



SUPPORTING PROGRESS
FOR GENDER EQUALITY
AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS
IN EUROPE



POSITION PAPER.

The Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe (the Alliance) was created in 2021 as a pooled fund to bring together diverse donors to support progress for gender equality and women's rights in Europe and create positive, long-term change.

CONTEXT



According to the United Nations, gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a “necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.”¹ Indeed, advancing women’s equality and empowerment is an integral part of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and Goal Number Five states: “Women and girls, everywhere, must have equal rights and opportunity, and be able to live free of violence and discrimination.”²

Gender inequality is often viewed as a more significant problem outside of Europe than within. Nevertheless, the situation is disconcerting in Europe: **one in three women** has experienced physical or sexual violence, women on the average earn **16%** less than their male counterparts³ and **43%** of LGBTQIA+ people feel discriminated against⁴.

EUROPE IS FACING SEVERAL CHALLENGES.

- The region is experiencing a closing of civic space. As populist and anti-progressive movements grow, already fragile democratic states have witnessed a backlash on fundamental rights. People living at the intersection of several vulnerabilities are even more at risk of discrimination and violence. In Europe alone, 707,2 million dollars have been invested in anti-gender organisations from 2009 to 2018⁵, helping them gain influence across the continent and threatening long-standing commitments to defending the rights of women and the LGBTQIA+ community. Indeed, in 2020 Poland adopted an almost-ban on abortion and Hungary rejected the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, the international treaty combatting gender-based violence.
- The mid-term and long-term impact of the COVID-crisis on gender equality issues remains to be discovered. In its Gender equality index 2021⁶, the European Institute for Gender Equality warns that recent progresses on gender equality, especially in Southern European countries, might be wiped out as a mid-term consequence of the pandemic. For example, 1.5 million women have lost their jobs due to the pandemic.
- More recently, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine started for the first time in 60 years, a war between two countries on the European continent, drove out the country more than 6,5 million refugees, mostly women (UNHCR) According to UN Women⁷ the gendered consequences are multiple and range from increased care burden for women, poor access to sexual and reproductive health services, conflict-related sexual violence and increased risks of vulnerability during migration journeys.

In the face of these overwhelming challenges, the sector remains significantly underfunded. This is due to a variety of factors, including limited support from national governments; a disproportionate allocation of EU funds to the Global South; the relatively weak philanthropic culture in the field; a lack of individual donor leadership and small organisation falling through the cracks of public and private funding.

This notable paucity of funding contrasts sharply with the ever-growing influence and effectiveness of grassroots women’s movements driving momentum on issues of gender equality across the globe. Thanks to their consistent efforts during the past decades, Europe witnessed the start of a cultural shift with more and more people supporting gender equality. This creates an opportunity for scaling up the impact of these organisations and improving gender equality.

- ¹ [UN Website, Sustainable Development Goals.](#)
- ² [UN Women Website, SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.](#)
- ³ [International Women’s Day Report, European Commission, 2019 and International Women’s Day Report, European Commission, 2020.](#)
- ⁴ [A long way to go for LGBTI equality, Fondamental Rights Agency, 2020](#)
- ⁵ [Tip of the iceberg, Religious Extremist Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Europe 2009 – 2018, European Parliament forum for reproductive and sexual rights, 2021](#)
- ⁶ [Gender equality index 2021, European Institute for Gender Equality, 28 October 2021](#)
- ⁷ [Rapid gender analysis of Ukraine, UN Women & Care, 4 May 2022](#)

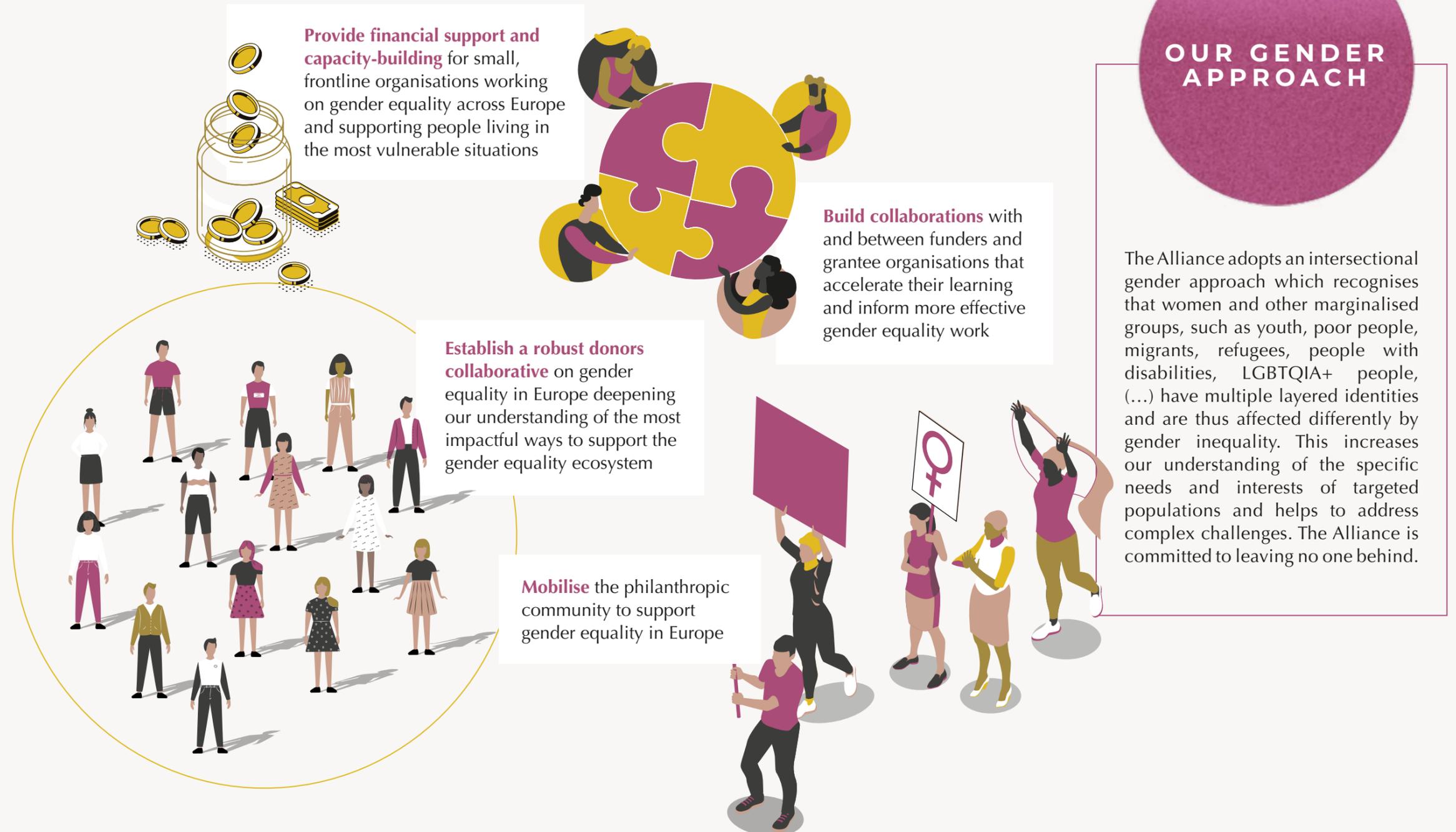
OUR OBJECTIVES

VISION

Our vision is a just and fair European society where gender equality is achieved for all people, especially women, girls, boys, men, and those who identify as LGBTQIA+ living in vulnerable situations.

MISSION

The Alliance supports the strengthening of small, frontline organisations working on gender equality in Europe that are working to improve the lives of individuals, ensure that they have equal access to opportunities and help them to live free from violence, while also addressing the underlying structures and power dynamics that uphold inequality and exclusion. We believe in a holistic approach where improving the lives of individuals goes hand-in-hand with pushing for systemic changes.



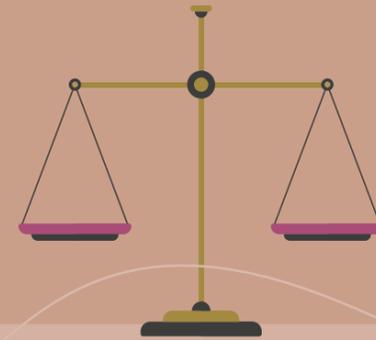
OUR POSITIONING

The Alliance is the only pooled fund focusing on gender equality in Europe. The initiative emerged from broad consultations with the women's sector, including women's funds, civil society organisations, and corporate and private donors.

We engage a diversity of funders, whether they have experience giving to gender equality or not and facilitate collaboration, mutual learning and increased impact. We aim to complement the work of other funders working on gender equality in Europe and to address gaps.

IN OUR WORK, WE ARE COMMITTED TO:

Supporting long term structural issues of gender equality in Europe such as gender-based violence, access to economic resources, access to education and training, environment and **listening to the field to identify emerging issues.**



Ensuring a **geographic distribution of grants across Europe** to underscore that there is a need to improve gender equality in all regions while responding to specific geographic needs.



Focusing on **small, frontline organisations working on gender equality** led by people with lived experiences who are acknowledged experts in the field. We believe this approach help us engage with previously overlooked actors who are close to the problems they seek to address.



Where needed, providing **unrestricted core support** to increase organisational development, resilience and sustainability.



Using **streamlined and flexible processes** to adapt to the capacity of small organisations and to reduce barriers to participation.



Enabling **opportunities for peer-learning, networking and capacity building** for our grantee partners and foundation members.



Raising the voices of our grantee partners and promoting their work in donors and institutional spaces.

Being a learning organisation engaging with the sector to strengthen our impact.



OUR OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK



1. GRANTMAKING

The Alliance implements regular calls for proposals and their focus is discussed and agreed by members.

In our first round of funding, the “2021 COVID Fund for Solidarity,” we selected 13 mainly small and frontline organisations for support.⁸ Grantee partners are based in 10 different countries,⁹ distributed across Northern, Southern and Eastern European Union. The majority are gender equality organisations that received core funding to work on issues such as violence against women, health and social protection (62%); access to economic resources, entrepreneurship and the digital divide (23%); and access to education and training (15%). Examples of their activities include support services for women victims of domestic violence in Hungary; self-led advocacy from refugee women in Germany; and grants to feminist social entrepreneurs in Spain.

The next call for proposals is foreseen for early 2023.

2. LEARNINGS

The Alliance provides spaces for networking, capacity-building and peer-learning to grantees and foundation members.

In May 2022, we organised a first convening to enable peer learning and networking, as well as exploring strategies to counter anti-gender movements. Representatives of all grantee organisations and foundation partners were present and discussed topics such as how to counter online attacks, the need for gender-sensitive education and how to promote gender equality with simple messages.

In the future, the Alliance’s Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation framework will produce learnings about our approach.

⁸ Small organisations have an annual budget under 450 000€.

⁹ Croatia, Belgium, France, Hungary, Latvia, Italy, Spain, Greece, Czech Republic and Germany.

ORGANISATION AND GOVERNANCE

STEERING COMMITTEE

The foundation members of the Alliance are part of the steering committee that provides strategic orientation and approves the final granting decisions. It is currently comprised of Fondation CHANEL, the King Baudouin Foundation, L'Oréal Fund for Women and the Bodossaki Foundation.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Programme Manager coordinates the initiative and supports the steering committee in its strategic decisions. She is embedded in the Network of European Foundations (NEF), a Brussels-based umbrella organisation dedicated to mutualising philanthropic support in Europe and hosting the Alliance.

ADVISORY BODIES

The Alliance integrates the perspectives of gender equality experts, including CSOs representatives in its work through advisory bodies. A Selection Committee for the 2021 call for Proposals was comprised of representatives from women's funds, philanthropy, academia, CSOs and the private sector.¹⁰

The Alliance plans to develop an advisory committee to support the Steering Committee's strategic choices.

¹⁰ It included representatives from Ikambere, Mediterranean Women's Funds, Global Philanthropy Project, and Open Society Foundations, amongst others.



By joining the Alliance, you can be part of a collaborative increasing your impact, providing help where it's most needed and benefit from learning.

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