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Brief  
guidelines  
for citizen  
participation

# Guide to gender mainstreaming in participatory processes



Generalitat de Catalunya  
Government of Catalonia  
**Ministry for Foreign Action,  
Institutional Relations and Transparency**



## **Brief guidelines for citizen participation, 10**

### **Guide to gender mainstreaming in participatory processes**

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Ministry for Foreign Action, Institutional Relations  
and Transparency

**Coordination:** Directorate General of Citizen Participation and Electoral Processes. Ministry for Foreign Action, Institutional Relations and Transparency. Government of Catalonia.

First Edition: July 2020

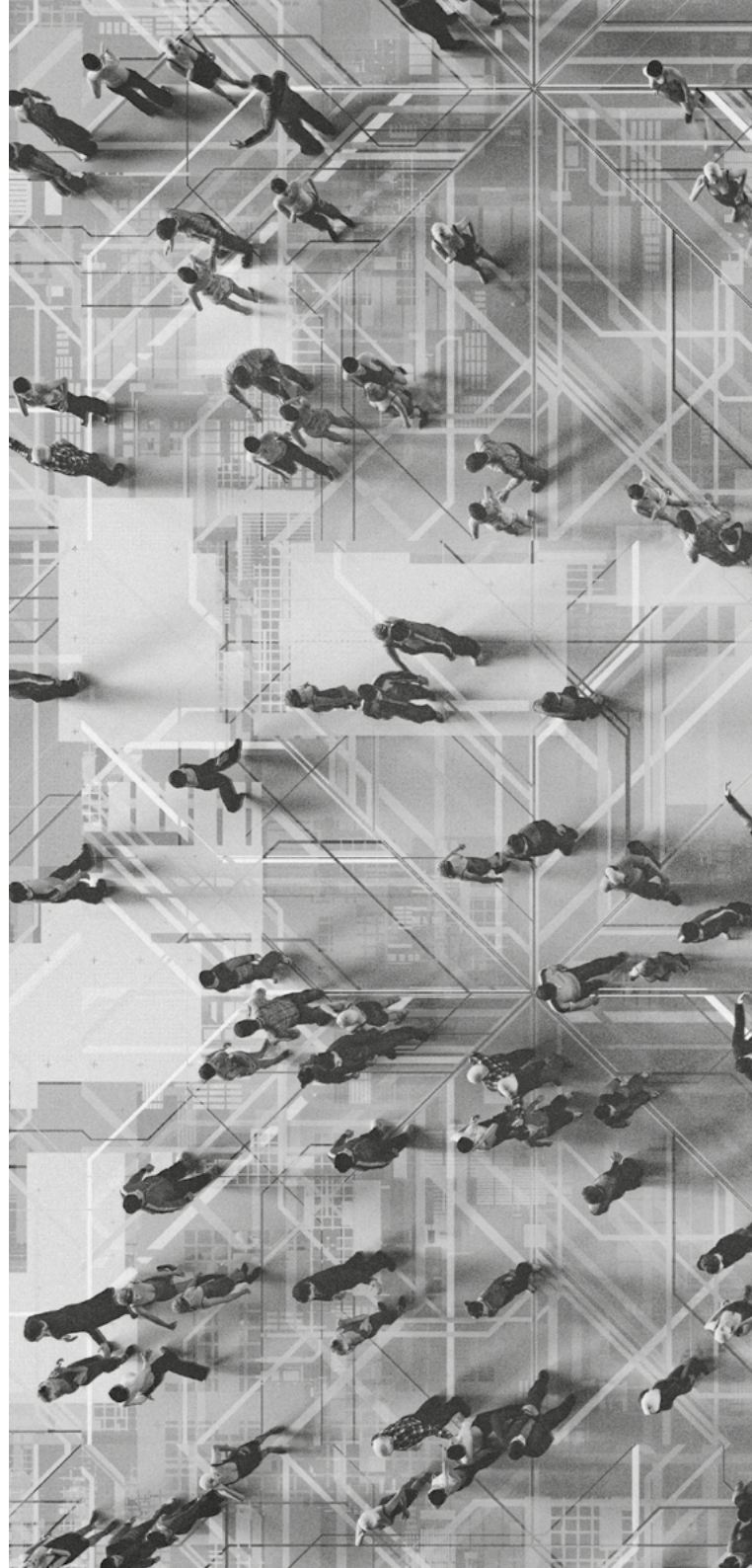
#### **Layout:**

Entitat Autònoma del Diari Oficial i de Publicacions

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# 1

## Introduction

The practical guidelines in this guide are intended to provide citizen participation technicians with resources that will enable them to design equitable processes and thus comply with the egalitarian democracy mandate of Act 17/2015, of 21 July, on effective equality between women and men, by offering tools to include gender mainstreaming<sup>1</sup> in different aspects of citizen participation.

The Guide is the result of the concern for gender equality of the Directorate General of Citizen Participation and Electoral Processes of the Government of Catalonia and is part of the project of analysis of citizen participation with a gender perspective, and was supported by the Surt Foundation in 2019.

The introduction of the gender perspective into participatory processes should be considered a process of change in the relations of power and influence on public policy, and should highlight the specific characteristics of women and identify the mechanisms that generate inequalities.

Citizen participation, intended for social transformation, could have negative effects if it does not empower women and people of non-normative gender. Thus, the democratic rationale for including women's views and listening to their specific knowledge and needs is twofold:

- Procedural, since in a high-quality democracy all citizens should be able to influence decisions to the same extent.
- Results-oriented, since democratic public policies have the mission of improving and equalising living conditions for all without exception, especially for

<sup>1</sup> Strategy to make the concerns of women and men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, to ensure that women and men benefit equally and to prevent the perpetuation of inequality, with the aim of achieving gender equality.

women, who make up more than half the population.<sup>2</sup>

The opportunities for dialogue must generate security and confidence in women, especially those with less participatory profiles, so that they feel that they are on an equal footing both in face-to-face participation and in digital forums. And given that all public policies are affected by gender inequalities, the recommendations of this Guide should be applied to all participatory processes initiated by administrations, regardless of the field.

However, these are not strict formulas to be applied mechanically, but must be contextualised and applied creatively, according to the field, the social sectors involved or the community circumstances, and taking into account the main areas of inequality that interact with gender, such as social class, origin, age, gender identity and expression or sexual orientation.

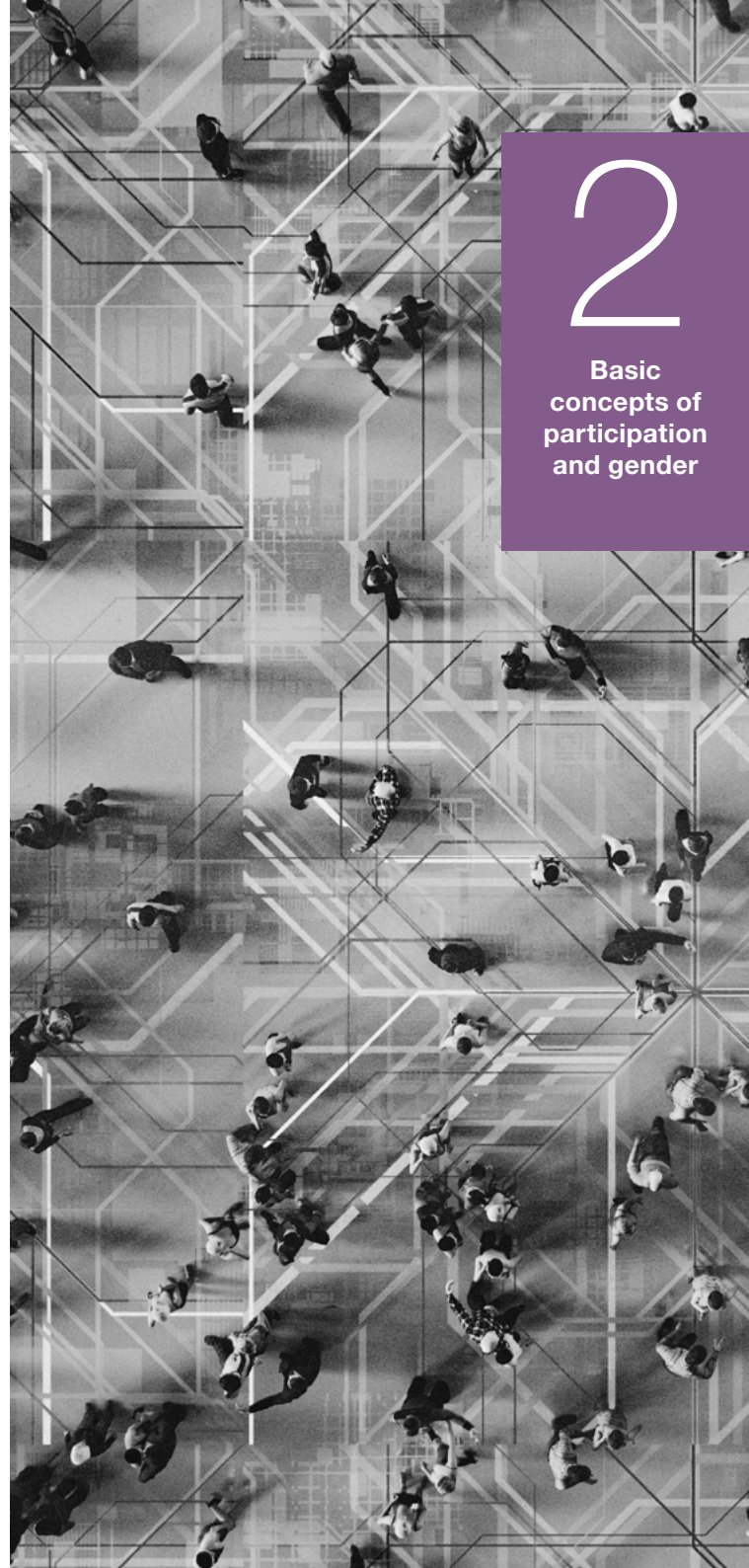
The Guide consists of two blocks, dealing with:

1. The basic concepts, such as participatory processes, gender inequalities and intersectionality, to ensure that everyone understands the same thing when they use these terms.
2. The elements required to achieve fairer and more equitable participatory processes that act as a tool to promote gender equality and respect for diversity in public policies.

<sup>2</sup> In Catalonia, on 1 January 2020, 50.95% of the population were women (source: Idescat).

# 2

## Basic concepts of participation and gender



## 2.1. Participatory processes

The expression *citizen participation* has several meanings related to the commitment of individuals and communities to the public sphere. From an operational point of view, the Guide only deals with **institutional participation** or activities organised by administrations to involve citizens in the solution of public problems. And within this, it focuses on the construction of collective discourses through the exchange of points of view before making decisions, so that the latter are more legitimate. Thus, we exclude information to citizens, negotiation with sector-representative entities, contributions from experts or individual contributions.

The Guide refers to participatory processes because they have more room for manoeuvre in the design process, but many proposals also apply to participation councils, participatory budgets or the involvement of users of public facilities in their daily management.

The equal distribution of power is an aspect of democratic quality that functions as a virtuous circle: if everyone dialogues on an equal footing, citizen participation will help public policies reduce gender inequalities, which, in turn, will result in greater equality when it comes to influencing public policies.

The first consequence of citizen discussions is that the composition of the group, its diversity, is more important than the number of participants. However, women are not always present, nor are they sufficiently taken into account in citizen participation, as will be seen throughout the Guide.

This video from the *Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions* provides examples of gender biases in public policy that can be detected through participation.

Video 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9bnXSJCBCs>

## 2.2. Gender Inequalities in Participation

Structural gender inequalities lead to different degrees of access to positions of power, and citizen participation is no exception, either in face-to-face workshops or on digital platforms. These inequalities harm both the presence of women and the success of their contributions in influencing the results. Since women have less influence, there is empirical evidence that, for example, care and human relations play a secondary role, making the results of participation biased in their representativeness or with significant shortcomings in the appraisal and proposed solutions.

The origin of these inequalities can be found in social and cultural constructs that assign specific roles to each gender. The sexual division of labour stands out, since women work in worse conditions and in occupations with less prestige and social protection, and they also feel a moral obligation to assume domestic and caregiving responsibilities. This «double presence»<sup>3</sup> gives them a greater workload and makes social relations and participation more difficult.

The traditional role given to women and the fact that professions consistent with this role, such as education, healthcare or community work, are feminised, means that the distribution of participants by gender varies according to the field: there are more in traditionally feminised fields and less in masculinised ones. The socialisation received also hinders women in that what is considered «feminine» is given less value in discussions than what is considered «masculine», and that men tend to appropriate participatory time and space.

<sup>3</sup> Balbo (1994:504).



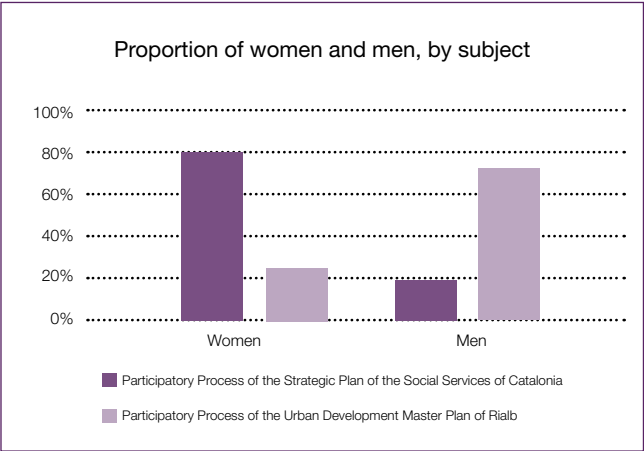


Figure 1: Proportion of women and men according to the different fields of the participatory process (source: Assessment of the participatory processes of the Strategic Plan of the Social Services of Catalonia and the Urban Development Master Plan of Rialb, Government of Catalonia, 2018)

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This imbalance and discrimination leads to the loss of knowledge and experience of the users of public services, with the result that public policies end up reinforcing traditional roles.

In addition, they lead to a democratic deficit, since the sectors with the least influence on participation do not see institutional decisions as sufficiently legitimate. In order to empower women, we must apply gender mainstreaming in citizen participation.

Finally, the different interests and priorities of women and men may result in political decisions based on participation that not only fail to take women into account, but are even detrimental to them. Consider, for example, a hypothetical participatory budget process where a choice has to be made between a health centre specialised in women and the rehabilitation of a public facility such as a soccer field. A gender vision integrated into the participatory process will show us that while the first facility has an impact on women's health, the second will be preferred by the majority of men, the

main users. Thus, the incorporation of mainstreaming not only alerts us to the different results of the participatory process depending on the composition of the participants, but also to a differential impact between public health and leisure.

Gender mainstreaming implies overcoming situations of exclusion and under-representation of women in participation in all public policies, following the recommendations of the Council of Europe's Group of Specialists on Gender Mainstreaming (1999).

### 2.3. Gender Intersectionality in Participation

Bringing together a large number of women does not in itself improve the diversity of the group, since they do not necessarily represent all types of women or have the same capacity for influence. Since the experiences of each one are conditioned by life circumstances such as work status, upbringing, or country of origin, the challenge of obtaining a diverse representation of women appears, since only they can clearly express their experiences and feelings.

Example: composite sketch of the participants in the processes of the Government of Catalonia

The issues that are typically discussed in the participation processes of the Government of Catalonia involve many women, but with a profile that is not very representative:

«born in Catalonia, aged 35 to 54, working in the service sector, specifically in the public administration, with university studies, member of an association and living in the metropolitan area».<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Government of Catalonia (2017: 38).





Image 1. Session self-managed by the AFA (Students' Family Association) of the Joc de la Bola school (Lleida). Participatory process of the school canteen site (2019)

Research also tells us that the methodology used in the participation processes - including the way to facilitate the discussion events - is decisive. Thus, we know that the ratio of women to men influences the final outcome of the participatory process, that decisions taken by consensus are more equitable than those taken by vote, or that both the identity of the person driving the participatory process and the identity of the person facilitating the discussion events can influence the final outcome.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Djupe et al. (2007); Harrison and Munn (2007); Karpowitz et al. (2012); Mansbridge (1999).

Experience of discrimination in a public service.  
Stereotypes and prejudices against Muslim women in gynaecological services (2020)

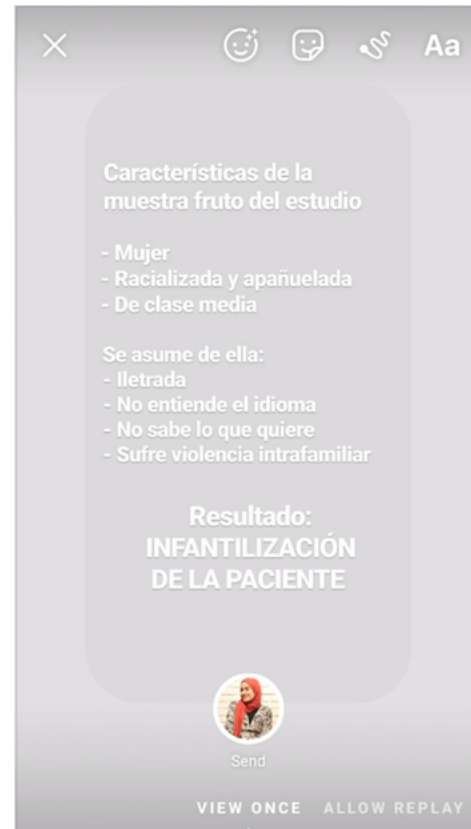
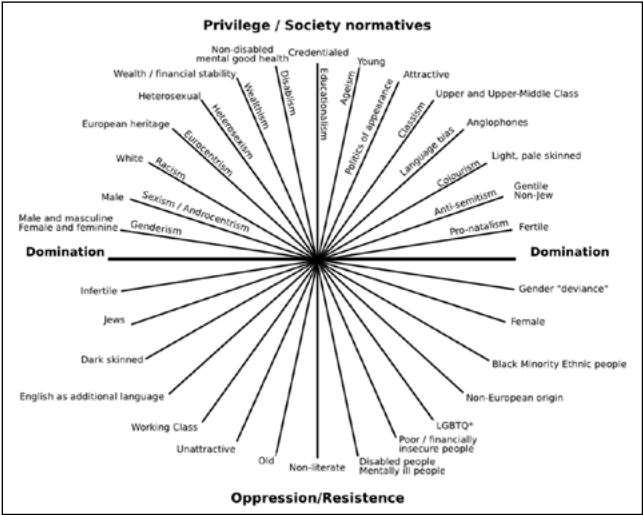


Image 2. Source: @ramiaschannel.

To address the discriminations and inequalities that arise when gender intersects with other simultaneously operating identities and social conditions, we use the concept of **intersectionality**, which helps us realise that each person's identity is the result of a combination of circumstances, and that citizen participation must therefore be able to encompass and correctly address this hyperdiversity.



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Figure 2: Intersection of the main areas of privilege, domination and oppression. Morgan (1996)

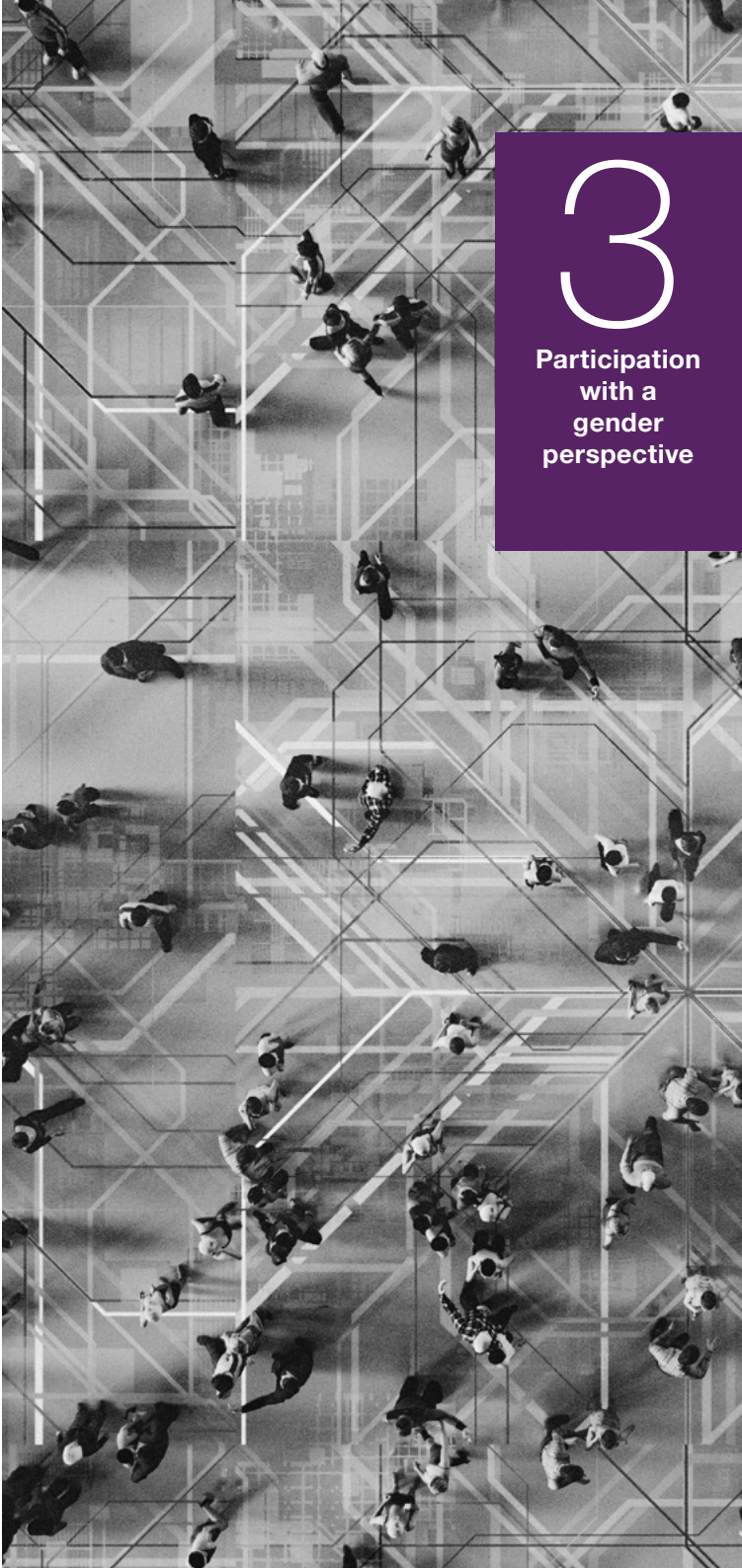
Each area of identity would require its own guide, but from a gender perspective we must be especially attentive to:

Identities that intersect with gender in participation	
Social exclusion	Employment
Sexual orientation	Physical aspect
Age	Place of birth
Gender identity or expression	Belonging to a minority
Diverse functionalities	Affiliation to a non-majority religion
Social class	Urban / rural territory
Educational level	Cultural level

Table 1

3

Participation with a gender perspective



The Guide refers both to aspects that affect all women and aspects associated with the most vulnerable groups of women, in order to achieve inclusive participation.

This section describes the tools for including gender mainstreaming in the following phases of the participatory processes (chart 1).



Chart 1. Phases of a participatory process. Source: own development from <https://participa.gencat.cat/>

The first thing to check is whether the issue to be discussed deserves a participatory process.

**Do you want to address an issue...**

- that is specific and associated with a decision planned by the Administration?

**Or**

- to improve the appraisal?

**Or**

- that has a practical application for civil society?

If the answer to all of the above questions is no, participation will be inefficient both in terms of public resources and in terms of the time spent by citizens, which may end up being detrimental to women or benefiting only those with spurious interests, such as making contacts or trying to influence public policies disproportionately. Of course, it will also be ineffective because: we will not achieve the objective for which the discussion was supposedly intended.

We must bear in mind that women have less interest in politics in abstract terms, a fact that has historically marginalised them, and instead show more interest than men in specific social issues that affect everyday life. On the other hand, a distinction must be made between women's practical needs, which are more immediate and usually linked to their gender role (women

as mothers, who are mainly active in certain areas of the public domain, etc.), and their strategic interests, which are related to overcoming the subordinate position they occupy in society in order to achieve a position of true equality in the political, social and occupational spheres.

In order to overcome unequal gender relations, the design of participatory processes must, firstly, address the immediate practical needs of women, but it must also take into account that participation must lead to structural changes in society and the fact that satisfying the strategic interests of women means changing the stereotypes and values prevailing in society.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.1. In the design and preparation phase

The gender vision must be included both in the structuring of the participatory process (discussion phases and times, exclusively female discussion forums combined with mixed forums, etc.) and in the contents,<sup>7</sup> which implies asking whether the objectives of the process respond to both the practical and strategic needs of women, and ensuring that the impact of gender is one of the main focuses of the discussion.

<sup>6</sup> Espiau, Saillard and Ajangiz (2005:27).

<sup>7</sup> Espiau, Saillard and Ajangiz (2005).



To meet the practical needs of the participants, one must think about the strategic needs and public role of women in relation to the policy being discussed.<sup>8</sup> Women's groups must also be empowered to discuss the impacts and consequences we would like to achieve on women's groups through the participatory process.

### 3.1.1. Designing the participatory process with a gender perspective

Some of the actions to facilitate the participation of people with all kinds of personal and social circumstances require more resources than usual, but this expenditure is cost-effective due to the yield that will be achieved; moreover, to incorporate the gender vision at the time of design, there are actions that do not necessarily require more resources. For example, collecting gender-segregated data in the assessment surveys of participation processes has no added cost. What does incur a cost is having to collect this data later, once a questionnaire has been distributed that does not include this demand for information.

The concept of *mainstreaming* is based on the idea that the vision of gender is not an add-on, but rather that it is naturally and systematically integrated into all procedures of the organisation, including citizen participation.

The political determination to make participation equitable from a gender perspective must be accompanied by budgeting for the relevant human and economic resources, in addition to the knowledge needed to integrate it naturally into all participatory processes.

Other aspects of the planning of the process that must be carried out under the gender perspective are the supervision of the project, the writing of documentation and other materials, the gender appraisal in the framework document of the discussion and the clauses in the contracting of services such as facilitation.

For the number and type of participatory actions, we refer to section 2.3 of this Guide. In any event, they should reach a wider segment of the population than usual and consider the objectives and roles of the different groups that participate.

### 3.1.2. Monitoring the project from a gender perspective

If we want citizen dialogue to replace opaque negotiations with *lobbies*, it will be useful to have a **monitoring committee** or **steering committee** to oversee the design presented by the citizen participation unit, as well as the development of the participatory process.

It is a matter of creating trust, both among citizens as a whole and among the stakeholders or large entities that speak directly and regularly with the Administration on behalf of a sector (unions, employers, tertiary social sector federations, environmentalists, etc.), to show them that all the points of view affected by the decision will be included in the process, and that the methodology will prevent manipulation, so that everyone can express themselves under equal conditions.

The steering committee should be multidisciplinary, consisting of experts in the various aspects of citizen participation, including the gender perspective, whose prestige is acknowledged by all parties, and in the right proportion according to sociodemographic criteria, such that at least half should be women.

The monitoring committee must review the participatory process and redirect it, if necessary, in three stages:

- Ex ante: during design, when there is still time to introduce amendments (therefore, before the start of administrative actions such as public procurement).
- While it is taking place, to correct unforeseen situations of discrimination or inequality.

<sup>8</sup> Espiau, Saillard and Ajangiz (2005:20).

- Ex post: to draw conclusions from the assessment results that may be useful for future participatory processes.

The monitoring committee can complement the expertise of the participation officers by pointing out aspects that are not immediately visible and that are detrimental to women.

3.1.3. Writing and materials development criteria

The following criteria should be applied in the drafting of documents, in the development of materials and in the website enabled for digital participation:

- Write in a synthetic way.
- Make technical concepts accessible.
- Describe in detail the possible impacts of the decision on daily life.
- Prepare versions that are appropriate for each segment of women to be questioned.
- Adapt the document and make it accessible: font size, length, appropriate languages.
- Accompany the written document with audiovisual material.
- Use an inclusive language and avoid the reproduction of gender stereotypes and roles.
- Ensure that the people who appear in the graphic material are consistent with the population as a whole.
- Publish the material with enough time for prior consideration.
- Prepare materials to support facilitation from the perspective of intersectional gender.

How to avoid the use of the generic masculine form (in Catalan).

Doubling up

Masculine and feminine nouns in a consecutive way with the conjunction and/or.

Example:  
els usuaris i les usuàries  
(users (male) and users (female)).

Collective and abstract nouns

Collective or abstract nouns.

Example:  
la ciutadania (citizenship)  
instead of \*ciutadans  
(citizens (male)).

Epicene nouns

Forms with no grammatical gender.

Example:  
la persona (the person),  
l'individu (the individual) or  
la part dinamitzadora (the  
facilitating party) instead  
of \* el dinamitzador (the  
facilitator (male))

Depersonalisation

Eliminate generic male forms.

Example:  
la persona que en serà  
responsable (the person  
who will be in charge, rather  
than: \*el responsable (the  
person in charge (male)).

Table 2. Approach to inclusive and non-sexist language. Own development.

Complementary audiovisual material



Video 2. Participatory process “Construïm l’Òmnia del Futur” (Building the Omnia of the Future), #SOMNIA. 2019. URL: [https://youtu.be/d7\\_tWUE5Lhw](https://youtu.be/d7_tWUE5Lhw)

3.1.4. Gender Appraisal in the Framework Document

The framework document, which specifies the purpose and limits of the discussion, must contain a gender appraisal with the specific needs of women and the differential effects that the decision will have on women and men.

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Example of gender appraisal in a framework document Participatory process of the National Interculturality Agreement (2019)				
		Equality	Diversity	Positive interaction
Women (examples for discussion)	What are we doing?	What are we doing for equality?	What are we doing for the knowledge and recognition of diversity?	What are we doing to foster positive interaction?
	What can we do?	<p>How can we facilitate the access of all immigrant women to the First Reception Service (S1A) at the time of registration?</p> <p>Specific programmes must be created to ensure that all women are offered the S1A.</p> <p>How can we take into account the views of all women in all social policies?</p> <p>How can we make policies for equality available to all women and men, especially to minority and vulnerable groups?</p> <p>How can we eradicate traditionally rooted forms of male violence, such as forced marriage or female genital mutilation?</p> <p>Illiteracy among immigrant women must be eradicated.</p>	<p>How can we integrate the different skills of women and especially those of vulnerable and minority groups?</p> <p>How can we integrate all women's entities, especially those of vulnerable and minority groups, into women's participation bodies?</p> <p>We must encourage the social recognition of care work in the public and family sphere, from an intercultural perspective, in order to reach all groups and promote male participation.</p> <p>We must highlight the role of women in minority groups, such as the Romany population or immigrant women.</p>	<p>How can we create spaces for dialogue between women from different groups and integrate their views into the planning, implementation and assessment of public policies? How can we open up existing spaces?</p> <p>We must create networks of women who can serve as a reference and support in areas such as education, occupational training, cultural activity or leisure.</p> <p>Mentoring projects must be created to accompany the recovery process of women survivors of male violence.</p> <p>Dates such as 25 November or 8 March, and their prior preparation, must be converted into spaces for meeting, training and learning among women of diverse backgrounds.</p>

Table 3 Source: Directorate General of Citizen Participation and Electoral Processes.  
Searchable online at [https://participa.gencat.cat/uploads/decidim/attachment/file/1115/2019\\_10\\_10\\_Document\\_1\\_PNI\\_-\\_v2.pdf](https://participa.gencat.cat/uploads/decidim/attachment/file/1115/2019_10_10_Document_1_PNI_-_v2.pdf)



### 3.1.5. Gender clauses in procurement

The gender clauses in the procurement of the dissemination, facilitation or synthesis of information foment innovation by prioritising the capacity and track record of the technical team in gender equality in participation.

The Guide for Incorporating the Gender Perspective in Public Procurement<sup>9</sup> allows you to deepen into it and check their legal basis.

Act 17/2015 of 21 July on effective equality between women and men:

Art. 10: «The procurement bodies shall endeavour to include social clauses in order to promote equal treatment and opportunities for women and men».

#### Demand clauses:

Among the technical or professional solvency criteria:

- Guarantee that, under equal conditions as regards the required professional profiles, at least 50% of the team members are women.
- Accredited training, knowledge and skills regarding gender. In particular, capacity to prevent and redirect macho, LGBTI, phobic or racist aggressions.

#### Offer assessment clauses:

- Ensure methodologies to achieve equal, inclusive and diverse participation.
- Ensure the inclusion in professional teams of women in conditions of social vulnerability.
- Assess the training plans of the professionals assigned to the contract.

- Ensure that the bidding entity has a plan to prevent and address any type of harassment affecting professionals, participants or other agents involved in the participatory process.
- Ensure that a person is designated to guarantee the implementation and monitoring of the measures related to gender equality.
- Ensure the implementation of responsible labour conciliation measures beyond the legal requirements.

To be checked in the design and preparation phase		
	Yes	No
1.1 The topics to be discussed are specific or have a practical application.		
1.2 The project has resources to address gender differences.		
1.3 In the number and design of participatory actions, the entire population is taken into account, including migrant women, women with functional diversity and trans women.		
1.4 Feminist entities are included in the steering committee.		
1.5 Documents and dissemination materials are adapted and made accessible.		
1.6 The framework of the discussion includes a gender appraisal.		
1.7 Procurement includes gender clauses.		

<sup>9</sup> Government of Catalonia, 2019. Searchable online at: [https://contractacio.gencat.cat/web/.content/principis/contractacio-estrategica/social/guia\\_genere/guia-igualtat-genere.pdf](https://contractacio.gencat.cat/web/.content/principis/contractacio-estrategica/social/guia_genere/guia-igualtat-genere.pdf)

## 3.2. In the communication phase

This section presents the strategies to disseminate the participatory process to the most diverse possible range of people in order to achieve gender-balanced discussion groups.

### 3.2.1. Women's groups that should be present

Citizen participation must include everyone involved in the decision, especially those who normally have less influence in the public sphere.

The **map of actors** determines which sectors are most involved and should include:

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- The type of women traditionally excluded from decision-making processes, so that they can contribute to a better appraisal and better public policy proposals based on their views and interests.
- The views of gender experts, to interpret inequalities and to make proposals based on this approach.

In order to locate the circles of women, activists and movements that are experts in gender, groups of migrant women and the entities that work with women in a situation of social exclusion, as well as informal groups and private individuals, so that they can be included as participants, it is necessary to:

- Have a **database** of entities that work on gender in each public policy, such as agriculture, education, urbanism, health, etc.
- Seek the opinion of people who are knowledgeable about the social fabric of women or feminists and are thus able to approach people who are **representatives** of the communities.

The Directorate General for Citizen Participation and Participatory Processes of the Government of Catalonia has a database of entities that can be used to make this search.

### 3.2.2. Public communication

The **Communication Plan** must:

- Provide brief, concise and visual information.
- Explain the impact of the decision on the daily life of each group.
- Proactively seek out women where they live their daily lives.
- Take advantage of informal networks of family and community relations. For example, school communities and civic centres.
- Explain the measures for reconciling work and family life in the workshops and the start and end times.
- In participatory processes at a national level, it is necessary to have the collaboration of the town councils, which are the authorities that are most familiar with the social networks within their municipal boundaries.
- Insert ads in magazines and newsletters aimed at the groups you want to reach.

As for the digital aspect:

- Segment dissemination in social networks by type of reader.<sup>10</sup> Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, among others, can promote participatory actions among less participatory groups if the parameters associated with these specific groups are included in the campaigns in order to publicise the process.
- Ask the entities and representatives of the groups that you want to include to carry out organic dissemination.

<sup>10</sup> On the definition and use of target audiences in the dissemination of announcements on citizen participation for social media, vid. CIVITAS (2015).

### Segmentation of audience in social media Programming on Facebook and Twitter

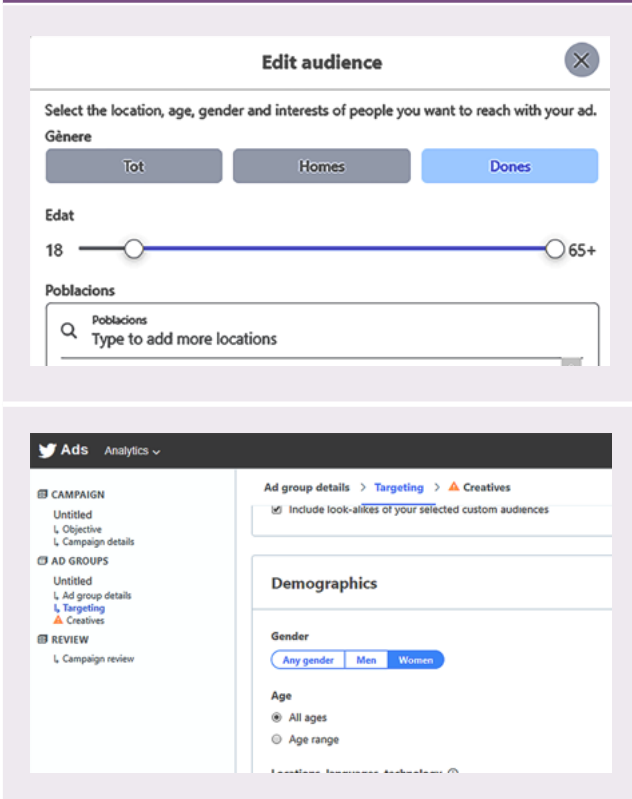


Image 3. Source: Twitter and Facebook.

Keep in mind the digital gender gap, since not everyone has access to digital gadgets or enter online participation platforms on a regular basis:

- Assess whether it is necessary to use paper to reach certain groups.
- Create points of support by the facilitators for registration in the processes and digital participation.

### 3.2.3. Announcement and monitoring of registrations

- The entities located with the map of actors must receive an announcement that encourages their social mass to participate.
- The organisation must supervise the registrations to check their balance.
- Imbalances must be offset by contacting the representatives and the entities that bring together the profiles of absent women and asking them to encourage them to participate.

When we detect absences in the registrations, both from women's sectors and from feminist movements, we take a proactive attitude.

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One alternative is to create mini-audiences<sup>11</sup> by stratified draw:

- The number of participants is determined, normally between 100 and 500.
- An internal distribution is made according to gender (51% women, taking into account the non-normative genders) and other areas of inequality in order to obtain a group as close as possible to the socio-demographic characteristics of the general population.
- A draw is made against the census or against the registration of participants to obtain representation by each category (e.g. woman / aged 18 to 30 / born outside the EU / lives in the Alt Pirineu and Aran).

<sup>11</sup> Escobar-Rodríguez and Elstub (2017); OECD (2020).



To be checked in the communication phase		
	Yes	No
2.1 The sectors of women most affected by the decision are identified.		
2.2 The women's and gender entities related to these sectors are identified.		
2.3 Community representatives are located to help disseminate the process.		
2.4 The communication plan includes various strategies adapted to different groups.		
2.5 Communication is adapted to the language, concerns and habits of women with less participatory profiles.		
2.6 Community and informal networks are used.		
2.7 The conciliation measures of the workshops are explained.		
2.8 There is an active search for participants in places where women are already habitually present.		
2.9 Support is provided for digital registration, if necessary.		
2.10 Ads are inserted in magazines and bulletins aimed at these groups and in social media, in a segmented way.		
2.11 The announcement calls for women participants rather than representatives of entities.		
2.12 It is verified that the range of types of people registered is consistent with that of society as a whole.		
2.13 Contact is made with community representatives in order to overcome any imbalances.		

3.3. In the discussion phase

An equitable process is based on reciprocity and empowers women because it is able to include their perceptions and proposals in the collective discourse.

3.3.1. Participatory diagnostics with a gender perspective

The first step in a participatory process is to share a appraisal of the public problem. It is on this basis that the proposals of other participants can be discussed

and assessed, so if women are absent, their needs and perceptions will not be expressed.

The first recommendation is always to include a focus on the gender perspective, with specific actions for women, such as discussion groups or exploratory walks in urban planning.

## Example of an exploratory walk<sup>12</sup> Applied to «El mapa de la ciutat prohibida per a les dones» (The map of the forbidden city for women)

### Gender discrimination in public areas

- Cities have been designed without considering the different perceptions and experiences of safety between women and men.

### What do the walks consist of?

- A group of women walk through public areas with a facilitator who questions them and takes notes and photographs the observations.
- The number of participants cannot exceed 25 and the diversity of the group must be taken into account.
- Duration: between 2 and 3 hours.
- Repeat the experience at different times and with different groups.

### Results

- Inventory of difficulties and limitations perceived by women in the daily use of public areas.
- Identification of the problem points in terms of the perception of safety.
- Compilation of women's demands in relation to the use of public area.
- Overcoming of the supposedly neutral urban safety standards from the gender perspective.

### Examples of perceived difficulties and limitations

- Unclear signage.
- Lack of lighting.
- Enclosed or not very clear spaces, with dark corners where people can hide.
- Poor public transport connections between residential areas, schools and stores.
- Streets that are not very busy or welcoming, and are neglected and poorly adapted to the needs of women.

### Impact on public policies

- Urban development actions to make a city more friendly for everyone.

### Other benefits

- The activity can be used to raise participants' awareness of male violence, use of time, gender roles and socialisation.
- It can also be used to activate women who are usually less involved and provide them with skills to facilitate their future participation.

Article 53 of Act 17/2015 of 21 July, on the effective equality of women and men, provides that policies on the environment, urban planning, housing and mobility have

a) to incorporate the gender perspective in all phases of urban design, planning, implementation and assessment, in order to put the needs and priorities arising from market and domestic work and care on an equal footing in the design and configuration of urban spaces and also to help eliminate existing inequalities.

b) to promote the participation of women and of associations for the defence of women's rights in urban design processes and receive the respective feedback.

<sup>12</sup> Information and references:

- Womenability (2016).  
- Renovation of the Congost district of Granollers (Gelambí, 2016: 227-230).  
- A detailed description of the methodology can be found here: Col·lectiu Punt 6, 2013.  
<http://www.punt6.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DONES-TREBALLANT-FINAL-baixa.pdf>



Image 4. Exploratory night walk.



Image 5. The result of an exploratory walk with a gender perspective in Sant Cugat del Vallès, which classified public areas into six categories.<sup>13</sup>

### 3.3.2. Safe spaces for dialogue

Rationality is central to public policy, with concepts such as the efficiency of public services and practices such as assessment, and participation must be integrated, even if there is no «single rational solution» to public problems.

Thus, participation does not seek «the most rational decision», but rather to act as a mediator between the multiplicity of values and preferences. In this dialogue, empathy and the fact that everyone feels fully accepted and can express themselves freely is as important as rationality.

All values and preferences should be given equal consideration, but the opinions of women who express themselves in a more emotional way or who make contributions linked to personal experiences are often overlooked. We can overcome this if we organise workshops reserved for women or certain groups of women before the general sessions. In this way we manage to:

- Attract participants who would find it difficult to enter general workshops.
- Offer a secure and comfortable context in which to use a more emotional language or a language different from the one usually used in the public sphere, especially when women feel inhibited by their way of speaking or by cultural factors.
- Investigate gender conflicts.

Theatrical techniques, such as the **theatre of the oppressed**, reveal conflicts and solutions that are then discussed by the participants.

In order to follow the discussion approach and avoid concluding with self-referential speeches, the conclusions have to be transferred to a general workshop, with participants defending the proposals and points of view that have emerged before the rest of the population.

<sup>13</sup> Photographs loaned by Col·lectiu Punt 6. More information about the Centre-East exploratory walk (Monastery-Sant Francesc) at <https://decidim.santcugat.cat/processes/marxes/f/229/meetings/164>.



In the self-managed sessions

It is a matter of involving women's circles, feminist movements, groups of migrant women, employment services or entities that work with socially excluded women, so that they can hold discussion workshops, promoting the debate on public policies in an environment that is familiar and safe for them. In this way, it is possible to get to know the points of view of groups that might not attend joint debates with other social groups.

3.3.3. Adaptation of general participatory actions

The structuring and design of participatory processes makes it difficult for women to participate because of

the gender role they are traditionally assigned; therefore, the costs of the double workload must be minimised.

Physical venues

With regard to the place where the participation will take place, it must be taken into account that:

- The physical space must convey a sense of welcome. Formal facilities distance women with family burdens and caregiving responsibilities.
- The space does not necessarily have to be the inside of a facility. If it is decided to convene the meeting outdoors, the weather conditions must be taken into account.



	
<b>Face-to-face session in Manresa</b> National Pact for the Knowledge Society November 2019	<b>Face-to-face session in Sabadell</b> Participatory process “Construïm l’Òmnia del Futur”, #SOMNIA2019. October 2019
Women: 47% · Men: 53%	Women: 81% · Men: 19%
Average participation 2008-2017 · Women: 55% Men: 45%	

Table 4. Comparison between physical venues and the presence of women between two participatory processes of the Government of Catalonia. Own development.

## Brief guidelines for participation

Strategies to create places of trust:

### Convening meetings in venues or premises

- where women usually meet to encourage them to join in the discussion process.
- accessible to all types of people.
- well connected by public transport.
- located on a well-lit and busy street.

### Offer services to facilitate conciliation:

- Breastfeeding room
- Points of care and services for people in situations of dependency, so that those who are responsible for their care can participate.
- Parallel activities for children's participation or, alternatively, areas adapted to children (toy corner, rest area, homework material, etc.).

The simple fact of offering these services in the participatory process does not mean the gender perspective is being included: offering them is a necessary condition to obtain a gender vision in public policy debates, but is not in itself sufficient.

## Digital spaces

The participation website must:

- offer clear and visual content.
- allow people to participate in a controlled way and keep a record of the progress made.

Online discussion must be facilitated in different time slots that are compatible with the schedules of public Internet access points.

Telecentres, which are facilities with computer devices and personalised assistance (library network, civic

centres, etc.), make it possible to combine face-to-face participation with online participation. These facilities are strongly feminised, which can offset the digital gender gap.

The Xarxa Punt TIC of the Government of Catalonia has 500 telecentres with a facilitator to support the online session, making it possible to reach thousands of users, mostly women.

## Sessions times

- Specify, disseminate and respect the start and end times.
- Avoid coinciding with school arrival and leaving times.
- Double the sessions: one in the morning and a second in the afternoon.

## Facilitation

Structures of domination make women less influential in participation for two reasons:<sup>14</sup>

- Socialisation into the ideals traditionally attributed to femininity makes them less motivated and willing to get involved. The consequence is more cautious contributions and more frequent apologies.
- The rest of the participants tend to underestimate the contributions of women, especially when the issue is not consistent with the role traditionally attributed to them.

<sup>14</sup> Martínez-Palacios (2017); Coffman et al. (2019).

The following aspects must be added:

- Male chauvinist expressions; stereotypes and prejudices of natural language.
- The fact that our society prioritises the technical and rational discourse over the emotional or subjective discourse.
- The predominance of a vertical and hierarchical communication model based on confrontation and poor listening skills.

It is necessary to conduct more research, as well as to separate the influence of educational level, employment or participatory experience, but men's contributions are assumed to be more propositional; they reite-

rate contributions already made and seek recognition, especially in traditionally male settings.

By taking the floor more often and keeping it longer, even when they are a minority, men reduce women's access, besides which we must add:

- **Maninterrupting:** Unnecessary interruptions of a woman's speech by a man.
- **Bropropriating:** appropriation of women's opinions and contributions by men.
- Distractions during women's contributions.
- Underestimation of women's contributions.

The Solidarity Economy Network of Catalonia offers a tool<sup>15</sup> that allows us to observe inequality in discussions by writing down the following elements for women and men participants:

Types of contributions				
Informative	Proactive	Decision making	Mediating	Repetitive/Insistent
Authoritarian	Emphasis on agreement	Emphasis on disagreement	Expression of feelings	Waiver of speaking time

Attitude types			
interruptions	Hogging the floor	Contents not related to the subject of the discussion	Raising controversy
Acknowledging the other	Active listening	Active listening	Waiver of speaking time

Table 5. Source: Solidarity Economy Network of Catalonia

The dynamics of the dialogue should enhance the relational aspect, mutual recognition and cooperation among the participants, with techniques such as:

<sup>15</sup> Accessible at: <http://xes.cat/comissions/economies-feministes/eina-observacio-genere/>

## Brief guidelines for participation

- Starting the contributions with the expression of feelings and experiences related to the use of the services, benefits and regulations that are the subject of the dialogue.
- Stimulating alternative forms of narration: life stories, graphic elements and visual aids such as card-board or Post-its.
- Role games: recreating the use of public facilities.
- In urban development projects or the design of facilities, the use of prototypes or models.
- Group forms of artistic expression, such as composing songs or making drawings as a group.

### Tips to redirect inequality in discussions

#### 1. In the welcome and in the presentation session

- Explain the importance of everyone being able to express themselves freely.
- Encourage the presentation of personal reasons for participating.
- Avoid mentioning the experience, training, employment or position of the participants.
- Limit time and avoid interruptions.

#### 2. In the dialogue

- Create small sub-groups to facilitate mutual recognition and allow everyone to speak.
- Encourage active listening.
- Adapt to the vocabulary and language of the participants.
- Control the contribution time and encourage women with a more passive attitude.
- Handle disputes creatively, seeking to find shared and balanced proposals.
- Gather opinions with visual tools that allow the identification of repeated ideas.
- Delve into the arguments behind the ideas expressed by women with less tradition of participation.

#### 3. In the event of an emotional contribution based on personal or subjective experiences

- Express gratitude for the trust and, if necessary, offer the option of leaving the venue.
- Assess and review the contribution without focusing on the way it has been expressed.

#### 4. In the event of longer contributions from men, demands for recognition, interruptions, etc.

- Point them out when they occur.
- Explain why they limit women's free participation.

#### 5. In situations of verbal, physical, symbolic or environmental discrimination or aggression

- Quickly and consciously pick out practices that undermine mutual respect.
- Stop the discussion to spotlight attitudes and expressions that are sexist, racist, ableist or LGBT-phobic.
- Adapt the response to the degree of violence, focusing on the person who has received the aggression; ask them what they need and offer them a safe place to relax.
- Make it clear to the aggressor that discriminatory or violent attitudes are not tolerated.
- If necessary, ask the aggressor to leave the venue and discuss how they can repair the damage.

#### 6. In the pooling

- Keep in mind that men are more likely to volunteer or be proposed as subgroup spokespersons on traditionally male-dominated topics and in male-dominated groups.
- Ensure that the conclusions reflect everyone's contributions.



## Draws

Beyond the composition of the mini-audiences, which we have already mentioned, other possible uses of draws are:

- To define the speaking order of the participants in the subgroups.
- To choose the person representing each subgroup.
- Establish how decisions will be made: unanimity, consensus, majority, etc.

To be checked in discussions		
	Yes	No
3.1 The appraisal includes a gender perspective component.		
3.2 A participatory appraisal with a gender perspective is carried out.		
3.3 Safe workshops are opened for women.		
3.4 Theatrical techniques are used.		
3.5 Self-managed sessions in entities linked to women from diverse backgrounds.		
3.6 The results of the safe workshops are transferred to general sessions.		
3.7 The venue is adapted to the daily reality of the women to be questioned.		
3.8 The venue is accessible to everyone and is well connected by public transport and located in a well-lit and busy street.		
3.9 There is a breastfeeding room and rest areas or care points for people in situations of dependency.		
3.10 Children's participatory activities are organised in parallel.		
3.11 Two identical sessions are held: one in the morning and the other in the afternoon.		
3.12 The schedule does not coincide with school arrival and leaving times.		
3.13 The differences between men and women in the way they express themselves are measured.		
3.14 Facilitation counterbalances the elements that place women in inferior conditions in the discussions.		
3.15 Value is given to all types of expressions and narratives, including those not based on rational language.		
3.16 Facilitation encourages creative and cooperative dialogue rather than competitive debate.		
3.17 Sexist, macho, LGBTI-phobic, racist, classist or ableist attitudes are neutralised.		
3.18 The order of speaking and the role of spokesperson are decided by drawing lots.		
3.19 The way in which decisions will be made has been established.		

### 3.4 In the closing and return phase

The information obtained from the discussions should be organised in such a way as to maximise the influence of participation on decisions. In this way, if participation has been egalitarian, public policies will also be egalitarian.

On the other hand, it should be noted that gender inequalities have been in place for millennia and that they cut across the whole of society, including citizen participation. Dismantling them requires continuous improvement work based on the permanent observation and analysis of actions.

#### 3.4.1 The results document

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If the systematic document that contains the collective discourse includes an analysis of the biases occurring in the discussions, as well as the gender impact that the contributions and proposals it contains would have if they were transformed into decisions, the effect they would have on equality could be better assessed.

Therefore, the results document should include the following:

- All the impacts and contributions that have appeared in the discussions and on which the unequal situations of women and men are based, regardless of the rhetoric used by the participants.
- An assessment of gender biases, both in terms of the unequal presence of women and men, and in terms of the unequal capacity to influence the results. This information can be taken from the assessment of the participatory process.

#### 3.4.2 Accountability

The return to citizenship should explain what impact the results of the participatory process have had on the decision:

- What proposals have been rejected because they would undermine gender equality?
- A comprehensive explanation of the gender impact of the decision.

#### 3.4.3 The assessment

We need to assess from a gender perspective whether we want to improve the fairness of participatory processes. Not only of the face-to-face workshops, where assessment is usual, but also of participation in digital platforms, such as Participa.gencat.cat or Decidim.

#### Design of the questionnaires

- They should include the «non-binary» category in the question on gender.
- They should ask:

About conciliation, space and schedules, subject matter and dissemination.

Whether the gender perspective has been satisfactorily integrated into the participatory process.

#### Collection of the questionnaires

Women's expectations, conditioned by socialisation and the suffering of inequalities, tend to make them more appreciative of the quality of services and products and, therefore, also of participatory instruments.

In order to mitigate this bias, once the questionnaires have been collected at the end of the session, it is desirable to share the assessment results at the end of the session so that the women can point out the barriers they have experienced and make proposals for improvement.

## Collection of information on digital participation

The trend towards online participation creates the risk of new inequalities due to the digital gender gap.

- The design of digital platforms should enable each profile to be associated with at least gender and age, in order to obtain information on biases in the platform's activity: proportion of women and men who log on, how long they stay, who makes more contributions, etc., and thus take corrective measures if necessary.
- It should be possible for this personal information to be hidden from the rest of the participants, both to avoid prejudice and discrimination and to guarantee the protection of personal data.

This information would allow the identification of biases.

## Analysis

The analysis of gender biases should be carried out:

- In each participatory process.
- On changes in citizen participation over time.

In both cases, it is necessary to:

- pay attention to the issues that have traditionally limited women's participation.
- cross gender and other areas of inequality with all other variables.

Finally, conferences should be convened with feminist and women's organisations to assess the results of the analyses and to propose future improvements.

### Examples of variable crosses

«gender» and «employment situation» with «satisfaction with the hours/space»

«gender» and «training level» with «subject matter of discussion»

### To be checked in closing and return

	Yes	No
4.1 The results document includes the impacts and proposals based on the different circumstances of women and men.		
4.2 The results document includes all the contributions, regardless of the rhetoric used.		
4.3 The results document assesses the influence of gender biases on participation results.		
4.4 The return sets out the proposals that were rejected because they would undermine gender equality.		
4.5 The return includes a brief description of the impact of the decision made on gender equality.		
4.6 The assessment questionnaires include the «non-binary» category.		
4.7 The questionnaires ask about conciliation, space and schedules, subject matter and dissemination.		
4.8 The questionnaires ask whether the gender perspective has been properly integrated into the participatory process.		
4.9 Women are asked at the site of participation itself, when collecting the questionnaires, what barriers they have experienced.		
4.10 The profiles of the digital platforms allow the measurement of the different customs and habits of women and men in the participation.		
4.11 The changes of gender biases in citizen participation over time are measured.		
4.12 The assessment takes note of the issues that have traditionally limited women's participation.		
4.13 The assessment crosses the gender variable, as well as the variables of the other areas of inequality, with all the other variables.		
4.14 Conferences with women's and feminist organisations are convened to present and discuss the results of the assessment analyses.		





To believe that only by opening participatory processes will we obtain more equitable decisions is to ignore the fact that structural inequalities, such as gender, are reproduced in the debates unless these have been designed with the appropriate methodology.

Women's inferior conditions for participation are due to the role traditionally assigned to them, the socialisation they have received, and the discriminatory attitudes that have historically excluded them from political life, but they also result from the way in which we have conceived participation: the centrality of rationality and the search for the «best» argument had generated a competitive model.

Consequently, actions to eliminate barriers to women's access to participation and to create conditions of equality between men and women must be aimed at overcoming these two types of causes. In addition, we must take into account:

- The hyperdiversity of women. As opposed to an abstract idea of «woman», reality tells us that it is a heterogeneous collective with numerous identities and social conditions, so we often have to focus on certain categories of women who are normally absent from citizen participation processes.
- The information society, which opens the way to digital participation. The Guide focuses on face-to-face meetings so that the challenge of achieving fully satisfactory virtual participation is still to be met. For this reason, we only refer to those aspects of the participation platforms that are currently (2020) used to support face-to-face participatory processes.

In order to overcome all these elements, the Guide proposes tools for an alternative model of dialogues based on cooperation, reciprocity and creativity, where the priority is to find fair and equitable solutions to public problems, collectively and in a way that satisfies everyone. Citizen participation can only be fair to

women and promote public policies that eliminate inequalities when the participants' feeling of usefulness is increased and discussion groups are socially balanced.

Since the Guide is intended to be practical, it presents 53 specific proposals that can be checked to see if they apply to each participatory process. But it will always be necessary to analyse the specific circumstances of each participatory process in order to assess their practical applicability.



# 5

To know more

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Generalitat de Catalunya  
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**Ministry for Foreign Action,  
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**16** PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND STRONG  
INSTITUTIONS



**5** GENDER  
EQUALITY

