

EQUALITY

CONSTRUCTION

PROFESSIONALISM

SUSTAINABILITY

# Towards an equal construction industry

Intellectual Output 3

Roadmap for VET providers

## “Gender mainstreaming in Construction VET”

June 2020



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union







Key Action 2 | Call 2017  
Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices

Project number:  
2017-1-ES01-KA202-038658

Partnership:

- Fundación Laboral de la Construcción (FLC). Spain
- Agencia para el Empleo del Ayuntamiento de Madrid (AE). Spain
- Fondazione ECIPA. Ente Confederale di Istruzione Professionale per l'Artigianato e le Piccole Imprese (CNA). Italy
- Ente per la Formazione e l'addestramento professionale nell'edilizia (FORMEDIL). Italy
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- Comité de Concertation et de Coordination de l'Apprentissage du Bâtiment et des Travaux Publics (CCCA-BTP). France
- Bildungszentren des Baugewerbes e.V. (BZB). Germany
- Centre IFAPME Liège-Huy-Waremme (IFAPME). Belgium

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# Gender mainstreaming in VET

## 1. Introduction

Gender equality or equality between women and men, boys and girls refers to the enjoyment of equal rights, opportunities, valuation and treatment by men and women of all ages in all spheres of life and work. It implies that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the implications set by stereotypes and prejudices about gender roles and characteristics of women and men. It means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.

However, all principal constraints to women's inclusion in construction VET currently ensue from their gender related situation of being guided by traditional, stereotypical patriarchal values.

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is one of the goals of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unfortunately, gender inequality practices still occur in nearly all fields of development; one of which is the skill development. Vocational education plays a pivotal role in achieving gender equality in skill development, and it has impacted the participation of women in labour market. Although there are various schemes and programs run by different institutions, they lack holistic focus.

This document analyses gender gap in skill development, identifies challenges of gender stereotyped construction labour market, and suggests remedial measures to fill the gender gap in skill development. The document discusses challenges regarding the participation of young women in construction VET and recommendations to mitigate these challenges are proffered.

While there still may be a need in some circumstances to design special programs or components to address the training needs of a particular population of women, the greater need is to develop an integrative strategy whereby women are enrolled alongside men in training courses. At the same time, **support activities should be designed to promote women's effective participation and to meet the specific training needs of the female audience.**

The main purpose of this document is to provide guidance and available information on resources to support the task to strengthen the capacity of VET institutions in mainstreaming gender equality concerns within construction sector.

The document is meant to be used by all those who are associated with skills training in construction VET institutions. More specifically, it is meant for managers, principals, instructors, technical officers and general staff. It is encouraged the creation of *gender focal points* in respective VET institutions that may use this tool extensively to implement the strategy for gender equality promotion in their own institutions.



## 2. Main research findings

### Prejudices about work in the construction sector.

The main areas covered by the focus group from which the opinions of the young people were inferred were environment- vocation – education.

The first conclusion concerns the sector and the other the women in the relationship with the sector.

- Resistance to classic stereotypes in the construction industry is reiterated and is very evident. In particular the physical strength, it is a tiring and dirty sector. Few interviewees motivated to enter the construction industry, the rest of the interviewees chose it because it was easy and of immediate gain.
- Women prefer to stay at home and prefer to do other jobs (curious that you speak for women and not speak for themselves) and that the construction sector is a male sector.
- The trainees interviewed were very impressed with the vision of the women workers interviewed for the WCB Project (testimonies). They did not think there could be working women on the construction site.

### Characteristics of the construction work

Terms indicated:

*Agility, knowledge of construction materials, strength, creativity, balance, capacity, intelligence, professionalism, dexterity, desire, weight, boredom, teaching, teamwork, observing rules, ingenuity, resistance, dirt and information.*

The most frequently repeated terms are: strength, balance, capacity, endurance.

These terms have been classified by reference to equivalence in the Employment Agency's dictionary of competences.

TERM	COMPETENCE	AREA	SUBMIT
Resistance	Physical resistance	Transversal	Intrapersonal
Strength	Physical resistance	Transversal	Intrapersonal
Knowledge of materials	Technique	Technique	Task
Capacity	Technique	Technique	Intrapersonal
Dexterity	Accuracy	Transversal	Task
Creativity	Creativity	Transversal	Intrapersonal
Intelligence	Decision making	Transversal	Task
Responsibility	Responsibility/commitment	Transversal	Task
Teamwork	Teamwork	Transversal	Interpersonal



TERM	COMPETENCE	AREA	SUBMIT
Information	Information Management	Access to employment	Insertion
Ingenuity	Creativity	Transversal	Intrapersonal
Dirt	Interpersonal and civic - Image	Key	Key 6
Agility	Physical resistance	Transversal	Intrapersonal
Balance	Physical resistance	Transversal	Intrapersonal
You want (motivation)	Motivation for access to employment	Access to employment	Drive
Weight	Physical resistance	Transversal	Intrapersonal
Boredom	Motivation for access to employment	Access to employment	Drive
Teaching	Motivation for access to training	Access to employment	Drive

### Area Vocation/Profession:

Vocational skills development is often considered to be an effective strategy to empower girls in a society by increasing their employability. At the same time, access to skills training provided by formal technical and vocational training institutions is often limited for them. There are various reasons for this, such as cultural resistance, lack of understanding of the usefulness of training, etc.

Also in this section cultural resistance is evident.

The construction VET sector is thus characterized by gender inequalities and stereotyping, reinforcing gender division of labour in occupational segregation in the labour market which is a constraint for women to enter into new, non-traditional and higher income professions. Girls and boys are channelled into different paths, usually resulting in different outcomes and in particular different earnings. The social mind-sets of families and girls'/women's own views are often responsible for bringing about such gender disparities.

These perceptions and trends in community thinking regarding gender roles, gender stereotypes on what women and girls are capable of, what they should do and should not do, need to be clearly understood and analysed without any biases for any action to redress the gender imbalance in VET to be adequately effective. Gender mainstreaming is a serious challenge in a society that has internalized these views and values in their traditions.

In addition to the awareness that women are strongly isolated in the sector, it is clear that there is a poor image of the entire sector and the construction professions, construction remains the last choice for those who do not want to study and want an immediate gain.



### Area Environment:

The image of a highly masculine sector remains strong, with great stereotypes not only related to gender but also to the construction profession.

The low positive image of the sector generates the "depopulation" of manual professions.

Lack of true professionalization. You can clearly perceive the prejudice that training is not necessary to work in the sector, you learn directly on the construction site.

*"The training is only necessary if the company asks for it"*

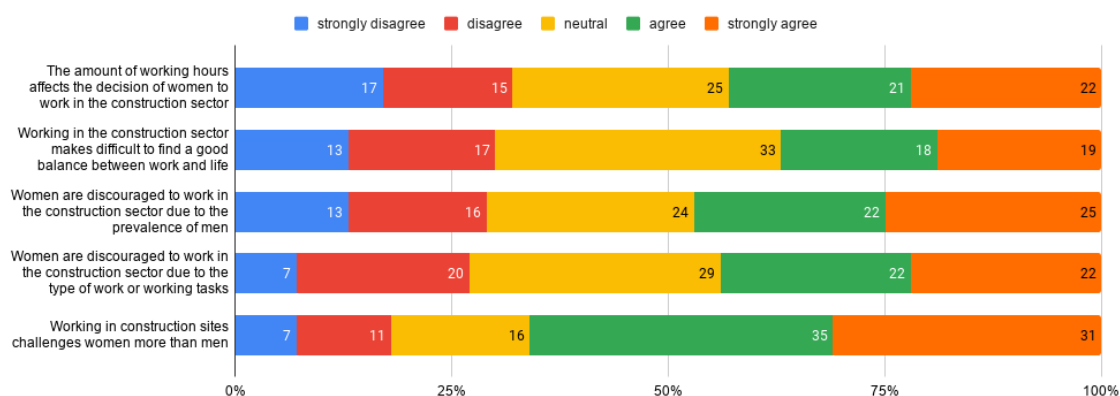
*"You learn more by staying two years on site than by taking the course"*

In addition, vocational training is not perceived as an enrichment of knowledge and skills but the attitude is the prevailing one common to the community in general that it is an alternative to a school curriculum and therefore a series b education.

To add to all the above factors, one of the most crippling barriers is the resigned attitude entertained by most of the women themselves who suffer from lack of self-confidence and are afraid to challenge the status quo. The fact is that the patriarchal mind-set is so dominating and has been so strongly internalized by all parties concerned that it is difficult for women to break out of that enclosure. They need thoughtful guidance, counselling and empowerment together with the trade skills for their full potentials to grow.

According to the survey participants, additional reasons preventing women to work in the construction sector are related to gender stereotypes, discrimination, and sexism episodes in the workplace. Other comments are addressed to the construction sector in general, which is still stigmatised as a 'physical' and tiring work environment with a lack of industrialisation and willing to cultural changes.

Figure 1: Main issues affecting the decision of women to work in the construction sector – numbers are expressed in %

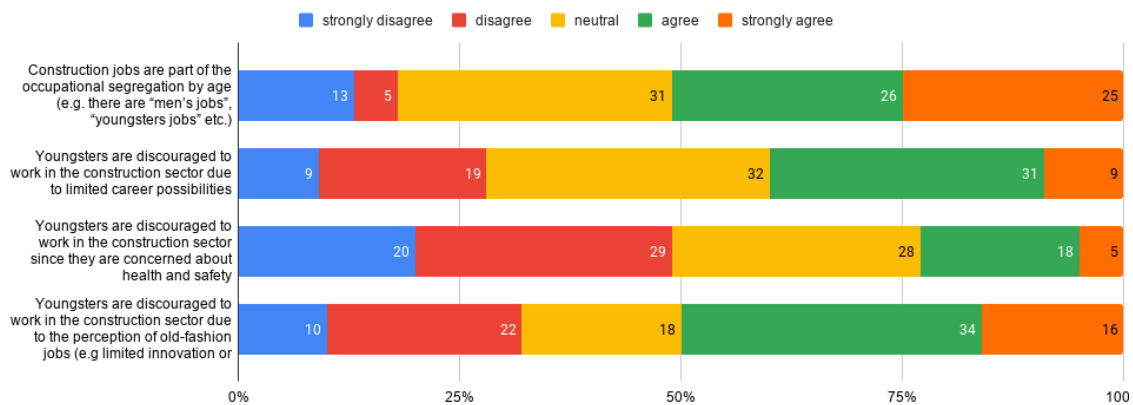


As suggestions to improve the involvement of women in the construction sector, some of the participants state that women should be invited to speak more frequently about their research and work - for instance through female role models campaigns and mentorship in the building industry and in universities. Other participants underlined the importance of organising



gender-equal conference panels and investing more money and time in trainings and gender equality within construction companies.

Figure 2: Main issues affecting the decision of youngsters to work in the construction sector – numbers are expressed in %



Besides the topics raised in Figure 2, the survey participants think that the youngsters are discouraged to work in construction because of the lack of job stability, low wages, and lack of career development.

To address these issues, possible solutions can be: raising the salaries; ameliorating labour conditions; promoting mentors and examples of successful construction workers who began their journey through different ways (work way up the system, education etc.); investing in the robotization of traditionally arduous and less secure tasks and in the training of technicians for the growing phase of industrialization and construction 4.0.

The findings show that there is no consistently reliable sex disaggregated data or even general information on either the overall structure of all formal construction VET institutions and their programmes or enrolment and retention of VET students and employment of teachers. Institutional figures that show trends in enrolment by sex are not readily available. This is a serious shortcoming that needs to be recognized and addressed.

Most significant to note in this data is that the overall number for female enrolment in construction VET overall is around 14% of the total student population, most of them in technical trainings or risk prevention topics. Likewise, the number of female instructors overall is about one-fifth of the total number within training centres.

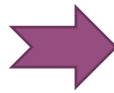
Gender-mainstreaming has not been effectively implemented in vocational training centres. There are merely three of seven key components of gender mainstreaming which can be implemented well, i.e. political will and leadership, political framework and gender statistics. However, the other four components, i.e. structure and mechanism, resources, infrastructures and civil society, were not well implemented.



## Possible improvement strategies

- 🎯 **Strengthen the orientation** to the professions starting from low schooling with the involvement of both genders.
- 🎯 **Producing positive images** of the industry with highly qualified products: restorations produced by women, energy efficient houses for which the construction know-how is high and professionalizing.
- 🎯 **Spread images** of the sector where there are women working.
- 🎯 **Acquaint men** on the entry of women on the construction site: promoting team games and/or simulations aimed at trainers, trainees, workers and entrepreneurs.

*Produce reflections on the fact that:*



- We all live in houses and that those who build them have great responsibilities. We all walk along roads and bridges that need to be built.
- Those who build belonging to different genres have different opinions and personalized professionalism.



### 3. Discussion

Implementing gender mainstreaming in education, especially in vocational school is not a matter of ease although the socialization and training on how to integrate gender perspective has been conducted. Only a part of all key components of gender mainstreaming can be successfully implemented at VET centres. The difficulty of implementing all the key components of gender mainstreaming at schools is because gender-responsive schools cannot be actualized without well-organized efforts, starting from policies, programs and activities. Therefore, principals' political will and leadership are very necessary, so that schools are able to grow the values of gender responsiveness.

Furthermore, gender-responsive vocational centres can be conducted through four aspects, namely internal, institutional, interpersonal and instructional.

#### ***Integrative approach***

- ⊙ information and promotion campaigns to encourage women to apply;
- ⊙ pre-training programs for women in order to familiarize them with the basic concepts, terminology and tools of training;
- ⊙ curricula and materials revision from a gender perspective;
- ⊙ private sector linkages and outplacement activities targeted to women;
- ⊙ training of trainers and staff in gender issues;
- ⊙ job readiness classes and outplacement activities geared to women's workplace needs, including issues on occupational stereotyping assertiveness, managing stress and discrimination, self-confidence building, interpersonal skills, and child care issues.

The integrative approach is particularly effective in existing, well-established training institutions, in which new activities can be introduced to complement the specialized technical training activities that are already provided. In such a situation, the specific needs of both men and women can be addressed in the design of the training programmes.

To ensure that gender issues are addressed during the design of a training programme, and that its objectives (including the effective participation of women) are met during execution, the project team should carry out a gender analysis throughout the preparation cycle (see appendix 1).



## Recommendations

### 1 Gender analysis of the complete training programme cycle<sup>1</sup>

The compilation and analytical interpretation of gender-disaggregated indicators is a central issue. Among the most common indicators are applicant/enrolment ratios, dropout rates, and labour market placement and outplacement rates, disaggregated by sex. These proportions/indicators will vary significantly by gender, age and educational level.

This information can be used to analyse the special needs of the female audience and specific approaches and activities can be introduced into the project to address them. Gender analysis is an integral part of identifying and characterizing the demographic characteristics of the target population.

Qualitative information or indicators are extremely important for interpreting quantitative measures and project results. A qualitative evaluation can assess the social and cultural constraints on women's participation in training, the capacity of the programme to change expectations and the level of motivation/self-esteem of these women, the existence of recruitment and counselling services, the perception of participants in support activities, etc. Various qualitative methodologies can be used, such as applicant/trainee attitude surveys and group empowerment workshops.

### 2 Set strategic and measurable objectives<sup>2</sup>

The information collected in the gender analysis can be used to set a target for the desired percentage of women participants. This is particularly useful at the planning stage of a programme. The greater the degree of occupational segregation in the labour market, the greater the need to specifically target the participation of women in non-traditional occupations in the design of any training programme.

The promotion of women in non-traditional occupations begins with encouraging women to train in these fields and supporting them in job placement, which in turn will reduce the misallocation of labour resources.

### 3 Curricula and learning materials review from a gender perspective

In many training institutions, the curricula and materials relate to traditional occupational patterns that often do not reflect the new occupations opening up to women in the growing sectors of the economy.

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 2



The review of training materials should incorporate and reflect positive images of women in the workplace, women's ability to perform the tasks of different occupations, the interaction between peers (women and men) in the workplace, new labour market patterns and the level of preparation of women in training. The process of reviewing curricula at the institution should also be strengthened to support the process of eliminating gender stereotypes.

While there has been concern in some training institutions about the materials developed for training purposes, the development of materials is only one aspect of the institutional change needed to encourage women to participate and succeed in training; other institutional changes, such as curriculum reform or gender training for trainers and counsellors, course schedules and locations compatible with women's other responsibilities, financial assistance and scholarships for women, etc., need to be addressed.

#### ④ Gender training of trainers and administrative staff

The effectiveness of teachers depends on several factors: the ability to communicate and interact with students; sensitivity to the multiple obstacles faced by students; the ability to diagnose the level of knowledge acquisition of students; and the ability to adjust the curriculum to reach a given audience.

Female teachers are excellent role models for female trainees, but so are male teachers. Gender training is important for educating trainers of both sexes on gender issues.

It is also important to provide gender training to staff who carry out the registration process of the training centre and who provide guidance and counselling services, so that they are able and motivated to present women with all the options available.

#### ⑤ Role model and mentoring programs for women

Positive images and role models are powerful tools for increasing women's participation in training programmes and broadening their horizons.

One of the most effective strategies for training women, particularly in non-traditional skills, is a role model programme, where women are identified as role models for female mentors in related fields.

The women could meet regularly with an individual or group of women trainees to discuss job possibilities, useful communication skills, workplace awareness, and to have general discussions that address the concerns of the trainees. As a possibility, the women trainees can sign a contract with the mentor on specific goals and objectives to be met during the training programme, and the women mentors serve as the main advisors and promoters for the women trainees.

For instance, in the immersive training experience for women of Women can Build (IO2), professional women were invited to participate in the training programme as trainers or counsellors and proved to be formidable role models to encourage the participants.



## ⑥ Labour market services and counselling

A facilitating element is the identification of new emerging markets that are not yet gender-stereotyped, with the assistance of the private sector. Market research can help identify areas where there is a lack of skilled labour and where employers would be interested in hiring apprentices. The benefit of training women for new emerging markets is that they will have fewer negative stereotypes to deal with compared to training in traditional areas.

A wide range of activities can follow the period of formal instruction in a training course, such as job placement activities, career counselling, internships, apprenticeships and other learning activities in enterprises. The most effective activities are those that expose the trainee to the actual workings of the enterprise.

Activities that link training to the private sector are highly effective in promoting women's participation by providing them with a better understanding of their options and improving their employment opportunities after the course has ended, particularly in male-dominated areas.

Services that support women during the job search process (with job interview skills, information on how to improve their appearance to look more professional, etc.) are also important, as women tend to have lower self-esteem than men, particularly when trying to enter non-traditional fields. These complementary activities are crucial to reducing drop-out rates, promoting job placement and transforming the expectations of all (participants, training institutions and enterprises).

## ⑦ Agreements between the industry and training institutions

Agreements between industry companies and training institutions can promote the training of women in the private sector, as well as various other institutions such as trade unions, women's associations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Awareness campaigns aimed at private sector industry and trade unions can be carried out to promote women in the workplace, as well as the holding of seminars and meetings, the dissemination of brochures and promotional campaigns to encourage women's work among private sector employers.

Strategies for building constructive links with the private sector and trade unions need to be strongly considered in order to promote quality training for women and men in areas that are in demand and that facilitate subsequent employment.

## ⑧ Campaigns and promotional measures

Advocacy efforts to encourage women to register and participate in training, including the use of appropriate messages, images and media, are extremely important. If the posters advertising the programme only show men, women may assume that they do not request it, or if the radio spots are not also used on stations that women listen to when they do, the entire target population will not be reached.

In particular, advocacy efforts should present a more up-to-date picture of gender roles, where both men and women enjoy a wide range of employment options.



Making messages attractive and appropriate to the context and audiences is a basic rule of any communication strategy. However, gender equality is not a simple product to advertise. In this case, making the message attractive does not mean simply finding the right words or images, but negotiating with the main actors what gender equality means specifically to the organisation and the sector, addressing possible misunderstandings and preconceptions.

It is recommended that advocacy campaigns are launched at national, regional and/or local level, giving wide coverage in the media. This effort will serve both to disseminate the activities of the institutions involved and to support the revitalisation of gender equality as a relevant issue in the public and political debate, taking advantage of its growing relevance at international level.

## 9 'Gender Focal Points' and networks

The role of a gender focal point is to collect and synthesize gender-related information, knowledge, ideas and activities and disseminate them to colleagues throughout the organization.

The gender focal point is the key staff member in an organization who is responsible for its gender mainstreaming strategy and for building the capacity of colleagues to incorporate gender issues into their work, in terms of both content and process.

Thus, the role of gender focal points is to "advocate for increased attention to and integration of gender equality and women's empowerment into agency policy and programming" (United Nations Training Centre for Women 2016).

Establishing new internal actors and sustaining them within the organization is one of the most effective ways to continue to promote change, long enough for it to take root within the organization. Indeed, it is capable of launching new actions and renewing existing ones, negotiating with leaders, mobilizing stakeholders, capitalizing on its own experience and learning from others.

Networks can be powerful tools for change, strengthening the links between administrative and management entities dealing with diversity and gender equality, improving cooperation and increasing the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming. Because they are informal, they are flexible in terms of objectives, activities and even membership, and can react quickly to change. Furthermore, they can be developed or supported to pursue different objectives at the same time, for example to lobby for new gender-sensitive provisions, support the implementation of equality plans or promote new measures, carry out projects, raise awareness or promote the long-term sustainability of measures.



## 10 Gender equality plans

When developing the Gender Equality Plan, it must be holistic and integrated. This means that the areas of intervention must be interdependent. The Plan has to address a variety of issues relevant to the whole community and organisational system.

For the training institutions, the equality plans are of great importance, mainly when conducting training actions under the gender perspective, since the internal dimension of the equality plan allows for the incorporation of the gender perspective in the provision of services.


The difficulty in implementing all the key components of gender mainstreaming in training institutions is that they cannot be done without well-organized efforts, based on policies, programmes and activities. The institutional will and leadership of managers is therefore very much needed if training centres are to grow in gender-sensitive values.

The equality plan is an opportunity to establish sustainable tools, procedures and cooperation with internal units to ensure regular data collection, promoting change in the mission, vision and strategy of the organization.



## APPENDIX 1

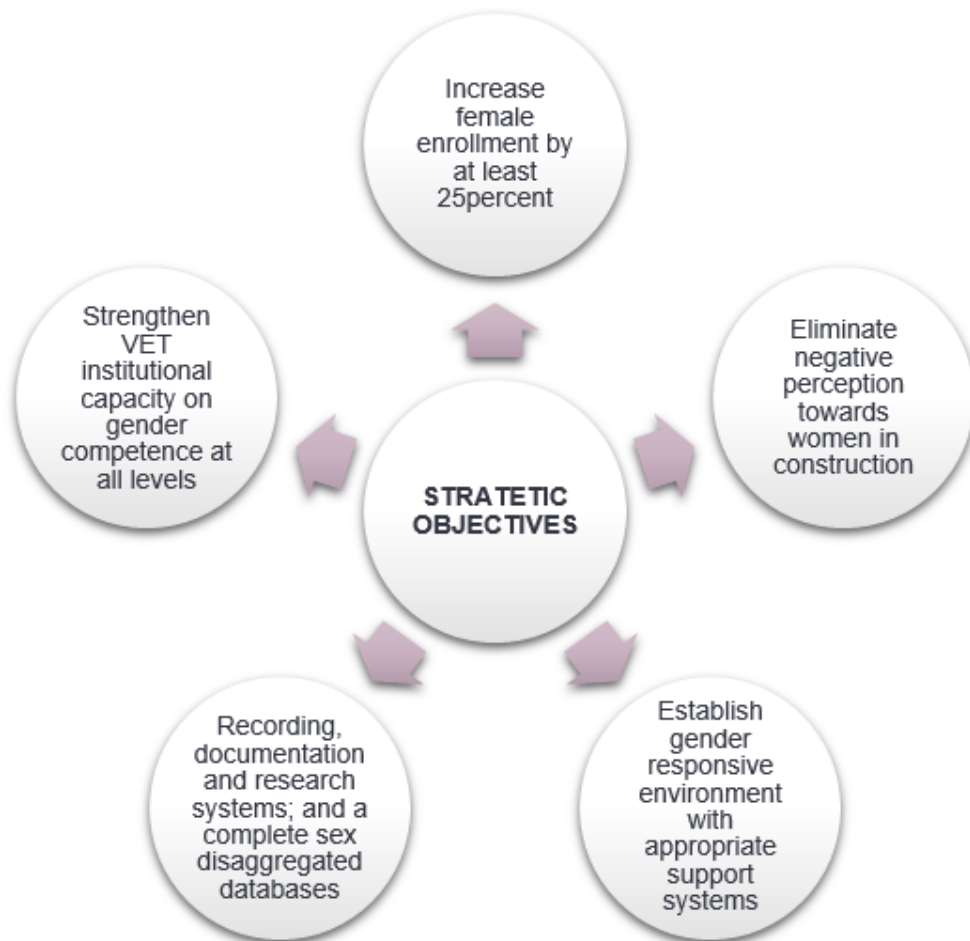
## Addressing gender issues throughout the entire cycle

PROGRAMME CYCLE	POSSIBLE ACTIONS TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION
 <p>The diagram illustrates the Programme Cycle as a vertical sequence of three stages, each marked with a checkmark in a circle. The stages are labeled: Identification, Orientation, and Analysis.</p>	<p>Gender analysis Institutional analysis Gender targeting of training</p>
	<p>New training approaches and support activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion campaigns.</li> <li>• New courses/curriculum/materials revision.</li> <li>• Private sector placement/job counselling.</li> <li>• Gender training of faculty and staff.</li> <li>• Multi-service support.</li> </ul>
	<p>Project appraisal with respect to women's issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate components into various aspects of programme.</li> <li>• Specific targets for programme size/characteristics.</li> <li>• Cost of specific activities.</li> <li>• Institutional representatives.</li> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation targets.</li> </ul>

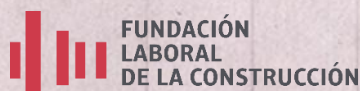


## APPENDIX 2

### Strategic Objectives







**FUNDACIÓN  
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Fundación Laboral de la Construcción  
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**AE** AGENCIA  
PARA EL EMPLEO  
Agencia de Colocación autorizada 13-2

Agencia para el Empleo del Ayuntamiento de Madrid  
(AE). Spain



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Fondazione ECIPA. Ente Confederale di Istruzione  
Professionale per l'Artigianato e le Piccole Imprese (CNA).  
Italy



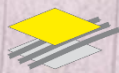
**FORMEDIL**  
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PROFESSIONALE NELL'EDILIZIA

Ente per la Formazione e l'Addestramento Professionale  
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l'Apprentissage du Bâtiment et des Travaux Publics  
(CCCA-BTP). France



**BZB**

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Baugewerbes e.V.

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