational, professional, representative institutions (Universities, Chambers etc)

Stakeholders are very often still not aware of “systematic” discrimination within their institutions (e.g. regarding gender equality in leading functions, representation in decision making committees, distribution of financial means etc). There is still very little awareness of the problem and the great extent of indirect discrimination (different treatment of groups that are not determined after gender but in fact consist mostly of one gender) as regards gender equality. **It is important to raise awareness and actively and financially support and award best practise measures and examples.** In many cases institutions are not aware of the positive effects for all of an efficient gender

5. Education

Interesting children in STE(A)M subjects as early as possible must be enhanced in kindergartens and schools. **Pedagogues are required to have at least a minimum knowledge about education based on gender equality. Incentive measures and prizes for best practise gender approaches** in kindergartens, schools but also Universities need to be further enhanced as well as the exchange of practise examples on national and European level. Additionally, parents should be included in projects to increase girls' interest in STE(A)M professions.

6. Awareness Raising

Role models play an important role in all age ranges and especially for girls and young women, the more so in the age of YouTube and Instagram. Moving female role models in the spotlight is important in educational surroundings (female teachers in STE(A)M subjects, inviting female experts to schools, internships with female STE(A)M professionals etc) but it would also be important to initiate campaigns via different social media channels, maybe in cooperation with popular female influencers /youtubers.

7. Other Measures

Financial support measures for SME helping to increase gender equality and raise employment of women in technical professions (e.g., supporting the costs for social insurance for women in order to decrease the costs for employing women)

Support programmes (EU programmes, national measures, initiatives by Universities, professional organisations etc) to initiate new gender equality networks for STE(A)M professions and to make them more efficient (with tailor-made coaching and mentoring programmes, internships, job market, start-up support, etc)



Support programmes (EU programmes, national measures, initiatives by Universities, professional organisations etc) that focus on personal and professional development courses for women in STE(A)M professions (e.g., courses on negotiation skills for women etc)

Encouraging national regulations and awareness raising initiatives boosting equality in family caring activities as only in a working world where fathers taking parental leave are as common as mothers doing so, (indirect) discrimination on the workplace can be finished effectively.