



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

While there has been some progress on gender equality in Europe in the past decades, the situation is disconcerting: 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; allocation of EU funds mostly 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.

- [UN Website, Sustainable Development Goals.](#)
- [UN Women Website, SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.](#)
- [International Women’s Day Report, European Commission, 2019 and International Women’s Day Report, European Commission, 2020.](#)
- [A long way to go for LGBTI equality, Fundamental Rights Agency, 2020](#)
- [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](#)
- [Gender equality index 2021, European Institute for Gender Equality, 28 October 2021](#)
- [Rapid gender analysis of Ukraine, UN Women & Care, 4 May 2022](#)

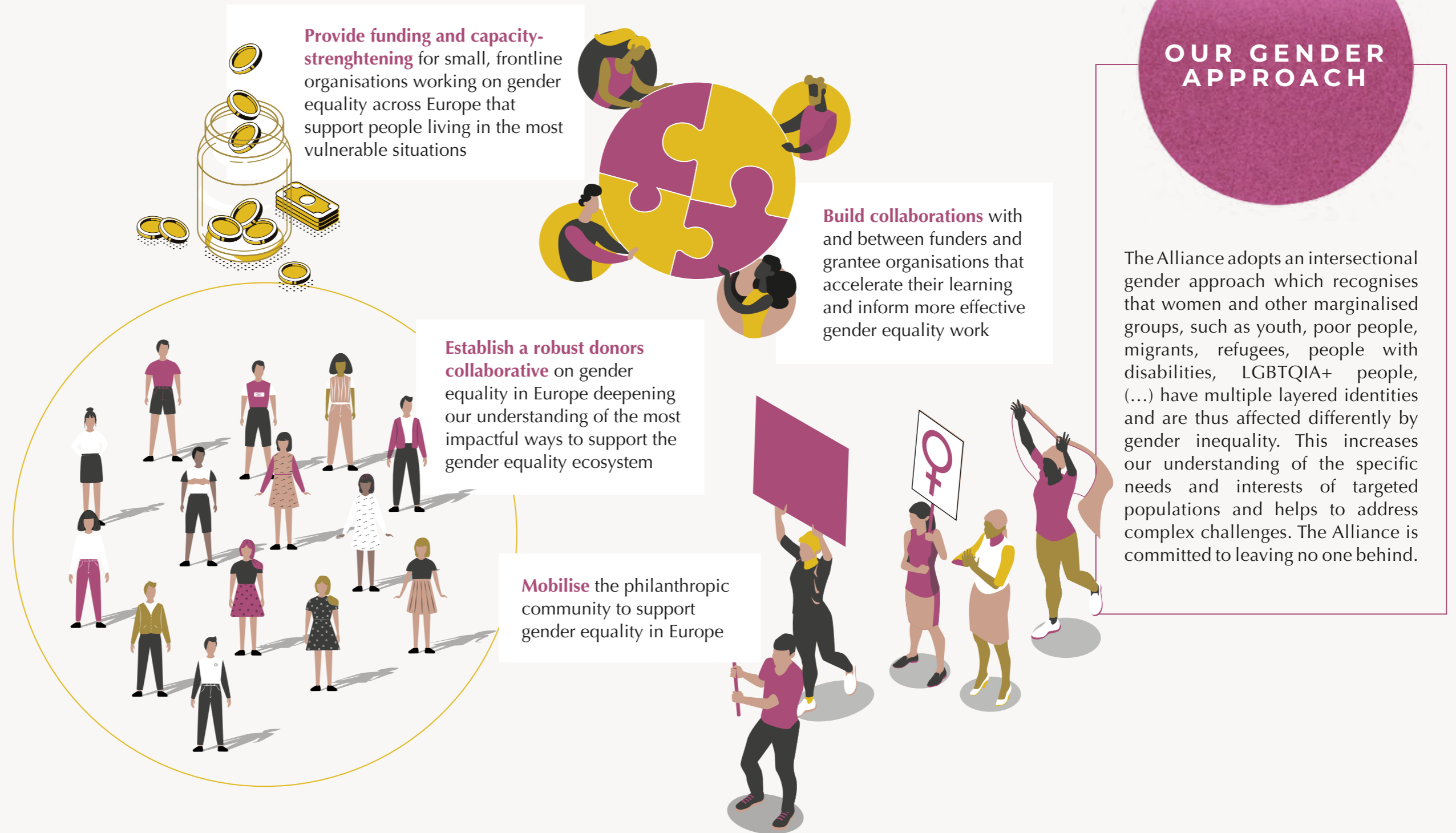
OUR OBJECTIVES

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.

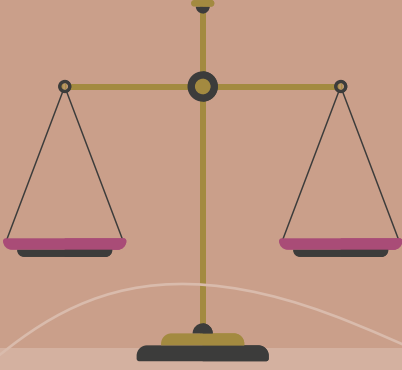


OUR POSITIONING


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:



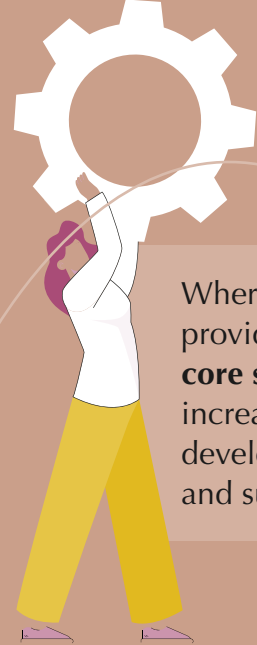
Supporting long term structural issues of gender equality in Europe such as gender-based violence, access to economic resources, access to education and training, environment and **listening to the field to identify emerging issues.**




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.



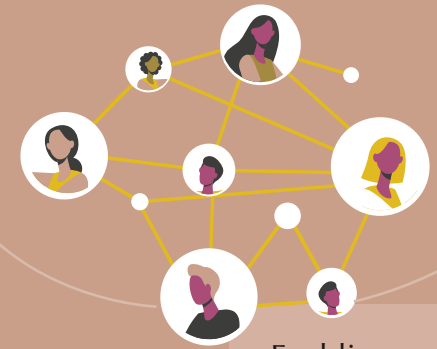
Focusing on **small and medium-size, frontline organisations working on gender equality** led by people with lived experiences who are acknowledged experts in the field. We believe this approach help us engage with previously overlooked actors who are close to the problems they seek to address.




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 to donors and institutional spaces.

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



EMPOWER WOMEN



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OUR OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK



1. GRANTMAKING

The Alliance runs regular calls for proposals to select and fund organisations that align with its vision and mission. Since it started in 2021, it has run 2 open calls for proposals offering funding for around 4 million euros:

- 2021 COVID fund for solidarity
- 2023 economic opportunities fund

Organisations were selected from an open call for proposals and assessed by a selection committee composed of external experts and then approved by our steering committee members.

Since 2021, the Alliance has supported 36 organisations:

- Working across 17 countries in Europe: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

- Supporting low-income women, trans-gender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people in Europe from a migration background and/or ethnic minorities, victims of violence, from rural or disadvantaged areas, in situation of disability, perceived as young and/or perceived as old.
- Working on topic such as economic inclusion, gender-based violence, women and LGBTQIA+ people rights and access to education.
- Having an approach combining individual empowerment with challenging oppressive systems thus implementing a mix of activities ranging from training, job placements, service provision, awareness-raising, community organizing and advocacy.
- Being self-led organisations or using highly participatory methodologies.

To know more about our grants, visit [our website](#)

2. FUNDING+

The Alliance is committed to support grantees in their organisational development and building collaborations between themselves, with other CSOs and with funders that accelerate their learning and build more effective work.

The Funding+ framework is guided by the following principles: needs-driven, ownership and solidarity and is implemented through the following set of activities:

- Convenings
- Feminist leadership & governance community of practice
- Grants for organisational development
- Financial management support

3. LEARNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

We have developed an approach to monitoring and evaluation that is guided by principles of emergent learning and strategy. We are committed to focus more on gathering information on the learning questions specific to our sphere of responsibility than the one of grantees. Thus, our current learning questions relate to:

- Developing an effective donor collaborative and mobilizing more resources for gender equality in Europe
- Providing funding and organisational development support that are useful to frontline gender equality organizations
- Supporting cross grantee/funder learning

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. Chaired by the Fondation CHANEL, the current members are:

Bodossaki Foundation, Fondation RAJA-Danièle Marcovici, Fondation de France, JPMorgan Chase, the King Baudouin Foundation and L'Oréal Fund for Women.

PROGRAMME TEAM

The Programme team coordinates the initiative and implement operational activities. The team 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. Ad-hoc selection committees for each call for proposals. The advisory committee supports gives guidance to the steering committee strategy and decisions. It is mandated for 3 years and currently composed of:

- Sana Afouaiz, Founder and CEO of Womenpreneur Initiative
- Caroline Brac de la Perrière, Director of Mediterranean Women's Fund
- Xenia Kellner, Cofounder of Young Feminists Europe
- Sotiris Laganopoulos, Sector officer for civil society at EEA & Norway Grants
- Jana Stardelova, Grants and engagement Manager at Ariadne

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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.

For more information you can contact Nadège Lharaig, Programme Manager at

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