**EEA AND NORWAY GRANTS**

**FUND FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS**

**INITIATIVE PROPOSAL**

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| --- | --- |
| Title of the initiative: Breaking gender-bias around women’s career choices |  |
| Implementing entity *(beneficiary state entity):*  Eesti Naisuurimus-ja Teabekeskus (ENUT)  (Eng: The Estonian Women’s Studies and Resource Centre). Contact: Ms. Reet Laja [reet@enut.ee](mailto:reet@enut.ee), <https://enut.ee/en/welcome/> |  |
| Partner(s) *(minimum one donor state entity)*:  BPW Follo (NGO Business and Professional Women Follo), Norway, Contact:  Ms. Anna Halvorsen, Chairwoman, [anna@tax-return.no](mailto:anna@tax-return.no); <https://www.facebook.com/bpwfollo/> |  |
| * Bilateral priority area identified by the JCBF beyond the programmes: * promotion of core European values, such as  respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights for all people, regardless of their racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity; * E-governance (digitalization) * eastern partnership * X equality and equal treatment * X business environment, sustainable and adaptive governance (based on “Competitiveness Plan for 2020” approved by the Government of Estonia) |  |
| Allocation *(total sum)*: 78 125 Euros  *(A more detailed project budget description in the activity plan)* |  |
| Short description of the initiative:  *(background, aim, participants, activity plan, budget outline, communication and dissemination)* |  |

**Background**

When it comes to the gender gap in entrepreneurship and the share of women in higher corporate ranks, Estonia is still very far from the best performers. On the policy level, there are no strategies or support measures for female entrepreneurship or more generally – empowerment. In 2024, only 15% of top managers in companies with over 10 mln.€ of turnover and over 10 employees are women.[[1]](#footnote-2) Only 27% of businesses in Estonia are founded by women.[[2]](#footnote-3) According to the Estonian polling company Kantar Atlas’ 2020 survey[[3]](#footnote-4), around 38% of men want to start their own business, but only 26% of women. The survey also shows that the difference starts with ambition. Ambition means thinking big, making bold choices and pursuing courageously your goals. This, however, does not come by itself. Especially for women, especially when they want to choose non-traditional career paths like leadership and entrepreneurship. This is largely due to the existing gender norms and traditional gender roles. If we want to increase the number of women in leadership positions and business, we need to break down gender-bias around career choices, we need girls / young women who firmly believe they ’can do it’. We need to empower women.

Women’s empowerment has to start in early childhood and continue throughout their studies at all levels of education. To support girls / young women in making non-traditional career choices, we need incorporate the gender perspective and skills to combat gender bias not only in education, but also in the career counselling and entrepreneurship promotion. This can be done by providing the key players with appropriate knowledge, skills and guidelines. Such guidelines could build on and supplement the Methodological guidelines for textbook publishers and teachers for developing textbooks and teaching materials free of gender stereotypes produced by ENUT during the EEA grant funded project which finished in spring 2024. The Guidelines to be developed should provide skills to support young people in navigating their career choices more effectively and free of gender stereotypes. In Estonia, there is a clear lack of gender awareness, knowledge of gender stereotypes and ways to overcome them on all levels of education, among career counsellors as well as promoters of entrepreneurship. This gap needs to be filled. In its women’s empowerment efforts Estonia should learn from the best practices of other countries, Norway being the best role model.

**Why Norway?**

Norway, a beacon of gender equality, stands as a living testament to what a society can achieve when women’s potential is fully realized. Often hailed as a global model, Norway’s progressive approach to gender parity serves as both an inspiration and a benchmark for nations striving to bridge the gender gap. Stepping ahead of its time, Norway made history by appointing the world’s first Gender Equality Ombudsman in the 1980s, marking the beginning of a transformative journey towards balanced representation and pay for women (not only in the public sector but also in the realm of private enterprise).

While the journey towards complete gender parity is an ongoing one, Norway’s dedication to equality is undeniable. With a robust legislative framework and a collective drive, the nation has propelled itself into the ranks of the most gender-equal economies globally. It’s a land where gender bias takes a back seat, and professional competence alone takes the driver’s seat – a fertile ground for foreign business women to thrive and make their mark without the shackles of gender discrimination. As we delve into the realm of women entrepreneurship in Norway, we uncover a landscape where innovation knows no gender and where the entrepreneurial spirit is nurtured without boundaries.

Norway has historically been a trailblazer for improving gender parity in companies. In 2005, it was the first European country to require listed companies to have bard with at least 40% female representation.[[4]](#footnote-5) Norway has also developed a Norwegian Action plan for more entrepreneurship among women, launched in 2008 – 2013.[[5]](#footnote-6) It’s relevant to mention here, that the (Norwegian) ’policy programme is most clearly influenced by a feminist empowerment paradigm’.[[6]](#footnote-7) Norway is also a model country when it comes to implementing the principles of gender-sensitive education whereby supporting young girls’ and women’s empowerment.

There is an abundance of government initiatives, policies, schemes and networks that are available for women entrepreneurs in Norway – a lot to learn from for the Estonian policy-makers and women empowerment activists.

Over the years, the project applicant, the Estonian Women’s Studies and Resource Centre (ENUT), has gathered a great deal of experience and expertise in empowering women through and in education, and supporting female entrepreneurship. We have worked on the subject with partners from Finland , Sweden and Iceland, but we did not have the opportunity to have a closer look into Norwegian experience.

**The project is partially building on the activities, earlier supported by EEA and Norway Grants.** The key facts to support the proposed project’s activities:

* In 2022-2024 ENUT carried out the EEA and Norway Grants funded project *Education free of gender stereotypes = more equal and wider opportunities for young people* (2022-2024)
* The project also introduced the Nordic (Icelandic) experience of building awareness of the harmful gender stereotypes and their implications on students’ career choices
* Under the project *Methodological guidelines for textbook publishers and teachers* *for developing textbooks and teaching materials free of gender stereotypes* were compiled for textbook publishers and teachers to help avoid gender stereotypes in school textbooks and teaching materials.
* **These *Guidelines* need to be supplemented by guidelines focusing specifically on girls’ / young women’s empowerment** targeting a wider readership from among all levels of education, teacher trainers, promoters of gender equality at universities, business promotion community members, entrepreneurship education providers, career counsellors, etc).
* **The feedback from the above mentioned project’s training demonstrated a great interest in the topics and pointed to the need to provide further guidance and training on breaking gender stereotypes and broadening students’ non-traditional choices in view of the rapidly changing world of work.**

**Project objectives**

The initiative addresses 2 bilateral priority areas identified by JCBF:

* equality and equal treatment;
* business environment, sustainable and adaptive governance.

**The overall objective** is to create a supportive environment for empowering women and breaking gender-bias around their career choices

**Specific objectives are**:

1. to incorporate gender issues in (entrepreneurship) education, career counselling and entrepreneurship promotion ;
2. to transfer to Estonia the Norwegian best practices of empowering women through education and entrepreneurship development .

**Planned results**[[7]](#footnote-8)

The planned results of the project are:

* Easy-to-use Guidelines for women’s empowerment to boost women’s entrepreneurship, taking into account inter alia the best practices of Norway, will be produced and made available for a wide range of stakeholders helping them incorporate the gender perspective in their work;
* A group of educators, teaching entrepreneurship on various levels and in many Estonian educational institutions, will receive specialized training, how to fight gender stereotypes in women’s career planning and to encourage women to become entrepreneurs.
* Working relations with Norwegian organizations involved in female empowerment will be established by the applicant and become the basis for future collaboration after the project ends.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| OUTPUT | INDICATOR | TARGET |
| Study tour for Estonian educators and entrepreneurs to Norway | Number of participants | 12 |
| Special guidelines on breaking down gender gender bias . Empowernment of women to boost women’s entrepreneurship | Number of documents | 1 |
| Intensive training course for educators, focussed on overcoming gender stereotypes in entrepreneurial education | Number of participants completing the course | 60 |
| New partnerships of ENUT with Norwegian organizations | Number of new collaborative partners | 2 |

**Sustainability of the project results**

ENUT will integrate the topic in ENUT’s future training offers.

The guidelines developed under the project will be in use by the education providers after the project ends. This includes universities, vocational schools and secondary schools.

ENUT will continue providing relevant support/expertise to project participants, ie gender-aware educators and career counsellors in their  efforts to empower women in their work and to promote the topic among their organisations’ staff members and beyond

Whenever opportunities arise, ENUT will integrate the topic and project outputs in its future activities/projects aimed at advancing  gender equality.

During the project, a network for future cooperation will be established between Estonian and Norwegian organizations promoting gender equality and female entrepreneurship.

**Project partners and beneficiaries**

**The lead partner: ENUT[[8]](#footnote-9)**

Established in 1997 and based at Tallinn University, the Estonian Women’s Studies and Resource Centre (ENUT) is a non-profit NGO engaged in promoting gender equality and empowering women. ENUT’s aim is to promote better understanding of human rights and the democratic process by encouraging gender equality, co-operation between men and women in all aspects of life, and the empowerment of women.

ENUT provides services for policy makers, researchers and students, media, other NGOs, and the general public in the field of gender equality.

As an interesting fact, it was Suzanne Lie, the wife of Dr. Kai Olaf, the Norwegian Ambassador to Estonia (1996 - 2000) who helped with her experience in academia to found ENUT and to launch ENUT's academic journal *Ariadne Lõng*. Suzanne Lie was then for nearly three years the Academic Director of ENUT, and even after leaving Estonia she maintained ENUT's ties with Norway until her death. Thanks to her, the ’Norwegian women’s empowerment spirit’ is very much alive at ENUT.

ENUT has from 2008 onwards carried out numerous projects in the field of gender in education on all levels of education (preschool, primary, basic, secondary, vocational, tertiary)[[9]](#footnote-10), to empower women.

ENUT does not have permanent salaried staff, but it maintains a representative and highly professional network of experts and educators, who contribute to its activities on contractual basis within specific programmes and projects.

**In this project we are planning to involve the following experts:**

**Aet Kull**, Head of the Marketing Department at the Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences, leads the development of the marketing curriculum. A strong advocate for women's entrepreneurship, she has spent decades training and mentoring aspiring female entrepreneurs, equipping them to launch and manage their businesses. Kull is also actively involved with ENUT (Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre), contributing to their annual women's entrepreneurship conference each November. Through her roles in academia, mentorship, and advocacy, Aet Kull plays a crucial role in advancing women's entrepreneurship and enhancing the marketing field in Estonia.

**Monica Klaas-Kütt,** Equality Officer in Tallinn University, is curious HR enthusiast with a passion for people, change and diversity and inclusion. Strong consulting, project management, and transformational change background.

Value driven, straightforward, diverse thinker, collaborative, courageous, pragmatic, strategic, analytical, determinant, passionate, authentic, and fun to work with. Skills: Strategic Business Partnering and Talent Management, Employee Engagement, Inclusion and Diversity, Change Management, Restorative Justice, Talent to Value Practitioner.

**Ülle-Marike Papp** is a gender expert, sociologist, lecturer on gender equality issues, especially focused on gender in education. <https://et.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%9Clle-Marike_Papp>

Author of

* the webportal [www.haridusjasugu.ee](http://www.haridusjasugu.ee/) (Education and Gender) targeting Estonian teachers on all levels of education and academia
* the *Methodological guidelines for textbook publishers and teachers* *for developing textbooks and teaching materials free of gender stereotypes* developed under the EEA funded project *Education free of gender stereotypes =  more equal and wider opportunities for young people*(2022-2024)
* author of several publications on gender-sensitive teaching

**Riina Kütt** is a gender expert, lecturer on gender equality issues, including in the project project *Education free of gender stereotypes =  more equal and wider opportunities for young people*(2022-2024); co-author of publications on gender sensitive teaching

Has participated in numerous EU- and foreign-donor funded projects on gender equality, including Erasmus+ project *Fair Play (2019-2022) with Czech and Norwegian partners*<https://www.kun.no/english-intl-projects/fair-play-at-schools>

**Reet Laja** has been chairing of the board of the Estonian Women’s Studies and Resource Centre since 2005. She has expertise in the areas of gender and education, achieving equal economic independence for women and men, enhancing work–life balance, promoting equal participation of women and men in decision-making, gender equality training and mentoring, eradicating gender-based violence and trafficking, and promoting democracy building, empowering the civil society and gender equality outside the European Union. From the year 2000 Reet Laja transfers her know-how and experience to developing countries as Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and others.

Reet Laja is a co-author of the gender equality manual for local authorities, a practical handbook on collective bargaining and a children’s book on gender.

**Berit Silvia Kondratjev** has previously worked as a teacher and head of education in preschool education. She has studied preschool education pedagogy and education management. She is currently studying for a doctorate in educational sciences and is a consultant in school development programs In Tallinn Universtiy. Her doctoral work centers on leaders' and teachers' perceptions of gender equality in school culture.

**The Norwegian partner : BPW Follo [[10]](#footnote-11)**

BPW Follo is an NGO and the first womens network that was founded in Norway in 1985. It is a member of Business and Professional Women Norway since 2012. There are 24 members in this network.

BPW Follo will

* form a delegation visiting Estonia
* participate in Roundtable discussions in Estonia involving Estonian project partners to share Norwegian best practices of women’s empowerment and supporting women’s non-stereotyped choices, including entrepreneurship
* prepare a programme for the Estonian delegation during the visit to Norway

**Estonian associated project partners and beneficiaries**

There will be several Estonian organizations participating in the project activities and benefitting from the project results:

* Tallinn University (<https://www.tlu.ee/en> )
* Estonian Entrepreneurship University of Applied Sciences (<https://euas.eu/?setlang=eng>)
* Association of Estonian Career Counsellors Eesti Karjäärinõustajate Ühing (KNÜ)

<https://kny.ee/en/about-association/association-of-estonian-career-counsellors/>

* Estonian Association of Teachers of Economics and Entrepreneurship
* Junior Achievement Estonia (<https://ja.ee> )

The beneficiaries will:

* participate in focus group interviews and provide input for the G*uidelines*

to be developed

* introduce their activities in promoting gender equality at university to provide input for creating a supportive environment for women’s empowerment
* participate in trainings and study-visit to break gender bias and stereotypes around career choices targeted at practicing and future teachers
* provide input for incorporating the gender perspective in entrepreneurship education
* provide their channels for project communication activities

**Wider stakeholder groups**

* Estonian Education Forum <https://eunec.eu/sites/www.eunec.eu/files/event/attachments/presentation_loogma.pdf>
* BPW Estonia (EENA) <https://bpw-estonia.ee/>
* ETNA Eestimaal - Rural Women Entrepreneurs NGO <https://fem.ee/>
* Policymakers

**Project activities**

The project is planned to start in mid-October 2024 and end on April 30, 2025. If necessary, the start date can be delayed until November 1, 2024.

The main activities of the project are

* Development of easy-to-use *Guidelines* for women’s empowerment and boosting women’s entrepreneurship. It will be used by a wide range of educational stakeholders and help them to incorporate the gender perspective in their work;

It needs to be noted, that the guidelines developed under the previous project, which also involved an expert from Iceland, focused on identifying and avoiding gender stereotypes in school textbooks and teaching materials. The main target groups were publishers, practicing and future teachers. The new guidelines will be focused on breaking down gender bias and gender stereotypes showing harmful impact of gender stereotypes (more theoretical aspect) + action to empower women, ie enhance women’s capabilities, self-confidence, and courage to grasp opportunities for achieving their goals and realizing their potential in leadership/management positions and in business.

The target group is different: entrepreneurship education providers, career counsellors, practicing teachers on all levels of education, promoters of gender equality, business promoters. E.g. teachers can do a lot to empower girls via the use of appropriate teaching methods, knowing the implications of the hidden curriculum (which can hinder girls’ aspirations and reconfirm male dominance). The two guidelines are complementary and there will be no duplication.

* Intensive training course (including in-person seminars and a study visit to Norway) for education providers, career counsellors and entrepreneurship promoters to raise gender awareness and introduce the newly developed guidelines.
* Expert meetings (on-line and in person) and visit of the Norwegian experts and promoters to Estonia, to share best practices.
* Communication and dissemination of project results.
* Organizational and administrative activities.

**Activity plan:**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Activity** | **Time** | **Location** | **Cost, €** | **Participants** |
|  | **Developing a new edition of the Guidelines for empowering women to boost female entrepreneurship** |  |  | **18 080** |  |
| 1.1 | Focus group interviews to collect input for the Guidelines to be developed (need, structure, content, use). 3 groups: promoters of gender equality at Estonian universities; practicing teachers on all levels of education and career counsellors; providers of entrepreneurship education and business promoters. The costs include premises, moderator fee, refreshments. | Oct-Nov. 2024 | Tallinn | 3 600 | 36 persons |
| 1.2 | Collecting the evidence of the Norwegian best practices in gender equality and female empowerment. | Oct – Dec 2024 | Distance work by EE and NOR partners | 2 940 | Experts from Estonia, supported by the Norwegian partner |
| 1.3 | Preparation of the guidelines | Nov’24 – Jan’25 | Tallinn | 9 760 | Estonian experts contracted by the project |
| 1.4 | Design, layout | Jan’25 | Tallinn | 980 | outsourced service |
| 1.5 | Printing | Jan’25 | Tallinn | 800 | outsourced service |
|  | **Intensive training course for education providers and career counsellors** |  |  | **30 372** |  |
| 2.1 | Training seminars based on the newly developed guidelines, taking into account the Norwegian best practices. The costs include premises, trainers’ fees and catering. | Feb- March 2025 | Tallinn | 9 672 | 4 seminars a' 20 participants each time |
| 2.2 | Study visit to Norway: the programme will be prepared by the Norwegian partner. Estonian experts will visit relevant institutions for 4 days. The costs include travel, accommodation, per diem, local travel in Norway, the cost of a networking meeting, organized by the Norwegian partner. | March-April 2025 | Norway, Oslo- Follo | 20 700 | 12 Estonian experts and educators |
|  | **Networking events and meetings** |  |  | **13 275** |  |
| 3.1 | Kick-off meeting | end of October 2024 | Online, Tallinn, Oslo- Follo | 0 | Project promoters and experts from Estonia and Norway, 10 persons |
| 3.2 | Receiving in Estonia of a group of Norwegian experts in gender equality and female empowerment. The costs include travel, accommodation, local transportation, networking meetings with Estonian stakeholders, premises, catering. | Nov- Dec 2024 | Tallinn | 10 463 | 10 representatives of Norwegian gender-equality and female entrepreneurship promoters |
| 3.3 | 2 on-line meetings with the Norwegian partner and other Norwegian organizations. The costs include speaker or moderator fees, 2 hours per meeting | Nov’34 – March’25 | on-line | 1 220 | Estonian and Norwegian experts on the topic |
| 3.4 | Wrap-up seminar (Face-to-face event, the costs include premises, materials, catering ). | April 2025 | Tallinn | 1 592 | 40 persons - experts, participants in the training course, associated partners' representatives |
|  | **Communication and dissemination of project results** |  |  | **4 998** |  |
| 4.1 | Work by communication specialist ( mailing lists, newsletters, social media channels, preparation of distribution materials etc) | Oct’24 – Apr’25 | Tallinn | 3 430 | outsourced service |
| 4.2 | Design, additional web-development | Nov’24 – Feb’25 | Tallinn | 1 568 | outsourced service |
|  | **Project organizational work, administration and reporting** |  |  | **11 400** |  |
| 5.1 | Coordination and organization of project activities. Project payments.  1000€ x 6 months. | Nov'24 - Apr'25 | Tallinn | 6 000 | Part-time work by ENUT |
| 5.2 | Accounting - 150€ x 6 months | Nov'24 - Apr'25 | Tallinn | 900 | outsourced service |
| 5.3 | Project administration, documentation and reporting – 750€ x 6 months | Nov'24 - Apr'25 | Tallinn | 4 500 | outsourced service |
|  | **TOTAL COSTS OF THE PROJECT:** |  |  | **78 125** |  |
|  | The costs of the Norwegian partner |  |  | **13 500** |  |

A more detailed break-down of project costs can be provided.

**Risk assessment and mitigation**



**Communication and dissemination of the results**

Active communication and dissemination of the results will be organized via the following channels:

* **ENUT and BPW Follo newsletters and mailing lists**: Regular newsletters and targeted email campaigns will be used to keep partners, stakeholders, and the wider community informed about project activities, upcoming events, and opportunities for involvement.
* **Project intellectual outputs** will be available digitally and on paper to all interested parties during and after the end of the project.
* **Social media** and online presence during the project: we will utilize social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram to regularly update stakeholders on project progress, share news and best practices, and encourage interaction.
* Overview of the project activities and digital materials will be posted on **the web-site of ENUT** [www.enut.ee](http://www.enut.ee). Online presence will be vital in maintaining engagement throughout the project lifecycle and after its end.
* **Press releases** and media engagement: Media coverage will be sought to highlight project achievements, partnerships, and the impact in the Estonian context.

The budget has a special allocation for communication activities, this role will be performed by contracted specialists.

1. <https://www.aripaev.ee/juhtimine/2024/08/22/1013-eesti-tippjuhti-graafikutel-mehed-on-ulekaalus> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Eestis on vaid 27% ettevõtetest naiste loodud, erinevus saab alguse ambitsioonist

   <https://turundajateliit.ee/eestis-on-vaid-27-ettevotetest-naiste-loodud-erinevus-saab-alguse-ambitsioonist/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Norway Continues to be a Global Leader in Helping to Break the Glass Ceiling

   <https://www.womenmeanbusiness.com/2023/07/norway-continues-to-be-a-global-leader-in-helping-to-break-the-glass-ceiling/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. In focus: Some government initiatives, policies & schemes that are available for women entrepreneurs in Norway. <https://sheatwork.com/norway-a-beacon-of-gender-equality-in-entrepreneurship/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Support for women's entrepreneurship: a Nordic spectrum.

   <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/17566261211202954/full/html?skipTracking=true> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Please refer to the [Results Guideline](https://eeagrants.org/resources/2014-2021-results-guideline) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. <https://enut.ee/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. <https://enut.ee/projektid/sugu-ja-haridus/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. <https://www.facebook.com/bpwfollo/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)