

# INSPIRE

*Research insights / working paper / policy brief\* template [DRAFT 2024.10]  
KSH 4 Innovation*

## 1. INSPIRE Project Insights to Date

The **goal of Knowledge & Support Hub 4 (KSH 4) Innovation** is to develop innovative knowledge and tools to address implementation of gendered innovations in the private sector. To do so, KSH 4 focuses primarily on gender responsive innovation communities and innovation policies in the private sector paying specific attention to the social and cultural factors enabling the successful implementation of gendered innovations within companies or innovation clusters.

The central reason for taking a closer look at (inclusive) gendered innovations is based on the following observations:

- 1) **Innovation research** still leans very heavily on **male perspectives** ([Foss and Henry 2016](#)) and addresses men's rather than women's needs.
- 2) The EU has strongly supported the need for gender mainstreaming in research and innovation, such as the development of the [Gendered Innovations Guidelines \(EC 2020\)](#). However, the bulk of research and policy action in the area still focuses on strategies for gendering research. Gendered innovations in the private sector have remained on the periphery of these efforts.
- 3) Innovation is a practical application of new knowledge, or novel recombination of existing knowledge, for a concrete purpose, which includes, but is not limited to, commercial gain, improvement of products and services, or public good. Innovation is gendered when **gender aspects are integrated into all aspects of the R&D process** in order to ensure equity of outcomes ([Schiebinger and Schraudner 2011](#)).
- 4) Current studies and policies on gendered innovations have not yet sufficiently addressed **aspects of inclusiveness and intersectionality**. Inclusive innovation considers all marginalised groups beyond gender<sup>1</sup>. Within the intersectional approach, **inclusive gendered innovations** should not only take into account issues of gender, but also **how gender fits in broader structures of inequality**.

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<sup>1</sup> Several related approaches have gained popularity in this regard and need to be mentioned: for example, responsible research and innovation advocates for engaging all relevant stakeholders, including women, in the innovation life cycle. A growing number of studies examines social innovation, which explicitly targets disadvantaged groups.

Against this background, the KSH 4 research team conducted a **strategic assessment (D2.1) of research** on gendered innovations and relevant gendered innovation policies in the business enterprise sector. The analysis is based on a **scoping literature review** of 122 documents comprising scientific articles, grey literature and policy documents in 2010-2022 ([Peters et al. 2020](#)) and adopted a feminist and a decolonial approach in the review, with attention to geographies and power relations of knowledge production ([Mignolo 2009](#), [Benschop 2021](#)).

The main finding of this analysis is that there is a lot of academic interest in gendered innovation and the field is dynamically developing. However, at the same time, the **current knowledge base is fragmented and inconsistent**. Work is needed on all conceptual levels: from theory development to applied research in formulating an approach to integrate sex, gender and intersectional analysis into innovation development in the business enterprise sector (BES).

The analysis identified **the need to extend the conceptual development of both the definitions of Inclusive Gendered Innovation and Inclusive Gendered Innovation Policy**. The original definition, proposed in [Schiebinger and Schraudner \(2011\)](#) and developed in subsequent works ([Schiebinger and Hunt, 2022](#); [Schiebinger, 2021](#); [Schiebinger and Klinge, 2018](#)) is still lacking important elements that would enable its wider uptake in the community. With the view of criticisms and the content of related concepts, we extend the gendered innovation definition to include the following elements:

- Considerations of inclusivity and intersectionality, in particular, how sex and gender interventions interact with other characteristics of diversity and dimensions of inequality;
- Directionality: beyond scientific excellence and quality of outcomes, IGIs ultimately aim at promoting inclusive gender equality;
- Focus on the innovation process, not just in basic and applied research;
- Focus on the wider scope of beneficiaries at all stages of innovation development;
- Focus on the structuring role of societal influences, institutional frameworks, and organisational structures;
- The crucial need to consider specific local context.

With these elements in mind, the KSH 4 research team proposed the following definitions:

- **Inclusive Gendered Innovation:** IGI mainstreams sex, gender and intersectional analysis in the R&D and innovation development processes aiming at promoting inclusive gender equality. The IGI approach considers how broader societal influences, such as unconscious bias, gender relations, and intersecting inequalities already present in institutional frameworks and organisational structures, as well as local context, affect innovation development and innovation beneficiaries. IGI involves a diverse group of beneficiaries in the innovation process. While intersectionality should be an aspirational goal of IGI, it may be difficult to realise empirically. In these cases, IGI should strive for an inclusive approach grounded in SG&DA.

- Inclusive Gendered Innovation Policy: IGIPs encourage the mainstreaming of intersectional SG&DA, promote equal and unbiased and research content and innovation through legislation, regulations, strategies, targeted initiatives and/or dedicated units as well as incentives. IGIPs on the RFO level aim at promoting the integration of intersectional SG&DA throughout the whole funding cycle, by providing a definition of clear terms for SG&DA, establishing gender criteria in application forms, assessment criteria for the evaluation, and by providing guidelines and training for applicants and evaluators on how to deal with these criteria. RFOs should evaluate the success of their IGIPs by conducting regular monitoring.

Based on the literature reviews on gender and innovation and promising policy instruments, the following **research questions** are recommended to address in future research, including the **work** conducted in KSH 4:

- 1) What is the relevance of GI funding instruments for private companies? What is the motivation for companies to apply for Gender in Research and Innovation (GiRI) funding? What hinders their participation?
- 2) How is the gender dimension considered in the innovation process?
- 3) How is intersectionality incorporated, implemented and monitored in promising policy instruments and funded projects?
- 4) How do gendered innovations lead to gender equality?
- 5) What output, outcome and impact can be generated with gendered innovation policy instruments? (for beneficiaries, for users, for the ecosystem)
- 6) What (supra-)national framework conditions effectively support gendered innovations or would be necessary? What conditions hinder GI?

## 2. INSPIRE CoP and KSH to date

This part starts rather abruptly, from my point of view it would be helpful to go back to the basic question, i.e. the initiation of CoPs (briefly explain what this is) in the areas of GI and policy. Then explain that it was agreed in advance to focus on two selected sectors for the GI CoPs, namely energy and IT. Then start with the description, i.e. what exactly the operational steps were to set up the CoPs, perhaps even with a supporting flow chart

The CoPs for KSH 4 gathered for a **Kick-off** in April 2024 and its **first Knowledge Exchange Event (KEE)** in June 2024. Both sessions were held online. This section provides an overview of activities, insights, and emergent themes which came out from the two sessions. Overall, the **Energy and IT CoPs** focused on brainstorming the **relevance** of gendered innovation and **requirements / conditions** for organisations to gain support and build capabilities for a successful integration of gender and diversity perspectives in processes. The **RFO CoP consists of funding organisations which fund innovations**. In the first meetings also challenges in developing **gender expertise** and

gaining **support from stakeholders** to develop funding policies focused on gendered innovation were raised. As a next step, in an expert talk by Professor Martina Schraudner the concept of gendered innovation was elaborated in respect to societal relevance and the SDGs.

### **Kick-off Event (April 2024)**

The **goal** of the Kick-off event was for the CoP members to meet one another, form groups based on their interest on **renewable energies (Energy)** and **information technology (IT)**, and brainstorm topics to address together.<sup>2</sup> The event started with an **introduction** of all participants including CoP members, KSH experts, and KSH leaders. Then, the KSH leaders informed the CoP members of the objective, structure, and implementation plan of the **INSPIRE project and KSH 4**. The main focus of the event was the **group-forming** session in which CoP members organised themselves around the Energy group and the IT group. Once the groups were formed, CoP members were put in breakout rooms and brainstormed key topics they are interested in tackling by sharing **challenges, needs, and possible solutions** to achieve gendered innovation processes in their fields. For each group, KSH experts provided input and KSH leaders facilitated the discussions. At the end of the event, all groups came back in a **plenary session** to share what they discussed in their respective rooms and to find common themes. The CoPs aligned on addressing **two key questions** in their future activities.

The **first question** was: Why is the **integration of gender and diversity dimensions** into innovation and development processes **relevant**? The Energy group discussed how gendered innovation and gender equality are seen as topics that **only improve experiences of women** instead of concepts that concern inequalities for all. Similarly, the IT group expressed needs of **awareness-raising** for integrating the gender perspective in the innovation process to tackle technologies with unjust and unfair outcomes such as artificial intelligence. As elaborated on in the next paragraph, both groups described instances in which organisations are still grappling with **increasing representations** of women and are still less aware of gendered innovation and its benefits.

The **second question** was: What are the necessary **requirements** or framework **conditions** for a successful integration of gender and diversity perspective? Both groups discussed the importance of **knowledge and awareness about gender (in)equalities** that users and wider society face from a lack of integrating gender and diversity perspectives in innovation processes as well as gender (in)equalities present in organisations (e.g., negative impacts of unconscious biases, gender balance at management levels, and the gender pay gap). **Expertise in gendered innovation processes** – that could inform organisations on how to consider sectoral differences, integrate gender and dimensions across value chains, develop user-oriented and employee-oriented company values, implement concrete guidelines, and change daily practices – were also raised as a requirement. Both groups engaged highly with the topic of **increasing organizational diversity**. They emphasised the

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<sup>2</sup> CoP members belonging to the RFO group had scheduled their own session before the Kick-off event was organised. To avoid a work overload of the RFO CoP members, they did not join the Kick-off event in April 2024.

importance of increasing diversity in research and innovation teams in terms of gender and discipline (e.g., working with researchers with a social science background). The Energy group raised the notion of losing femininity when working in science and technology and the lack of women in STEM education as challenges. The IT group raised low participation of women in STEM education, male-dominated cultures, different leadership-styles, and different expectations for work-life balance across genders as challenges to increase diversity. Thus, both groups identified **strategies for recruitment and retention** of diverse talent pools as a requirement. The two groups also discussed whether using quantitative key performance indicators are appropriate as tools to increase diversity and foster inclusion as they may risk tokenizing employees with relevant backgrounds (e.g., women employees feeling “used” for showcasing diversity efforts of the organisation). **Meaningful goal-setting and monitoring** to foster gender- and diversity- oriented organisational cultures were also of interest.

### **RFO CoP Kickoff (February 2024) and next meetings**

The RFO CoP met for a first time and after some introduction and getting together exercises, needs were discussed, covering aspects like more comprehensive knowledge and resources to better integrate gender perspectives, extensive capacity-building for stakeholders, and the development and dissemination of accessible guidelines for Gender-Responsive Research and Innovation. In the second meeting on April 21st, new members were welcomed (Canada, Poland) and the formalisation of the participation of RFOs in the CoP by (tailored) MoUs. In the third meeting in May, Professor Martina Schraudner presented the concept of gendered innovation in respect to societal relevance and the SDGs.

### **Knowledge Exchange Event 1 (June 2024)**

The **goal** of the first knowledge exchange event was to discuss the **relevance** of gendered innovation and brainstorm **how RFOs can support** Energy and IT CoPs to promote it. The event kicked off with the KSH leaders sharing the results of the [strategic assessment \(D2.1\) of literature on Gendered Innovations](#) including what inclusive gendered innovation is, its benefits (e.g., ensuring equality, identifying markets and customer needs, improving product and research quality, and appealing CSR), and the status quo of Inclusive Gendered Innovation Policies. Based on this information, members from the **Energy and IT CoPs** shared their current ideas on integrating diverse user needs and what kind of support from the RFO CoPs they envision. The **RFO CoPs** shared their current activities and potential ways they could support companies.

The **Energy and IT CoPs** raised several **challenges** to integrate diverse user needs in innovation processes. One challenge was to **motivate large companies**, especially those that are partially government-owned, to investing in structural and organisational change for implementing gendered innovation processes. For example, companies are not incentivized to integrating needs of low-income user groups as they are less likely to lead to profit. As a result, **start-ups** have a lower barrier to entry to adopting gendered innovation processes as they are structurally and financially more flexible. In addition, start-up management and employees tend to be of younger generations and thus

more likely to be open to social-oriented approaches. A second challenge was to build **organisational competencies**. Whether it is integrating gender and diversity in internal processes or writing plans for gendered innovations in funding proposals, CoPs discussed the difficulties of developing relevant goals / indicators, training internal experts and identifying external experts. Moreover, the CoPs emphasised that gendered innovation processes must be implemented while accounting for the local context of the organisation. In the Global South, organisations may have a more bottoms-up approach to building capabilities instead of relying on top-down guidelines. In response, the RFO CoPs brainstormed how funding policies could **combine requirements** of increasing diversity in organisations with integrating diversity in processes instead of requiring strictly the latter. In doing so, the RFO CoPs brainstormed that Energy and IT organisations without full-fledged gendered innovation capabilities would be less intimidated to apply for funding.

The **RFO CoPs** also raised several **challenges** that they face when supporting Energy and IT fields through funding schemes. One was the **lack of support** to develop funding opportunities that focus on gendered innovation. The RFO CoPs described how there is limited budget and buy-in from stakeholders to ensure that gendered innovations is not merely an add-on to evaluating funding proposals but a main requirement. Another challenge was building **competencies of RFOs** to develop gendered innovation policies and evaluate submitted proposals. The challenge stems from a lack of gender expertise such as describing the relevance of gendered innovation in specialised research fields and contextualising it depending on national or regional focuses.

### 3. KSH leaders' reflections



Overall, it can be said that assembling the CoPs - consisting of private sector companies - is challenging and appropriate measures had to be taken. It turned out that 1. entire CoPs - consisting of companies - do not exist in part, and 2. companies also do not have the capacity to participate in KSH activities "voluntarily." Furthermore, it seems that the interest in such working groups is much higher from academic institutions than from the private sector.

As a result of the CoP assembly process, it was not possible to define thematic CoPs, except for the RFO CoP, which started its collaboration in spring 2024. Although the first kick-off led to lively exchange and most participants from the first kick-off also attended the first KEE, there is still no clear interest in committing to close collaboration through self-organised meetings.

In the summer of 2024, new ideas had to be put in place to counteract the collapse of the CoP concept. On the one hand, there was the idea to approach EU-funded already existing CoPs to see if they would like to expand their existing collaboration through cooperation in INSPIRE. On the other hand, it was considered to shift from the strict form of a CoP to a network and aim for a loose collaboration through irregular meetings. The KSH 4 is currently in the final definition phase.



# How to build your research insights

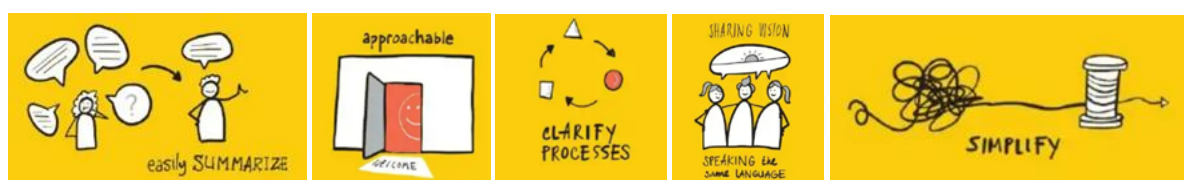
What does this look like in action [example]?

*If you are preparing for the INSPIRE Knowledge Exchange, this document helps you to create your own research insights.*

Research insights are short documents of about 4-6 pages (part 1 and 2), preferably using hyperlinks to existing INSPIRE deliverables, not full references. The working paper consists of 10-12 pages plus appendices (adding part 3 and 4). Here is an example of what the document may look like. We encourage the use of visuals. Remember to use your KSH colour scheme and unique icon – change the header!

## 1. What do we know about presenting information?

Audiences understand us better when we visualize instead of presenting text blocks:

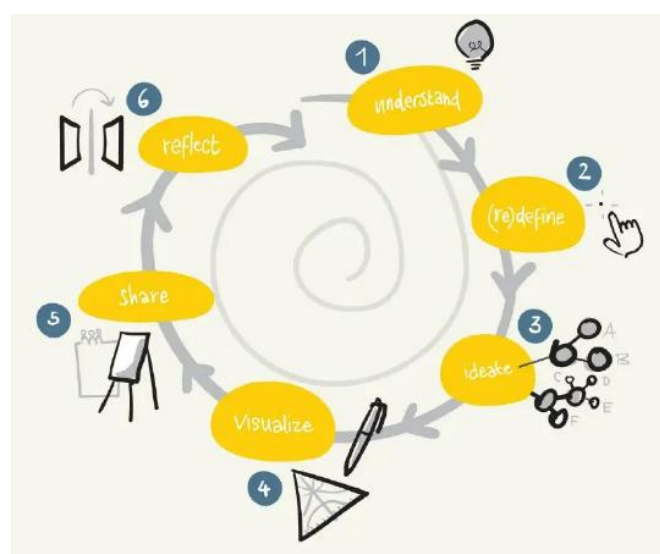


## 2. How to apply to INSPIRE research insights?

- Think of best ways to bring your audience up to speed!
- Stick to approachable, easy to digest bits
- “Digesting for others” is not the easiest, but makes a bigger difference

## 3. What does this mean for you?

Try this process – from understanding to reflection:



## 4. Suggested icons

[Here](#) you can find the latest INSPIRE PPT template, including various illustrations that you can use.

Look at [www.unsplash.com](http://www.unsplash.com) and [www.freepik.com](http://www.freepik.com) for inspiration!

For general icons, select “light” Word Doc system icons from Insert > Icons



Examples of infographics and whitepapers: <https://successinstem.ca/resources/>

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