



**Let's care**

BUILDING SAFE AND CARING SCHOOLS  
TO FOSTER EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION  
AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

**LET'S CARE**

# **D1.8 Gender and diversity guidance report**



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
CoS	Community of Schools
EEA	European Education Area
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ESL	Early School Leaving
EU	European Union
NCB	National Coordination Board
PMAB	Let's Care Policy Makers Advisory Board



## Executive Summary

The European Commission and other international organisations point to disengagement as a key factor for academic underachievement and early school leaving (ESL) of students. The Let's Care project seeks to contribute to the understanding of the factors involved in school dropout and academic achievement. To do so it will develop a theoretical model that focus on the relational security of students across ecological levels to a) explain the processes leading to ESL and underachievement of basic educational competencies and b) base a logical model for intervention. The project adopts an approach based on attachment theory to foster equality and educational inclusion.

This guidance document has a two-folded aim: on the one hand to provide a theoretical approach for addressing and understanding the sources of disadvantage that prevent students of reaching their full potential at education, and, on the other hand, to provide a practical approach for the assessment and monitoring of how these disadvantages are address along the Let's Care project. Accordingly, two standards consisting on informed awareness and pragmatic assessment have been adopted to examine the Let's Care project from a gender and diversity perspective. A brief presentation on the relevance of the matter is followed by a gender sensitive analysis and a process for the assessment and monitoring of the project implementation.



## 1. Purpose and uses of these guidelines

The data from the last OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted in 2018 show that one in five 15-year-old students in Europe lacks adequate reading, maths or science competencies, pointing to a worsening trend in acquiring basic learning skills (OECD, 2019). The background report of the Working Group on Schools<sup>1</sup> stresses that early school leaving is directly related to the students' disengagement and underachievement, and is strongly associated with a series of cumulative disadvantages resulting from personal, familiar, socio-economic and educational factors (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). In this regard, the European Commission has pointed to the benefits of adopting a whole-school approach that engages the educational community in cooperation with external stakeholders at the large society to enable the resources and processes that increase inclusive education and foster the students' academic success (European Commission, 2015).

According to previous research, the lack of redistribution (i.e. an imbalance in the social composition or allocation of resources and services among schools based on economic inequality), lack of recognition (i.e. the unequal value and respect of historically vulnerable social groups in a given context based on cultural inequality), lack of care (i.e. the differential support, relational safety and attention based on affective inequality) and lack of representation (i.e. differential power that the voices and perspectives of some actors based on political inequality) are at the root causes of educational exclusion (Tarabini & Wang, 2018). Let's Care aims to understand and improve the caring dimension of educational inclusion and school success by identifying crucial determinants affecting student's relational security and their impact on underachievement, disengagement and school drop-out. The project adopts an ecological perspective that analyses four different contexts (individual, relational, community and political) and acknowledges the need to promote an inclusive educational model to offer every child the opportunity to develop their full potential. However, although the need to promote equality and overcoming gender and diversity discrimination is becoming increasingly evident, it is still an objective that has not been fully achieved in the European context (OECD, 2020). Along this text, we will use the term equality to refer at the universal principle recognising that all human beings hold intrinsic dignity and therefore hold fundamental rights. Conversely, the term equity will be used to refer at how this universal principle is applied in the practice, recognising the different circumstances of people and responding to the need of addressing these circumstances to really achieve equal opportunities and rights (Rawls, 1971).

**The purpose of this document is to provide the necessary guidelines to address and care for the equality dimension during the implementation of Let's Care with a specific focus on gender and diversity.** For the development of the Let's Care project, a gender and diversity perspective must be

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<sup>1</sup> sub-group on Pathways to School Success



taken into account as a transversal process that permeates the full project's implementation. To these ends, this guide adopts two standards: informed awareness and pragmatic assessment. The first involves being sensitive to the detection of sources of inequality – both internally and in the area that is the purpose of research and intervention – and the second is to implement a systematised evaluation and strategies on gender and diversity.

Following these standards, this report provides in the following sections, on the one hand, an overview to address and understand the sources of disadvantages preventing students from reaching their full potential in education, and on the other hand, a practical approach for the assessment and monitoring of how these disadvantages are addressed along the Let's Care project implementation, that includes the conformation of a Gender and Diversity Committee (GDC)<sup>2</sup> and periodic assessment of the project's activities.

## 2. A person-centred approach for a safe education

### 2.1. Education policy in the European context

Education is embedded within European countries' national competencies and at the heart of their welfare systems. However, at the level of the European Union (EU), the parallel development of educational policy for more than twenty years has provided a broader framework defining coordinated goals among the member states of the Union: from the Lisbon Strategy (Council of Europe, 2000), across the Education and Training (ET) frameworks of 2010 and 2020 (European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, 2010; European Commission. Directorate-General for Education, Youth, 2021) and up to the present European Education Area (EEA) (Council Resolution on a Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), 2021).

The EEA sets a common implementation framework in the EU that streams from broader international commitments aimed at accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (United Nations, 2015), which identifies the principles of equity and inclusion at the basis of education policies and systems (UNESCO, 2017). In this regard, specific mention must be done to other international commitments such as the Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNESCO & United Nations, 1977), that recognises the right to education for all, the Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO, 1960), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) or the Incheon Framework 2030 (UNESCO, 2016), which foster the international safeguarding of educational rights and coordination of global strategies for development and implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> Full description in section 3.3. (p.29) of this document

The complex and unique context that the European Union represents involves that, for implementing these strategies, multilevel governance structures – coordinating local, regional, national and European authorities – must engage multiple stakeholders in policy-making and articulate targeted allocation of specific funding and resources to achieve the goals established across levels and contexts (Caponio & Jones-Correa, 2018). The financial crisis of the late 2000s, the refugee crisis of the early 2010s and the Covid-19 pandemic derived in an exceptional context fostering the involvement of EU institutions and the impact of EU-level policy-making in national education systems (Alexiadou & Rambla, 2022). As a result, European governance and policy-making have provided a social investment strategy explicit in the EEA that puts education on the front-line of political action and focuses on achieving quality and inclusive education to build inclusive, cohesive and sustainable societies (Hippe et al., 2016). In this regard, it is the EEA critically emphasises equity and inclusion as core elements of the strategy and, for the first time, a common EU-level framework officially distinguishes education as the key to “building cohesive societies and to sustaining European competitiveness” and “stresses the importance of ensuring equal opportunities and inclusive education, paying special attention to disadvantaged groups and investing in re-skilling and up-skilling” (Council Resolution on a Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), 2021). This way, EEA strategy seeks to prompt equity and inclusion as cross-cutting mechanisms at all levels to promote and safeguard the core European values of social justice and protection, equality between women and men, protection of the rights of the child and the promotion of the of its citizens' fulfilment (European Union, 2022).

## 2.2. Key notions on safe education: equity, inclusion and intersectionality

This work adheres to the European Commission's definition of **equity** as “the extent to which individuals can take advantage of education and training, in terms of opportunities, access, treatment and outcomes” (European Commission, 2006, p. 2). In the same way, we adopt the UNESCO (2008, 2017) definition of **inclusive education** as “the process of reinforcing the capacity of education systems to welcome and reach out to all learners [...] that involves the transformation of schools and other centres of learning so as to cater for all children”.

These two political definitions embody the spirit of the public policies in place in the participating EU counties of the Let's Care project and shape the social opportunities and institutional structures in which education takes place across countries. The promotion and leverage of safe education models at the policy level involve a systemic shift leading to more proactive and protective educational systems that acknowledge the value of diversity, seek to engage all members of the community in the educational process and promote the well-being of students (United Nations,



2009). This political and governmental action translates into the practices and meso-level policies adopted by each school as a critical individual educational institution.

To address the articulation of both equity and inclusion in practice, we subscribe to Ainscow's (2016) definition of **inclusion for strategic purposes** and take into account inclusion as:

- A process: involves iteratively evaluating students' needs, the learning opportunities they receive and how to best respond to difference and diversity to foster their educational outcomes most effectively.
- The identification and removal of barriers to participation and learning: meaning that multiple sources of information and stakeholders in the educational community must identify risks and barriers, nurture problem-solving and planning improvements in policy and practice.
- Concerning the presence, participation, and achievement of all students: in this regard, Ainscow (2016, p. 147) defines 'presence' as "where children are educated, and how reliably and punctually they attend"; 'participation' as "the quality of their experiences whilst they are there and, therefore, must incorporate the views of the learners themselves"; and 'achievement' as "about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results."
- Particularly involved with students at higher risk of marginalisation, exclusion, or underachievement: this aspect highlights the critical nature of the inclusion process. It stresses the responsibility of the parts involved in educational policy and practice to commit to progress, ensuring that the students with a higher risk are given the necessary opportunities to attain presence, participation and academic achievement within the education system.

This way, **inclusive schools** are institutions that act as social links (Claridge, 2004). Schools strengthen educational communities' capabilities by reaching out to their members and bridging their educational needs with the public structures with power and resources to implement solutions for meeting them (Ainscow, 2020). The educational culture of inclusive schools is therefore marked by participative local policies and practices in which students' achievements, attitudes, diversity and well-being are acknowledged, promoted and valued. It also recognises the potential of all students to contribute to their communities meaningfully and, ultimately, to the success of their societies (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). However, far from 'just' being a theoretical approach to education, several studies with large sample sizes across many diverse contexts have shown that inclusive education is also the most effective model. For example, Hehir et al. (2016) found in a systematic review of 180 studies conducted in 25 countries consistent evidence supporting that "included students develop stronger skills in reading and mathematics, have higher rates of attendance, are less likely to have behavioural problems, and are more likely to complete secondary school than students who have not been included". Hattie (2008) performed a synthesis of over 800 meta-

analyses on educational achievement and found that inclusive models showed better results than other segregating or assimilating approaches. Lastly, a recent paper by Kefallinou et al. (2020) thoroughly discussed the educational, social and economic justification for adopting inclusive models to educations for improving quality of education, learner's outcomes and long-term social inclusion.

In conclusion, inclusive education is a rights-based educational model that helps frame long-term goals and technical guidelines. The fundamental principles of this model are: a) to engage all students in learning and instruction; b) to adapt the context capabilities to promote the full potential development through a dialogic exchange among the educational system, educators and learners; c) to identify and act to remove barriers to learning; d) to acknowledge, value and care for the diversity of students taking in account their individualised needs and e) to counteract the risks that generate higher disadvantages in students. Its implementation is based on proven effective interventions and, according to previous evidence, produces better educational and social outcomes (Ainscow, 2020).

However, building inclusive schools involves considering the broader educational community in which education takes place and its influence on children's development, well-being, and educational achievement. The Let's Care project delves into how **interactions among the community, teachers and learners affect the educational (and socio-emotional) outcomes in education**. Attachment theory applied to the educational context shows that relational security is one of the key elements for academic success. Children who establish better relationships with their teachers, in terms of closeness, trust and security, show better competencies in variables associated with academic processes, such as attention, regulation or confidence in the teaching-learning process, which have a direct impact on their academic results, externalizing and internalizing behaviour and school engagement (García-Rodríguez et al., 2023; Hamre et al., 2014; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; D. L. D. L. Roorda et al., 2011). Additionally, research underlines that these effects are even greater for high-risk students (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; D. L. Roorda et al., 2017). Relational security is thus understood as the initial basis that allows developing the individual and relational competencies necessary for acquiring new knowledge and facing academic challenges. Moreover, dyadic teacher-student relationships are related to school climate, which in turn impacts school engagement, and this school engagement modulates academic results, especially in secondary school (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; D. L. Roorda et al., 2017). In other words, inclusion necessarily involves care: without relational security in the school context, there is a much greater likelihood of school failure or early dropout.

Ultimately, the Let's Care project holds a **holistic conception of the person** and an **ecological conception of the social systems**. It means adopting a *biopsychosocial approach* to human beings assuming that the psychosocial and developmental aspects of learners are interconnected and shaped by their interaction with their educational settings (WHO, 2004). Thus, educational

outcomes cannot be properly understood in isolation from the subjective status and social contexts of the individual experiences (Amholt et al., 2020). Bronfenbrenner's *ecological theory* (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007) points to the nested system of interactions – micro, meso, exo, macro and chronosystems – that influence children's development as shaping the ways in which children's growth and learning. In this regard, a paper of Johnson (2008) develops in depth the process and interactions affecting students' achievement, pointing to the complex and dynamic nature of schools and the need to identify the sources of energy loss, points of bifurcation, and levels of initial sensitivity within the layers of the system.

Adopting an **intersectional perspective** allows encompassing the multilevel, multicomponent and dynamic factors affecting educational outcomes. All students hold the same fundamental rights; however, they experience diverse sources of disadvantage and inequality based on the intersection of different social categories that lead to better or worse educational outcomes. Moreover, these processes of social categorisation and stratification lead to cumulative disadvantages that increase the risk of experiencing limited opportunities later in life (Smyth & McCoy, 2009). In this regard, intersectionality theory highlights the constructivist nature of identity building and the key role of agency and subjective experience, remarking the interactions among the different axes of social categorisation of individuals and the need to analyse how these intersections of social labels and perceptions are not value-free but situated in the nested social system – with specific power dynamics – in which the individual lives (Bešić, 2020). In practice, the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 implemented by the EU adopts intersectionality as the foundational principle to base mainstreaming targeted actions (European Commission, 2022).

### 3. An examination of gender and diversity in the Let's Care project

Inspired by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) tools for gender impact assessment and gender mainstreaming (EIGE, 2017, 2019), we assess the Let's Care project in the following sections. Firstly, a brief discussion on the relevance of how the interactions among gender and other axes of diversity derive in cumulative disadvantage based on the intersection of social categories across the student's diversity. Second, we conduct a gender and diversity sensitive analysis of the project's work packages and the main issues concerning gender and diversity that should be considered, providing specific guidelines and tools. Lastly, a plan to monitor the implementation and conducting periodic assessment by the GDC is presented.

### 3.1. Evidence on the relevant influence of gender and diversity in educational achievement.

The Let's Care project addresses the changing and complex interactions that influence the inclusion dynamics of students. We adopt an intersectional perspective that acknowledges the person as holistic and intersected by social labels that impact their agency, power and influence in their communities and societies. In this regard, following the UNESCO (2009) guidelines, the aim is to reach multi-disadvantaged learners and individuals who are not currently in education, employment, or training (NEETs), with a focus on considering factors such as gender, ethnicity (especially Roma children), migration status, socio-economic status, (dis)ability, and (non)parental care, which will be analysed under this intersectional perspective, as **key target groups for inclusion**. The project will put special consideration in the analysis of **gender** as a **transversal dimension** that distinctively increases the risk of exclusion when in interaction with other axes of disadvantage.

**Gender inequality** is a primary concern of social justice globally and a specific research factor to bear in mind when developing safe educational systems. The globalisation of social problems, with transnational dynamics operating in the generation of multiple disadvantages and discrimination, puts on the table the need, on the one hand, to pay attention to the new ways in which gender still intersects with other social dimensions and, on the other hand, to develop gender mainstreaming policies at global and national instances (Fraser, 2005). Increasingly, interpreting gender inequalities by taking into account intersectional theory and the multiple cumulative disadvantages that learners can experience is showing new paths for implementing inclusive policies and practices that broaden the access, participation, and success of students in education (Jayachandran, 2015; León, 2016)

Firstly, when looking at **gender gaps in educational attainment** specifically, previous research shows that in many countries, women outperform men's results. When examining the **gaps in academic achievement**, female students also show better results than boys in reading tests while still lagging largely behind in mathematics and more slightly in science tests (OECD, 2020). Previous studies point among the causes of these disparities to the features and instruction styles across national educational systems, the school environment (quality, organisation, policies and practices in place...), the socialisation and conception of masculinity in peer cultures at their educational settings or to the family inputs received during childhood (Autor et al., 2016; Hattie, 2008; Hermann & Kopasz, 2021; Legewie & DiPrete, 2012).

Second, previous literature shows the effect of gender as an interacting factor of cumulative disadvantage in educational achievement. For instance, the 2018 PISA results obtained, analysing worldwide patterns of processes affecting the students' performance has shown the determinant impact of providing equal opportunities for learning (OECD, 2020). It has also revealed how gender interacts, on the one hand, with the student's attitudes and expectations towards learning, and on



the other hand, with the social impact of families and school communities in their educational outcomes, emphasising the potential role of the parents involvement, and the encouragement that children receive in their proximal contexts at the school (OECD, 2015). In this regard, the cumulative effects of the intersection of social factors with gender increases as learners grow older (Eurydice, 2011).

Factors like the ethnicity and race of students or the social class have been widely studied related to gender in previous works. For instance, a meta-analysis by Parker et al. (2020) showed that the gender gaps were largest as the SES level increased and that social class acted as a statistically significant moderator. Ethnic diversity also showed effects with gender gaps, boys turned out favoured in maths utility value when the degree of ethnic diversity was lower and girls when it was higher. Longitudinal data from the United Kingdom also shows the differentiated effects of disadvantage related to the gender and migrant background of participants (Zuccotti & O'Reilly, 2019). In fact, a study by Autor et al. (2015) showed that the more disadvantaged the family, the bigger the gap among girls and boys; and that these also interact in the cases of children with disability. The composition of the family and the parental care also seem to influence the educational outcomes, and previous studies show that boys double the rates of behavioural and disciplinary issues in single-parent homes (Autor et al., 2016).

In conclusion gender is a relevant variable to address when looking to improve the learners educational achievement. Whether as a key variable impacting the student's outcomes or as a source of variability in interaction with a diverse range of other social variables, gender produces complex effects on educational results. The amount of solid evidence supporting the need to analyse the influence of gender and other social sources of diversity in the research process motivates the generation of specific guidelines for assessment within the Let's Care project.

## **3.2. Gender sensitive analysis of the project: guidelines and tools**

This section discusses the various work packages and their corresponding tasks (Figure 1), as well as the ways in which we have incorporated the gender and diversity dimension into each of them.

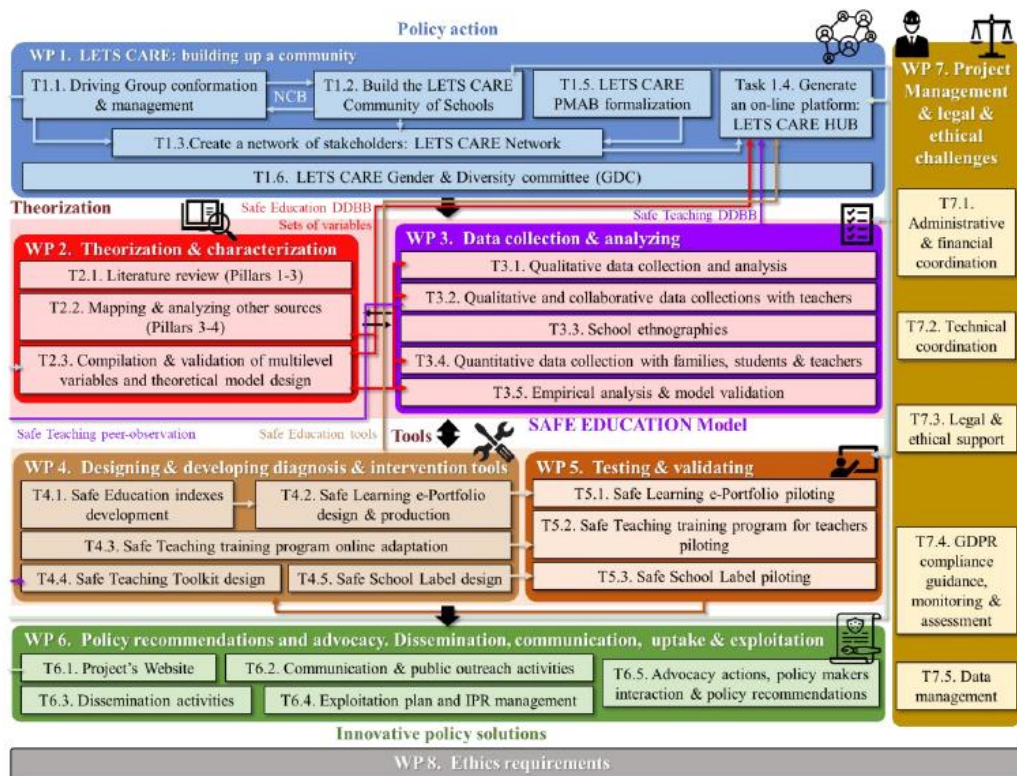


Figure 1: Graphical presentation of Let's Care components

The project will implement a five-phase holistic approach to research, with a focus on theoretical explanation, empirical and practical implementation. A co-creation and collaborative dynamics strategy will be pursued and materialised in the different phases. It will use a user-led, participatory method to involve stakeholders, particularly teachers and students, throughout the design, validation and implementation phases.

The theoretical explanation of the project will include creating a theoretical Safe Education framework based on a comprehensive **desk research**. It will feed and enable the implementation of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods to identify indicators and determinants affecting Safe Education, and their interrelations with underachievement in reading, mathematics and sciences, and early school drop-out.

The empirical implementation, **data collection and tool development**, will involve the generation of knowledge which will be translated into the development, testing, and validation of a series of multilevel participatory and diagnostic tools aiming at improving school achievement through fostering security in most vulnerable European learning contexts. The permeation of the project will be ensured by the construction of different stakeholders and internal co-creation and managing infrastructure.

The practical implementation, formulation of novel policy actions, will focus on **promoting secure communities** that facilitate a safe/caring and advocacy approach. This phase will involve the



formulation of novel policy actions focused on promoting inclusive education practices and addressing potential variations due to gender and diversity, including sex/gender, ethnicity, class, religion and (dis)ability.

Overall, the project will take a **multilevel and iterative** approach to ensure that the gender and diversity dimension is fully considered and integrated in all phases of the research, from theorization to implementation.

To make it easier for the reader to understand and track the progress of our inclusion of this dimension, it has been decided to include a table at the end of each section. This table will contain a list of indicators that will provide a clear and concise overview of how gender and diversity should be taken into account in each work package.

### **3.2.1. *Let's Care community and policy action***

The project aims to enhance the transactional learning and collaboration among authorities by establishing sustainable network and structures, incorporating diverse perspectives, and ensuring the replicability and continuation of results after funding ends. The project will also involve co-creation mechanisms. To facilitate the project's activities and ensure a collaborative approach, a **"Driving Group"** and **"Gender Diversity Committee (GDC)"** (see section 3.3., p.29) will be established. The Driving Group, consisting of two representatives from each Consortium partner, and the GDC will ensure that an **inclusive approach** is taken throughout the research process, paying close attention to the perspectives of gender and diversity in all stages of the project.

A **Community of Schools (CoS)** will be installed within the project, which will initially include 18 schools from the countries where fieldwork will take place, divided into 6 local/national school communities. The schools selected for this study will be carefully chosen to reflect a variety of educational levels, programs, and perspectives. They will be located in areas with socio-economically disadvantaged populations to ensure representation of the social stratification of the region. As far as the community population's gender, cultural background and personal situation are concerned, we will simply reflect the current reality without implementing any kind of intervention. All this information will be valuable in constructing metrics and drawing final conclusions.

Some of the project tasks will be coordinated by the **National Coordination Board (NCB)**, which will invite up to 120 new schools to conduct the qualitative data collection and join the Community. The 120 schools will be chosen to reflect the diversity of Europe, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with migrant backgrounds, and those with special needs. Care will be taken to ensure the representation of genders. The schools will come from various profiles, including early childhood education centres, primary, secondary (general and vocational), second chance schools, public, private, rural, urban, and will have gender, ethnic, social and linguistic



diversity. By considering these variables, we will be able to conduct an analysis of the schools' situation from a gender and diversity perspective.

The **Let's Care Network** will be composed of different stakeholders which assure the representation of heterogeneous and diverse actors' vision, perspectives and narratives. The aim is to involve as many stakeholders as possible in a strategic way, representing local, national and international levels, as well as the relevant types of stakeholders for each level. An engagement strategy will be created to ensure the strategic participation of all stakeholders in achieving the project's goals.

A **Let's Care HUB** will be created to allow an effective communication and content management for project partners, collaborators and stakeholders. It has been designed to achieve several objectives. Firstly, it aims to ease communication and exchange among project partners and collaborators, such as the teachers, school directors and stakeholders, allowing them to share information, ideas and feedback in a collaborative and co-operative way. An inclusive tracking system will be implemented by asking for personal information such as gender, cultural background, and status during the registration process to evaluate the inclusiveness of the tool. Secondly, it serves as a central location where all the project's products and results can be stored and accessed. Finally, the platform is intended to be a hub for building communities of practice, advocacy and policy networks among stakeholders. It will be a place for the school community and the stakeholders to access relevant materials, exchange ideas and build relationships with one another. Bringing together diverse perspectives and points of view is crucial in order to ensure participation of all members, with a special emphasis on including and valuing the perspectives of different genders and diverse groups. Access to the Hub will be available through registration on the project website and will include a library of public deliverables, publications, and training materials; documentation of data collection methodologies (we will ensure the representation of diversity and gender among the groups with specific strategies as outlined in the following sections), ethical protocols, and questionnaire; a database of policies, programs, and projects related to safe education for all; a moderated social network; project tools; an Intranet for internal documentation and communication; a platform for collecting qualitative data; and a Safe teaching Lab, which will provide a space for teachers to share and validate safe practice, and to observe and train in the observation practices. Additionally, the project will seek to ensure the cognitive accessibility to the technology for all participants, including design and implementation of features that cater to diverse cognitive abilities and needs.

Lastly, a "**Let's Care Policy Makers Advisory Board (PMAB)**" will be established, made up of current and former policy makers with experience in creating and implementing school policies at the national, regional, and local levels. The members will be selected to represent diverse experiences from across Europe and from outside of the EU. This group of experts will provide feedback on the project's achievements and facilitate connections with other policy makers to increase awareness and adoption of the "Safe Education" approach in relevant policy-making forums.



RELEVANT QUESTIONS	DATA NEEDED	SOURCE OF DATA
Are men and women represented equally or disproportionately in different groups and organization within our community?	% of gender representation in different groups and organisations within the community	Let's Care Community
What is the percentage of women in leadership positions within the school communities?	% of women in leadership position in the school communities	Hub registration
What is the percentage of women in leadership positions among the stakeholders?	% of women in leadership position among stakeholders	Hub registration
Are men and women represented equally or disproportionately in different groups and organization among the stakeholders?	% of gender representation in different groups and organizations among the stakeholders	Hub registration
Is the material in the HUB accessible?	N. persons who can't get access to the HUB	Let's Care Community

Table 1: WP1 indicators

### 3.2.2. Theorization and characterisation

The **Let's Care theoretical model** will concentrate on the four levels of observation defined in the project's proposal at different ecological levels (Figure 2).

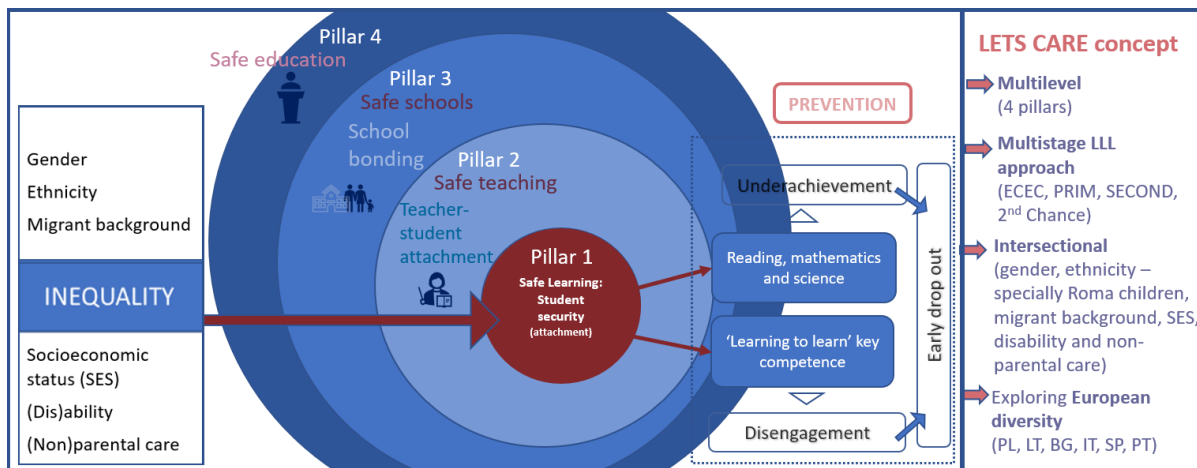


Figure 2. Let's Care theoretical model - the 4 Pillars

The choice of a **methodology** for the desk research will affect the entire project by determining a first selection of the four sets of variables by observation levels: "Safe Learning", "Safe Teaching", "Safe Schools" and "Safe Education", all specified for the different stages (ECEC, primary, secondary). These variables will be used to signify the quality, factors, and underlying reasons for

learning outcomes and will form the foundation for creating a theoretical model of Safe Education that will be established and verified through empirical research.

As expected, the synthesis of evidence derived from the literature reviews and the selection of articles done within them will build the foundation of the project's theoretical framework and reflect an inclination towards the gender and diversity agenda on the teacher-student attachment and the relational safety of the educational environment:

- At individual level, gender differences in the dynamics of student's socio-emotional security will be investigated, adopting an intersectional perspective. This intersectional perspective allows us to evaluate the extent to which gender inequalities interact and are enhanced or mitigated when other diversity dimensions are present, such as social class, ethnic origin, migrant origin, or disability.
- At relational level, we will explore how gender and diversity dynamics may be interacting with Safe Teaching competencies in the different development stages.
- At the community level, we will examine the impact of gender and diversity perspectives on student achievement in a more systemic manner, including the communication and relationships between teachers, families, schools, and peers.
- At the political level, we will examine whether policies and programs adopt a gender and diversity perspective in education (further details in the next section).

The research team has set several strategies that allow the respect of an intersectional standpoint. For this purpose, it is necessary to distinguish between the scientific literature review, which will examine the current state of the field, and evaluation of policies and programs which will examine the current state of inclusive education in terms of government policies.

### *Literature review*

Concerning the literature review, the first important thing the team will bear in mind is about being intentional about searching for and including a critical literature that amplifies and empowers the voices of under-represented groups. This includes looking for publications from journals or authors and theoretical/methodological approaches that are known for focusing on diversity and inclusion in the educational field. When possible and without falling into a reductionist approach, a particular attention will be paid to the articles that address both key structural and political factors that intersect students learning experiences. To do so, we draw on Shields (2008, p.5) proposals to look at structural factors that reflect “the ways in which the individual's legal status or social needs marginalize them” and political factors that highlight “the different and possibly conflicting needs and goals of the respective groups from which an individual draw her or his identity”.

As the **research methodology** is intended to seek valid ways to represent reality, it's important to be aware of potential biases in the literature. The field of research may be dominated by one particular group or perspective, and it's important to consider how this might influence the findings



and conclusions of the studies reviewed (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). The researchers will pay particular attention to the articles that do analyse differences between males and females and those that also analyse possible differences by ethnicity, migrant background, socio-economic, (none) parental care status, or disability in relation to school success, work and personal spheres.

The **selection of articles** that employ gender-sensitive and inclusive language will receive particular attention over those that do not and will serve as a crucial guide for our methodological framework, to be utilized in all stages of the research (details on identifying and implementing gender-sensitive and inclusive language can be found in section 3.2.6).

Additionally, the research team will reflect on its own biases, assumptions and world-views, promoting awareness and actively counteracting against social reproduction dynamics that perpetuate inequality. Collaborating with people from different backgrounds can help to bring different viewpoints and experiences to the literature review process and make it more inclusive. Since it is an intercultural and international research team, we bring to the table diverse perspectives, and a dialogic exchange among and within the research teams must be fostered.

### *Policies, guidelines, programs and projects*

At political level, the research team will assess where public policies and programs stand in terms of social equity and inclusiveness at European, national, regional and local level. To achieve this, it is essential to analyse and evaluate the consequences of these policies and programmes in gender, class and ethnic bias and to assess their effectiveness in questioning or removing inequalities in education. Different biases could affect policies and programs, the first of this is the “intersectional invisibility” (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), that is referred to exclusion of the educational needs and the problems of multidiscriminated groups of students. The second bias refers to the decontextualized consideration of intersectional inequalities caused by the “adding and removing” (Hankivsky, 2012) them from the legislation landscape. The third bias is the result of the reproduction of classic stereotypes with regards to certain multi-discriminated categories (Hankivsky, 2012), which contribute to their stigmatization (Lombardo & Agustín, 2012).

Guidelines have been formulated that will allow the project team to find regulatory or conceptual gaps that indirectly facilitate the extension of non-inclusive situations in schools.

Firstly, it's important to conduct a gender and diversity audit: this involves analysing existing policies and programs at all the mentioned levels to identify any potential biases or disparities that may disproportionately impact certain groups of students, such as girls, boys, students from different ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds, or students with disabilities. Doing this, a gender and diversity lens will be used; when developing or revising policies and programs, consider how they may affect different groups of students and actively seek out the perspectives of those who may be impacted. For this purpose, simultaneous interaction between categories should be carried out, considering also other type of differentiation and inequality, such as territory (i.e. urban/rural,



central/peripheral) and (dis)ability (Rodrigo, 2022). The intersectional approach is useful to identify new profiles that would remain invisible and under-represented without the crossing of gender and other specific characteristics (Rodrigo, 2022). This intersectional framework allows to change the binary thinking relationships in more inclusive and interactive terms and helps in recognizing “structural and systematic source of discrimination” (Rodrigo, 2022) that affect specific groups that have to lead with various prejudices.

In parallel, the mapping process will also bear in mind the key objectives of the Gender and Equality Strategy that involve:

- Ending gender-based violence.
- Challenging gender stereotypes.
- Closing gender gaps in the labour market.
- Achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy.
- Addressing the gender pay and pension gaps.
- Closing the gender care gap.
- Achieving gender balance in decision-making and in politics.

Policies and programs should ensure inclusiveness and accessibility. From our end, we will analyse whether those are inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities and those from diverse backgrounds. This includes providing appropriate support and accommodations as needed, and avoiding any language or imagery that may be offensive or exclude certain groups of students.

Lastly, an examination of the language used to govern the educational system will be conducted to determine if gender-sensitive and inclusive language is being employed.

It's important to note that these guidelines should be adjusted to each local context and culture and should be seen as a starting point for tailoring the approach to the needs and possibilities of each context.

Finally, it's of our interest to remember that this is an ongoing process, and it's always important to be aware of one's own biases and assumptions and to continue to seek out new outlooks and knowledge.

RELEVANT QUESTIONS	DATA NEEDED	SOURCE OF DATA
Does the research involve primary sources that analyse the significance of gender and diversity?	N. of articles that consider gender and diversity from an intersectional approach <sup>3</sup>	Scopus, WoS, EBSCO

<sup>3</sup> The same indicator could be used for policies and programs as well

Is the methodology designed to identify (potential) variations due to gender/diversity?	The data for this indicator is generated by the research team. It assesses the articles on a scale from 0 to 2, where 2 signifies that the methodology thoroughly takes into account and accounts for variations caused by gender and diversity, 1 that it partially do it and 0 signifies that it does not.	Articles used for the literature review
Is the methodology designed to identify (potential) variations due to diversity, including ethnicity, class and (dis)ability?	The data for this indicator is generated by the research team. It assesses the articles on a scale from 0 to 2, where 2 signifies that the methodology thoroughly takes into account and accounts for variations caused by gender and diversity, 1 that it partially do it and 0 signifies that it does not.	Articles used for the literature review

Table 2. WP2 indicators. Source: EC, 2011

### 3.2.3. Data collection and analysis

WP3 data collection and analysis should be based on the United Nations' considerations regarding gender statistics:

*“In summary, gender statistics are defined by the sum of the following characteristics:*

- a) Data are collected and presented by sex as a primary and overall classification;*
- b) Data reflect gender issues;*
- c) Data are based on concepts and definitions that adequately reflect the diversity of women and men and capture all aspects of their lives;*
- d) Data collection methods take into account stereotypes and social and cultural factors that may induce gender bias in the data”* (United Nations Statistical Division, 2016, p. 1).

Therefore, the Let’s Care team will bear in mind that **gender statistics are not only about data disaggregation but also about gender concepts, methods, and issues**. So as to follow those guidelines, the Let’s Care project will pay attention to the following pieces of advice.

Firstly, the methodological approach should consider students' and teachers' expectations, needs, and situations and if these are different depending on sex, age, migrant background, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, disabilities, non-parental care, school stage or school characteristics (public/private or urban/rural). Let’s Care academic partners will have read about gender and diversity inequalities in the education field, such as gender-based choices across study fields, and properly operationalise them in the research design (EIGE, 2017). Nonetheless, the data collection

methodology should also allow researchers to check if there are issues that concern vulnerable populations that should be included in the research strategy.

Second, the subject should be approached from different and mixed methodologies to provide a rich understanding. Thus, in qualitative research, the Let's Care team should identify specific cases that allow the team to understand the studied phenomenon (Hernández-Sampieri, 2014, p. 384). Besides, especially in qualitative data collection, researchers should generate inclusive dynamics in order to create safe environments in which everyone feels comfortable sharing opinions. During participants' selection for Let's Care interviews with stakeholders and policy-makers, it will be important to include different experienced voices that can add relevant information about gender, migrant or disability perspectives in the field of school disengagement, underachievement, and early drop-out. In addition, the methodology should ensure that participants provide different views from different power positions. For instance, the Let's Care project should contact not only headmasters but also teachers.

Conversely, in quantitative research, the data collection methodology ought to be sensitive to samples in order to be representative. This means that, as much as possible, the sample will represent the diversity that exists in the reality maintaining the proportions in which it manifests. The Let's Care teams are going to need information about under-represented groups. Quantitative research, like surveys, should consider data disaggregation in terms of sex, age, migrant background, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, disabilities, non-parental care, and school stages. Nonetheless, disaggregation categories will change depending on the target group measured (students, teachers...).

The United Nations (through Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators) has highlighted the importance of data disaggregation in detecting people in vulnerable situations and avoiding leaving no one behind (Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, n.d.). Furthermore, data analysis would benefit from data disaggregation, allowing an intersectional perspective to be introduced. From that perspective, researchers will take one variable (e.g. sex) so as to study how it interacts with other variables (European Commission, 2011), such as migrant background, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, or school stages. Nonetheless, univariate associations can be complemented with multivariate associations in order to go deeper into the analysis process; one way to do that can be the regression model (Global Partnership for Sustainable Developed Data, 2021, p.4).

Third, during the analysis phase, Let's Care academic partners ought to be highly aware of how their sex, gender, and prejudices may affect research conclusions to avoid bias. Besides, researchers should thoroughly analyse environments in which data will have been collected to study the outcomes inside a context. Data will be accurately expounded to enable other researchers to

understand where the conclusions come from (Gendered Innovations in Science Health & Medicine Engineering and Environment, n.d.).

To finish, data collection tools and methodology should use sensitive language adapted to the context in which the research is to be conducted. The questionnaires will be designed and later piloted following the recommendations available in previous literature about all the key variables identified in the project's proposal as influencing unequal educational opportunities (i.e. gender; ethnicity; socio-economic status (SES); migrant background; (dis)ability; (non) parental care).

In any case, for any other question, Let's Care GDC will constantly be in touch with data collection activities and will be available for any specific circumstance that appears during this phase. Regarding legal and ethical issues, the Let's Care project has the help of the law firm TIMELEX as one of the partners. In any way, issues regarding personal data protection (as anonymisation) will be on the agenda from the start of the project.

Last but not least, accessibility should be considered in the data collection tools, such as questionnaires, surveys, etc. Some recommendations at this point have been made by United Nations, such as read-aloud functionalities or verifying the time the survey is available (United Nations, 2022, p. 33). The Let's Care team will be thinking about them (for instance, whenever possible, in the case of data collection tools inside the HUB). Nonetheless, more accessibility information can be found in the WP6 section.

RELEVANT QUESTIONS	DATA NEEDED/INDICATOR	SOURCE OF DATA
Will the data be disaggregated?	Data will be disaggregated in at least 7 categories: sex, age, migrant background, ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, disabilities and family composition.	Quantitative data collection (surveys)
Will the data incorporate different views and sensibilities?	At least 4 stakeholder interviewees experienced in vulnerable populations	Qualitative data collection (interviews)
	At least 1 teacher per focus group experienced in vulnerable populations	Qualitative data collection (focus groups)
	At least 60% information collected from disadvantaged populations	Data collection
Will the data collection methodology avoid bias? Will the data reflect gender and diversity issues?	At least 1 GDC meeting per year to assure gender and diversity perspective in data collection tools, methodology, and analysis	Meeting records and meeting minutes

Table 3. WP3 indicators

### **3.2.4. Designing and developing diagnosis and intervention tools**

One of the objectives of the let's care project is to generate new metrics for Safe Education and related and replicable supporting multilevel tools (student-teacher-school) that help improve school achievement through fostering student socio-emotional security. These new metrics and safe education tools will be created from the combination of the results of the literature review and data collection and analysis and will be accessible through the HUB platform of the project. Their validation will be developed by piloting them in 6 countries, in around 70 schools.

At the individual level, two Safe Education indexes and a Safe Learning e-profile will be developed. Concerning the indexes, it is envisaged to develop a) Early dropout and underachievement index and b) Student (in)security risk index. Gender and diversity information collected during literature review and data collection analysis (e.g. data disaggregation in terms of sex, age, migrant background, ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, disabilities, non-parental care, etc) will be considered to develop these indexes and must be part of the weighting of variables of each final index. Each of these indexes will have a manual of use and interpretation that will be written according to sensitive, respectful and inclusive language as it is described in the previous section (data collection and analysis).

Safe Learning e-profile will compile key information regarding the student's learning pathway collected by the teaching staff and the students themselves. This tool may include a longitudinal follow-up strategy based, on the one hand, on questionnaires and Safe Education indexes resulting in an individual student profile. In the setting of these variables, gender and diversity disaggregated information will be considered. On the other hand, this tool may include tailored intervention proposals to improve school achievement. These interventions must incorporate a description of their content from a safe education and person-centered approach, which highlights the evidence on the relevant influence of gender and diversity in educational achievement (see sections below) and seeks to apply a sensitive narrative with their targeted populations.

At the relational level, a Safe Teaching Training program and a Safe Teaching Toolkit will be developed. The Safe Teaching Training program is comprised of formative materials (documents, video/clips, gamified exercises and assessment tools, etc.) focused on the training of teachers and school boards to improve their competencies, awareness, and commitment in terms of safe relationships and safe school climate. It will be a plug-and-play training accessible online and adapted to each school stage not only in terms of the specific educational characteristics of each stage but also considering cultural differences. All materials have to use a gender-sensitive language, be non-stereotypical (e.g. some pictures of male preschool teachers) and be adapted to different languages. To ensure that the materials are correctly adapted to each of the participating countries the DG and the NCB (composed by representatives of each project partner and teachers from each country) will work together and will be advised by GDC.



The Safe Teaching Toolkit is a set of tools validated in a collaborative process that will include 1) A guide for teachers and school teams about Safe Teaching Practices 2) An interactive online wiki-database of Safe Teaching Practices (open to contribution), and 3) Safe Teaching self/peer-observation tool. A gender and diversity perspective will traverse this toolkit, paying special attention to the way in which safe teaching practices are evaluated for inclusion in the wiki-database. Attention to gender diversity, individualized attention to students and consideration of cultural and social factors, among others, should form part of the rubric for evaluating educational practices as Safe Teaching Practices.

At the school level, a Safe School Label will be designed. This tool is a (self)evaluation system, organized in dimensions and indicators, to assess the percentage by which schools can be considered Safe Schools, based on the previous data collection and analysis work. This tool should have some indicators related to inclusive education practices or acknowledging differences of gender, ethnicity, culture, social class or religion towards both students and teachers.

RELEVANT QUESTIONS	DATA NEEDED	SOURCE OF DATA
How well do the education indexes used in the organization consider diversity factors such as sex, age, migrant background, ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, disabilities, and non-parental care?	Education indexes have at least 3 items related to sex, age, migrant background, ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, disabilities, non-parental care, etc.	Safe Education index
To what extent is the organization's safe learning e-profile designed to meet the needs of migrant students?	At least one of the possible safe learning e-profile indications will be designed for a diverse populations related age, migrant background, ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, disabilities, non-parental care, etc..	Safe Learning Index
How well does the organization's training material cater to linguistic diversity by providing materials in multiple languages?	Plug-and-play training material will be easy to adapt to different languages	Training material
How well does the organization's assessment rubric for safe school practices take into account diversity factors such as attention to gender diversity, special needs, or cultural and social factors?	The assessment rubric for safe school practices contains at least 3 items around attention to gender diversity, special needs or cultural and social factors.	Safe School
How well does the organization's Safe School Label take into account inclusive education practices?	Safe School Label have at least 1 item related to inclusive education practices	Safe school Label

Table 4. WP4 indicators

### 3.2.5. Testing and validating the intervention tools

The Let's Care project is going to test and validate 3 different tools:

1. **Safe Learning E-portfolio:** It will be designed as a longitudinal student monitoring tool that helps teachers know their students' situations and necessities to avoid drop-out and insecurity. Once the tool has been created, it will be tested in 10 different classes (20 students/class).
2. **Safe Teaching Program:** It will be a training program designed to improve teachers' knowledge and skills regarding safety. Safe Teaching Program will be tested in 3 teachers' groups (6-15).
3. **Safe School Label:** It is going to be a self-evaluation tool that allows schools to assess the degree of safety and school bonding from a whole-school approach. It will be tested in 10 different schools.

At this point, some critical issues regarding gender and diversity should be taken into account by the research team. On the one hand, accessibility ought to be guaranteed in the three tools, and on the other hand, gender and diversity perspectives should be integrated into methods and samples. By the time of the piloting, Let's Care theoretical model and data collection activities will have been almost finished, and researchers will have carefully mapped gender and diversity inequalities in the education field from a safety perspective. Nonetheless, the piloting phase can help Let's Care partners confirm or refute some assumptions or include new findings. At the point of analysing piloting results, Let's Care researchers should be aware of their personal circumstances and ideas so as not to introduce gender bias in the project outcomes.

At this late point in the project, the researchers will know more precisely the type and characteristics of the sample for the piloting. Anyway, as far as possible, samples should reflect reality and include diversity.

As emphasized throughout this deliverable, gender-sensitive language should be used in the three tools, especially in Safe Teaching Program contents (documents, videos, and activities).

Accessibility should be guaranteed in Let's Care tools in case someone with disabilities wants to use them. In this way, whenever possible, text will be available in large font size and will incorporate a read-aloud functionality (United Nations, 2022).

Finally, this piloting phase has been designed to collect users' feedback. Let's Care team should give the feedback phase the importance it deserves. The team should gather the opinion of everyone who wants to share it and will offer channels and will create dynamics in which everyone can feel comfortable.

RELEVANT QUESTIONS	DATA NEEDED/INDICATORS	SOURCE OF DATA
Will the piloting process incorporate feedback from participants?	The participation in terms of gender and diversity in the feedback task is guaranteed (considering their representation within the sample)	Survey
Will the piloting and validation methodology avoid bias?	At least 1 GDC meeting to ensure gender and diversity perspectives in the piloting and validation process	Meeting records and meeting minutes

Table 5. WP5 indicators

### 3.2.6. Dissemination, communication and advocacy phase

Dissemination and Communication Strategy is going to include different actions such as events, social media campaigns, and web diffusion content. All communication products will try to use gender-sensitive language. The European Institute for Gender Equality works with the following definition of the term:

*“Gender-sensitive language is gender equality made manifest through language. Gender equality in language is attained when women and men – and those who do not conform to the binary gender system – are addressed through language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity, and respect.”* (EIGE, n.d.-e)

Some tips on how to use gender-sensitive language can be:

- Avoid gendered pronouns: the sentence “When every participant contributes his own ideas, the discussion will be a success” can be changed to “When all participants contribute their own ideas, the discussion will be a success” (EIGE, n.d.-d)
- Avoid gendered nouns: The word “businessman” can be changed to “business executive” (EIGE, n.d.-a).
- Avoid invisibility: the sentence “Under the law, all men are equal” can be changed to “Under the law, all women and men are equal” (EIGE, n.d.-c).

Nonetheless, an opposite strategy can be the use of gender-neutral language. This will allow the writer to include in the writing or speech people who are non-binary gender. In the case of gender-neutral language, the third person of the plural is recommended (EIGE, n.d.-f). Additionally, “people” should be used instead of “women” or “men”.

The use of gender-sensitive language may introduce nuances regarding different languages and contexts. To overcome these obstacles, Let’s Care will make fieldwork partners aware of this issue and ask for their help with any national language nuance.



Regarding Let's Care events, they will include specific actions to present gender and diversity findings about the theoretical and practical framework that will have been designed. In this regard, Let's Care final event might include a particular lecture about it. Considering Let's Care events, the consortium should aim to target audiences and promote the participation of key stakeholders and the public. Additionally, the Let's Care team might try to guarantee accessibility during the events assuring the existence of access ramps to buildings and offering automatic translation and sign language translation in case someone needs it.

Let's Care team should be cautious in using visual images in social media campaigns and web content. Some pieces of advice would be needed. Firstly, these images should avoid gender or cultural stereotypes (Coordinadora de ONG para el Desarrollo, 2019, p.12). As IEGE reported, an example of a stereotype in the education field may be that "girls are expected to be more passive and inactive than boys" (IEGE, 2017). Therefore, if we do not want to contribute to the stereotype, we might use, for instance, an image that depicts some students (girls and boys) playing a sport (like football) together during a school break. Secondly, visual images should show diversity: sexes, ages, ethnicities, disabilities, etc. Thirdly, it is going to be a good idea to accompany images that add additional information with a description (United Nations, 2022, p.24) not only because context is important but also because in this way, people with disabilities can be included. Legal and ethical issues will be crucial about images, especially if we talk about children. The law firm TIMELEX, as a partner of the Let's Care project will assist the partners with ethical aspects and best practices to manage sensitive information. In the same way, TIMELEX will assist the Project Partners when informed consent or assent is needed. Information about participation in the project activities and consent/assent will be well explained and adapted to the participant's possible requirements to minimize the barriers to participation and understanding.

As long as possible, all communicative actions should make visible and give the floor to different vulnerable groups (Coordinadora de ONG para el Desarrollo, 2019, p.27). Besides, in communication activities, using more than one language and more than one communication channel may help with the inclusion of different targets when possible. What is more, language will be reviewed keeping people with disabilities in mind so as to be understandable and clear and considering easy to read standards (e.i. IFLA Standards) (IFLA, 2010).

With regard to accessibility in social media campaigns, a recommendation would be to generate materials not only to be read but also to be heard and watched (United Nations, 2022, p. 23).

The technical European standards regarding accessibility requirements for ICT products and services will be reviewed and implemented as much as possible across the communication channels of the project (European Telecommunications Standards Institute, 2018).

Last but not least, the Let's Care project should make policy recommendations (Green and White paper) having previously studied what its implementation can cause positive or negative impacts,

considering sex, age, migrant background, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, disabilities, non-parental care, school stage or school characteristics (public/private or urban/rural).

RELEVANT QUESTIONS	DATA NEEDED/INDICATOR	SOURCE OF DATA
Will there be communicative actions to transmit gender and diversity findings?	N. of communicative actions to present gender and diversity findings	Specific communicative activities
Will the project facilitate equal participation of different groups in events?	N. of event presentations given by women	Let's Care list of events participants
	N. of event presentation given by an author belonging to an underrepresented group	
Will the communication strategy avoid bias?	At least 1 GDC meeting per year to assure inclusive communicative materials	Meeting records and meeting minutes
Will accessibility be considered in communicative actions? Will target diversity be considered in communicative activities?	1 promotional video in sign language and with subtitles in up to 5 languages	Let's Care promotional video
Will impact analysis be made before the formal presentation of policy recommendations?	At least 1 DGC meeting to study positive and negative impacts on gender and diversity of policy recommendations	Meeting records, meeting minutes, and meeting work products

Table 6. WP6 indicators

### 3.2.7. Project management

As the gender and diversity perspective is a crucial aspect of the Let's Care project, the Consortium team is committed to incorporating it into the internal dynamics as well by utilizing co-creation and collaboration mechanisms.

Research has consistently shown that a team that reflects the diversity of gender and backgrounds leads to a more thorough and impactful outcome, while also fostering a culture of creativity and out-of-the-box thinking (Bear & Woolley, 2011; Hall et al., 2018; Misra et al., 2017; Riedl et al., 2021; Smith-Doerr et al., 2017; Woolley et al., 2010).

Guidelines have been established to incorporate gender and diversity considerations throughout all phases of the project as a structural element.

The Consortium was built with a commitment to inclusiveness, specifically by actively seeking partners who could provide a gender balance in all positions and bring a wealth of cultural and methodological diversity to enhance the project's scope. The project team takes a proactive approach to encouraging the appointment of members of under-represented groups to leadership roles within the organization.

Making sure that every team member feels comfortable to express their ideas and perspectives is a high priority for the project team. To reach this goal, the team has pledged to be vigilant in identifying and combating any biases that may affect the research. The team is dedicated to responsiveness to feedback, and to making adjustments as needed to promote inclusivity.

RELEVANT QUESTIONS	DATA NEEDED	SOURCE OF DATA
Has the project Consortium team achieved gender and diversity balance at all levels, including decision-making positions?	% of women and individuals from diverse backgrounds on the project Consortium team, as well as the % of these individuals in decision making positions	Consortium team's composition and job title
Are the working conditions amenable to enabling all staff members to balance their work and family responsibilities satisfactorily?	N. of organisations that have the availability and use of policies such as flexible work arrangements, parental leave, and dependent care support	Policies of the organisation composing the Consortium
Is there a system in place to monitor and ensure compliance with gender and diversity equality within the organisation?	Availability and use of organisations' policies that ensure the compliance of gender and diversity equality	Policies of the organisation composing the Consortium

Table 7. WP7 indicators. Source: EC, 2011.

### 3.3. Assessment and implementation of gender and diversity guidelines and tools

The gender sensitive analysis of the project must be followed by a plan to address the risks presented, providing specific mitigation procedures, which in the Let's Care project include:

1. Systematise a gender and diversity monitoring plan.
2. Conforming an internal Gender and Diversity Committee.
3. Scheduling periodic assessments of the project implementation.

Figure 3 summarizes this **plan for the gender and diversity monitoring** actions during the Let's Care project implementation.



Figure 3. Gender and diversity monitoring plan

The plan foresees that the research teams get familiar and interiorise the guidance provided in this report to apply the two standards of informed awareness and pragmatic assessment when carrying out the specific tasks of each work packages. This will constitute a flexible process that will adapt to each WP requirements and aims. The assessment of the project implementation work packages done in the previous section will lead the identification of key issues regarding gender and diversity during the Let's Care specific tasks. The particular guidelines provided for each work package must serve to raise awareness among the researchers, who will apply them and incorporate the intersectional perspective when implementing the project's tasks. This implementation will be subject to internal monitoring and evaluation by an internal GDC conformed by selected member of the consortium that will use the proposed measurement tools (i.e. indicators) to keep track of how the gender and diversity dimensions of the project are being addressed in the form of periodic reports.

The **GDC** will be formed by two representatives of the COMILLAS team, and one representative from CIDALIA, TIMELEX and PROMAESTRO respectively. On the 21/02/2023 the proposed members of the four teams gathered in the first GDC meeting that officialised the conformation of the Committee and provided feedback to the first draft of this guidance report to fine tune a final proposal of the document.



Scheduling **periodic assessments of the project implementation** will consist on a yearly assessment implementing the indicators proposed that appropriately fit the corresponding implementation phase of the project. As agreed in the first GDC meeting, these guidelines and tools are to be adapted in the future based on research findings or unforeseen needs detected. Tentatively, the proposed dates for the assessment will take place on M16 and M33. A final report<sup>4</sup> will be prepared consisting on the critical review of the results of each assessment and a global evaluation of the project.

## 4. Conclusion

The proposed assessment and action plan outlined in this deliverable will be implemented in order to address and promote equality in terms of gender and diversity within the project. The GDC will be responsible for monitoring progress and generating periodic reports to measure the impact. The proposed indicators will be valuable in determining the effectiveness of the project's gender and diversity initiatives at the conclusion of the project. This will be done by creating a D1.9 which will outline the measures taken to adhere to the gender and diversity guidelines throughout the project duration.

With all this information the GDC of this project will be able to assess, take action and generate periodic reports that will allow generating impact measures to promote equality in terms of gender and diversity.

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<sup>4</sup> D1.9 – Assessment of Gender and Diversity issues in project implementation (M46; Lead CID)

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