



PROJECT NUMBER  
101080161

**Transnational  
panel  
discussion with  
political  
representatives**  
Work Package 9



Co-funded by  
the European Union

## About the project

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has affected our lives in many ways and manifested itself in many undesirable forms, such as the negative impact of coronavirus on individual lives, it has caused many deaths, the negative impact has also been on the global economy and employment, and on the quality of life in society in the form of restrictions on social rights, such as the right to be protected from poverty and social exclusion, the right to housing and education, and restrictions on medical care. COVID-19 also has effects on the democratic debates and the enjoyment of fundamental rights in the different countries of Europe. The impact was even more pronounced from a gender perspective, because as the United Nations (2020) noted, "from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex". Given the mentioned situation, the European Commission has awarded the project partners with the project HEARD, which focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the democratic debate, the enjoyment of fundamental rights and the work and life of women through a gender perspective.

HEARD focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the democratic debate, the enjoyment of fundamental rights and the work and life of women through a gender perspective. The search for an adequate response to overcome the crisis that occurred during the pandemic of COVID-19 should be a result of the participation of the involvement of various social partners, civil society and decision-making bodies of a given state. By involving partners from 9 different European countries in all the phases of the project we aim to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of respect for the rule of law, democratic values, and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights, with special attention to the social rights of citizens and residents of the given state.

The project HEARD consists of 11 Work packages. In this document - the Report of the Transnational panel discussion with political representatives - we summarise the following project results/ deliverables of Work package 9 (WP 9):

1. Event Description Sheet for the Transnational panel discussion with political representatives (See Appendix 1),
2. Report of the Results of the Transnational panel discussion with political representatives (See Appendix 2).

## About the deliverables of Work package 9

Within the WP 9, the in-situ Transnational panel discussion with political representatives on the topic how COVID-19 crisis had affected on the democratic debate was conducted by 10 project partners in-situ in 9 partner countries (Slovenia, Italy, France, Portugal, Spain, Bulgaria, Sweden, Cyprus, Greece) and with 300 participants in total (in-situ). **(See Appendix 1: Event Description Sheet for the Transnational panel discussion with political representatives).**

After the Transnational panel discussion with political representatives the feedback of the participants was processed, the report in English language was prepared **(See Appendix 2: Report of the Results of Transnational panel discussion with political representatives).**

We ensured the minimal number of participants (>276) and a minimum number of countries, from where the participants are coming from (7-9 countries). At the event we had 300 in-situ participants coming from 11 different countries (Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Netherlands, Romania, and Slovenia).

The findings of the report will serve as guidelines in the next steps of the project.

## Meet the partnership



Fakulteta za  
organizacijske študije  
Faculty of organisation studies



## Contact Info



Co-funded by  
the European Union

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## **Appendix 1:** Event Description Sheet for the Transnational panel discussion with political representatives

**EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET****For Transnational panel discussion with political representatives (Work package 9)**

| PROJECT                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Participant:</b>              | 01 - FAKULTETA ZA ORGANIZACIJSKE STUDIJE V NOVEM MESTU (FOS)<br>02 - Associazione InCo-Molfetta APS (InCo)<br>03 - INSTITUTO ANAPTIXIS EPICHEIRIMATIKOTITAS ASTIKI ETAIREIA (iED)<br>04 - CBE SUD LUBERON (CBE)<br>05 - Comune di Vimercate<br>06 - FONDATSIA ZA PREDPRIEMACHESTVO, KULTURA I OBRAZOVANIE - Foundation for Entrepreneurship, Culture and Education<br>07 - NORDIC DIASPORA FORUM (NDF)<br>08 - AYUNTAMIENTO DE MISLATA<br>09 - Federação de Associações Juvenis do Distrito de Braga (FAJUB)<br>10 - CARDET CENTRE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY LIMITED (CARDET) |
| <b>PIC number:</b>               | 01 – 943692340<br>02 – 922855576<br>03 – 998069182<br>04 - 950177275<br>05 – 905191003<br>06 – 940414710<br>07 – 916641562<br>08 – 897272796<br>09 – 929027880<br>10 – 999738552                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Project name and acronym:</b> | The impact of COVID-19 crisis on diverse democratic perspectives through gender perspective - HEARD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

| EVENT DESCRIPTION |                                                               |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Event number:     | 09                                                            |
| Event name:       | Transnational panel discussion with political representatives |
| Type:             | Panel discussion                                              |
| In situ/online:   | In-situ                                                       |
| Location:         | 10 partners conducted event In-situ.                          |

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | 01 – In-situ in Slovenia, Novo mesto (FOS)<br>02 – In-situ in Italy, Molfetta (InCo)<br>03 – In-situ in Greece, Larissa (iED)<br>04 – In-situ in France, Pertuis (CBE)<br>05 – In-situ in Italy, Vimercate (Comune di Vimercate)<br>06 – In-situ in Bulgaria, Varna (FECE)<br>07 – In-situ in Sweden, Stockholm (NDF)<br>08 – In-situ in Spain, Mislata (Mislata)<br>09 – In-situ in Portugal, Braga (FAJUB)<br>10 – In-situ in Cyprus, Nicosia (CARDET) |
| <b>Date(s):</b>                | 01 - 09. 04. 2024 (FOS)<br>02 - 23. 04. 2024 (InCo)<br>03 - 30. 05. 2024 (iED)<br>04 - 30. 05. 2024 (CBE)<br>05 - 11. 05. 2024 (Comune di Vimercate)<br>06 - 11. 04. 2024 (FECE)<br>07 - 19. 04. 2024 (NDF)<br>08 - 30. 04. 2024 (Mislata)<br>09 - 12. 04. 2024 (FAJUB)<br>10 - 15. 05. 2024 (CARDET)                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Website(s) (if any):</b>    | <a href="https://heard-project.eu/">https://heard-project.eu/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Participants</b>            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Female:                        | 132                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Male:                          | 168                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Non-binary:                    | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| From country 1 [Slovenia]:     | 32                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| From country 2 [Italy]:        | 65                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| From country 3 [Greece]:       | 34                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| From country 4 [France]:       | 29                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| From country 5 [Bulgaria]:     | 28                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| From country 6 [Sweden]:       | 28                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| From country 7 [Spain]:        | 11                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| From country 8 [Portugal]:     | 25                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| From country 9 [Cyprus]:       | 43                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| From country 10 [Netherlands]: | 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |     |                                 |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|----|
| From country 11 [Romania]:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 4   |                                 |    |
| Total number of participants:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 300 | From total number of countries: | 11 |
| <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |     |                                 |    |
| <i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |     |                                 |    |
| <p>The Transnational panel discussion with political representatives was the ninth event in the project HEARD. It was organised and conducted within Work package 9 of the HEARD project in all project countries from all project partners.</p> <p>The Transnational panel discussion with political representatives started with the greetings and introduction to the event. All project partners continued with the presentation of the project consortium and present political representatives, which acted as key participants at the discussion. After the introductions the project partners presented and started a discussion regarding already prepared political recommendations, based on the previous project events and results, from the field of democracy, human rights, and work-life balance of women for future epidemic situations. Speakers presented to the public prepared political recommendations by the project partners, accordingly to the findings of the project, and ensured that both political representatives and the public had a possibility to reflect and debate about the findings, with the primary goal to ensure that political representatives and the public has possibility to engage in meaningful reflection debate, learning from the past and thinking about the future pandemic situation and possible solutions. The events were concluded with an in-depth discussion between the participants, political representatives, and project partners.</p> <p>The topics covered encouraged a lively debate among those present. The participants were particularly involved in sharing their opinion and point of view. All the questions posed and arisen during the panel discussion have been discussed very lively by participants, political representatives and project partners and conclusions were reached. The participants feedback and conclusions were gathered in »the Report of Transnational panel discussion with political representatives.«</p> <p>The Transnational panel was a success in terms of raising awareness of the political recommendations and ensuring that politicians and decision makers at different levels could reflect on prepared political recommendations, while at the same time, the public had an opportunity to reflect on their perception of the pandemic with politicians. This event was one of the key importance events, as project partners had an opportunity to get direct feedback from politicians and public about their findings of the project up to this point in the project.</p> |     |                                 |    |

| HISTORY OF CHANGES |                  |                                               |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| VERSION            | PUBLICATION DATE | CHANGE                                        |
| 1.0                | 31.05.2024       | Faculty of Organisation Studies in Novo mesto |
|                    |                  |                                               |
|                    |                  |                                               |

## **Appendix 2:** Report of the Results of Transnational panel discussion with political representatives

PROJECT NUMBER  
101080161

# **Report of the Transnational panel discussion with political representatives (WP9)**



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|                                                                         |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>SLOVENIA - FOS</b>                                                   | <b>5</b>  |
| First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE                                   | 6         |
| 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management | 6         |
| 2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity                                    | 8         |
| 3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management             | 8         |
| 4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement                 | 10        |
| Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS DEBATE                                | 10        |
| 1st sub-subject: Limited movement                                       | 10        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly                           | 11        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights                                         | 11        |
| 4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension                                | 12        |
| Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN                              | 12        |
| 1st sub-subject: Work Policies                                          | 12        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)                      | 13        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support                                  | 13        |
| <b>ITALY - INCO</b>                                                     | <b>15</b> |
| First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE                                   | 16        |
| 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management | 16        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity                                    | 17        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management             | 17        |
| 4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement                 | 18        |
| Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS                                       | 18        |
| 1st sub-subject: Limited movement                                       | 18        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly                           | 18        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights                                         | 19        |
| 4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension                                | 19        |
| Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN                              | 19        |
| 1st sub-subject: Work Policies                                          | 19        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)                      | 20        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support                                  | 20        |
| <b>ITALY - MUNICIPALITY OF VIMERCATE</b>                                | <b>20</b> |
| First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE                                   | 21        |
| 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management | 21        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity                                    | 22        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management             | 23        |
| 4th sub-subtask: Transparency and democratic engagement                 | 23        |
| Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS                                       | 24        |
| 1st sub-subject: Limited movement                                       | 24        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly                           | 24        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights                                         | 25        |
| 4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension                                | 25        |
| Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN                              | 26        |
| 1st sub-subject: Work Policies                                          | 26        |

|                                                                         |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)                      | 27        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support                                  | 27        |
| <b>GREECE - IED</b>                                                     | <b>28</b> |
| <b>FRANCE - CBE</b>                                                     | <b>28</b> |
| <b>BULGARIA - FECE</b>                                                  | <b>28</b> |
| First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE                                   | 28        |
| 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management | 28        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity                                    | 29        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management             | 30        |
| 4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement                 | 30        |
| Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS                                       | 31        |
| 1st sub-subject: Limited movement                                       | 31        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly                           | 31        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights                                         | 32        |
| 4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension                                | 32        |
| Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN                              | 33        |
| 1st sub-subject: Work Policies                                          | 33        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)                      | 33        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support                                  | 34        |
| <b>SWEDEN - NDF</b>                                                     | <b>34</b> |
| First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE                                   | 35        |
| 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management | 35        |
| 2nd sub-subject Electoral integrity                                     | 36        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management             | 37        |
| 4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement                 | 38        |
| Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS                                       | 39        |
| 1st sub-subject: Limited movement                                       | 39        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly                           | 40        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights                                         | 40        |
| 4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension                                | 41        |
| Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN                              | 42        |
| 1st sub-subject: Work Policies                                          | 42        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)                      | 42        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support                                  | 43        |
| <b>SPAIN - MISLATA</b>                                                  | <b>44</b> |
| First key thematic: Democratic Debate                                   | 45        |
| 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management | 45        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity                                    | 46        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management.            | 47        |
| 4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic commitment                 | 47        |
| Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS                                       | 48        |
| 1st sub-subject: Limited movement                                       | 48        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly                           | 48        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Limited rights                                         | 48        |
| 4th sub-subject: Psychological dimension                                | 49        |

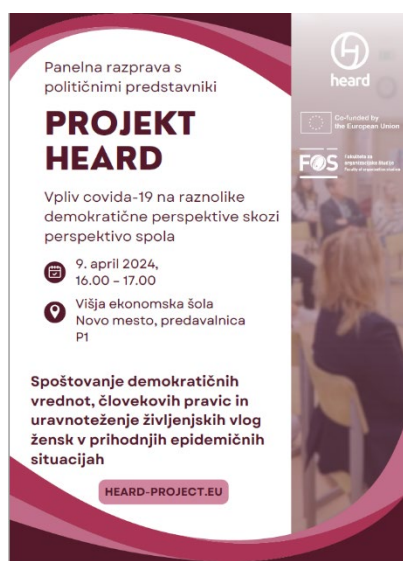
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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN                              | 49        |
| 1st sub-subject: Work Policies                                          | 49        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organizations (CSO)                      | 50        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Mental health support                                  | 50        |
| <b>CYPRUS - CARDET</b>                                                  | <b>51</b> |
| First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE                                   | 52        |
| 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management | 52        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity                                    | 52        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management             | 53        |
| 4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement                 | 54        |
| Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS DEBATE                                | 54        |
| 1st sub-subject: Limited movement                                       | 54        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly                           | 55        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights                                         | 55        |
| 4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension                                | 56        |
| Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN                              | 56        |
| 1st sub-subject: Work Policies                                          | 56        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)                      | 57        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support                                  | 57        |
| <b>PORTUGAL - FAJUB</b>                                                 | <b>57</b> |
| First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE                                   | 58        |
| 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management | 58        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity                                    | 59        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management             | 61        |
| 4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement                 | 62        |
| Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS                                       | 63        |
| 1st sub-subject: Limited movement                                       | 63        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly                           | 64        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights                                         | 65        |
| 4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension                                | 66        |
| Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN                              | 67        |
| 1st sub-subject: Work Policies                                          | 67        |
| 2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)                      | 68        |
| 3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support                                  | 69        |
| <b>New Policy Recommendations</b>                                       | <b>70</b> |
| <b>Conclusions</b>                                                      | <b>74</b> |

# SLOVENIA - FOS

Transnational panel discussion with political representatives in Slovenia was conducted on 9<sup>th</sup> of April from 16.00 – 17.35 at the Higher school of economics on the address Ulica talcev 3a, 8000 Novo mesto. We hosted 2 political representatives on the event, namely Dr Vladimir Prebilič, the mayor of Kočevje and candidate for European parliament 2024 under the political party Vesna, and Dr Vida Čadonič Špelič, a member of Parliament in the National Assembly of Slovenia. In the Table 1 below, we can see the timetables of the WP 9.

Table 1. Timetable of the WP 9 at 16.00 pm (CET)

| TIME          | TOPIC                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16:00 – 16:05 | Welcome speech of the dean of FOŠ, Dr (PhD, USA) Annmarie Gorenc Zoran, Full professor and leader of the HEARD project, Dr Maja Pucelj, Assistant professor |
| 16:05 – 16:15 | Presentation of the project and project partners and presentation of political representatives as participants at the discussion                            |
| 16:15 – 16:25 | Presentation of projects already implemented and planned activities                                                                                         |
| 16:25 – 16:40 | Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations from the field of democracy for future epidemic situations                         |
| 16:40 – 17:00 | Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations in the field of human rights rights for future epidemic situations                 |
| 17:00 – 17:20 | Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations in the field of balancing life roles of women in future epidemics situations       |
| 17:20 – 17:50 | Short discussion                                                                                                                                            |
| 17:50 – 18:00 | EC satisfaction survey and conclusion thoughts                                                                                                              |



The event started with a welcome speech from the dean of FOŠ, Dr (PhD, USA) Annmarie Gorenc Zoran, Full professor and leader of the HEARD project, Dr Maja Pucelj, Assistant professor. We continued with the presentation of the project and project partners and presentation of political representatives as participants at the discussion. We presented and started a discussion regarding already prepared political recommendations from the field of democracy, human rights, and balancing life roles of women for future epidemic situations. We concluded the event with a short discussion and ended the event. Below we attached the invitation to the event.

According to mentioned research findings, we formulated 3 key thematic and sub-subjects as stated below:

## First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

### **1<sup>st</sup> sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management**

#### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Partnership between government and trustworthy experts (of different sectors) must be achieved to formulate effective public health strategies with partnerships at local, national, and international levels.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration for pandemic preparedness.
- Strengthening global response and resilience.
- Best practices in pandemic management should be noted and used as guidance for future governments. They can emphasise both the strategic thinking for long-term planning and policymaking.
- Independent bodies that monitor government decisions and identify any conflicts of interest, errors by both experts and government and evaluate management and strategies should be established. They should also strive for promotion and maintenance of democratic dialogue and human rights in society. Mentioned bodies could also act as risk assessment managers and identify risks for pandemics and measures on how the government can ensure democratic values in any risk.

- Ethical guidelines should be established to help ensure that decision-making during pandemics is guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for human rights in order to ensure human rights and privacy/data protection.

Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the topics that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- The politicians noted that this pandemic has taken experts and politicians by surprise. The politicians and other participants in the panel discussion also agreed that communication at national and regional level was extremely poor during the epidemic.
- The politicians and participants suggested supplementing the project's policy recommendations with instructions for applying best practices during the pandemic and identifying the worst practices during the pandemic and emphasised the need to educate prominent political representatives on the content of crisis management.
- Dr Prebilič pointed out a good practice that he implemented as mayor during the pandemic. When he travelled to Japan at the beginning of the pandemic, he saw too early how they dealt with the pandemic there. In Slovenia, he reacted more easily and quickly when he returned to the town of Kočevje as mayor. He said he was lucky that his deputy mayor was a lieutenant colonel, and it was easier for them to establish a key strategy. He was also grateful for the presence of the company Melamin, which provided disinfectants at critical moments, which were not available in many places. He also emphasised that there is a company in Kočevje that produces socks and that very quickly started to produce masks. As he added, people then got the feeling that the city administration knew what it was doing and trusted them - but he emphasised that he believes that the time of emergency is not the time for democratic discussions, but that the most appropriate solutions should be adopted in the shortest possible time. And why? Because the welfare of the nation must be protected and safeguarded. Respect for the rights of the individual is secondary. He emphasised that where the local government is sovereign and enjoys a certain degree of legitimacy and legality, it is possible to control the course of the epidemic and gain the trust of the population, otherwise not. He also pointed out that a digital system was set up in Kočevje, where people entered their data and received all instructions related to the epidemic, especially regarding work, benefits, etc., which was difficult for many people to understand during the epidemic due to the abundance of information. He emphasised that this was one of the better solutions he saw during the epidemic, both locally and nationally.
- Dr Prebilič also warned that there will also be emergency situations in the future, not only because of the epidemic, but also because of the migrant crisis, the war, everything is related to the great instability in Europe. He therefore believes that it will be necessary to learn the systems even in crises. However, as he pointed out, we face a great paradox, because elected representatives have no knowledge in this area. A school for mayors or for leaders at national level will have to provide this knowledge if we want to ensure adequate human resources. At the same time, in his opinion, an appropriate level of education should also be guaranteed for entry into politics - today a politician in a prominent position does not even have to have completed elementary school. Therefore, these people should be equipped with the specific knowledge required to perform this function before they take on visible functions.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> sub-subject: Electoral integrity**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- In order to promote both democratic engagement and public health security, we strongly support the use of a range of voting techniques, such as mail-in ballots and digital platforms in order to enable early and remote voting, guaranteeing that individuals who are unable to physically go to polling spaces, such as UK residents who use postal ballots, can still participate in the voting process. In order to facilitate these approaches, it is imperative to uphold transparent and user-focused websites that provide guidance to individuals during the voting procedure. These websites should address issues like the replacement of misplaced votes, thus fostering an electorate that is both inclusive and well-informed.
- Refining campaign strategies to ensure transparency of the electoral process through public disclosure of financial information on campaigns, public debates, accessible information, independent media coverage and the involvement of civil society.
- In addition, it should be ensured that the various vulnerable groups have access to all possible ways of voting and available information.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- Both political representatives agreed that it is optimal if elections are not scheduled during the epidemic. But if it is necessary to hold them, then we are in the digital age, so we can hold elections remotely.
- However, Dr Prebilič pointed out that elections must be understood in a broader sense, i.e. they mean participation - that people can express themselves, gather, socialise, express their opinions, and therefore he believes that holding elections is a much more complex arrangement, such as holding local council meetings, which were held digitally during the epidemic. Therefore, he considers it more optimal to wait for the epidemic to subside and then hold elections, if necessary, because he believes that it would be difficult to get rid of the feeling that whoever wins these elections has won in a way that gives them legitimacy. For this reason, the Constitution itself provides for elections to be suspended in certain situations, and he believes that this is an appropriate solution in the event of an epidemic.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> sub-subject: Media integrity and information management**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- We must strive to achieve media transparency and objectivity, which necessitates guaranteeing its independence from government and political influences. Enforcing impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists, along with verifying and disclosing sources, could bolster media credibility.
- To combat misinformation, it's essential to educate the public on identifying fake news, emphasising the importance of relying on credible sources. This can include implementing fact-checking measures to ensure news reliability and promoting education through school curricula or government-funded courses available to all citizens. Providing digital resources on discerning fake news can further this educational effort.

### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- The politicians and participants at the event pointed out that the digital age and the availability of various information via web searches such as Google are a great source of information at a basic level, but also contribute to the false belief among the population that they are experts in all fields (teachers, doctors, epidemiologists, etc.), regardless of their actual level of knowledge or educational background. They pointed out that we tend to believe online and social media more than the scientists trying to stop the pandemic. However, they also explained that one of the biggest challenges of the pandemic in Slovenia was that incompetent experts were used as spokespeople during the pandemic and that epidemiologists had to justify political decisions with which they did not fully agree. It would be necessary - also on the part of politicians - to recognize that epidemiologists are experts in dealing with pandemics and that they should suggest the best ways to deal with the pandemic. It was not the right way for politicians to explain the said phenomenon, which led to scepticism and resistance from the public. However, the politicians at the event warned that there is no democracy in the event of a pandemic, but basic human rights must still be respected. However, they pointed out that the experts will never decide to harm people. And asked a rhetorical question - if we trust dentists and doctors, why not epidemiologists? They attribute this consequence to the fact that respect for the knowledge of experts has been completely devalued in recent years. They problematized the fact that politicians were giving instructions to the public and then not following them, leading to confusion and anger among the population.
- Both politicians pointed out that journalists are extremely important in any crisis because only through them can important information be brought to the public. Therefore, it is necessary to respect them and to build a relationship with them and respect them even in situations where there is no pandemic. However, they emphasised that journalists are transmitters of information and pass on the information they receive. It is therefore very important that decision-makers do not resort to lies, secrets or the concealment of information in their communication. This is because all of this raises doubts about the veracity of the information, first for the journalist and later for the listeners or viewers. At the same time, they warned that the problem also lies with the people themselves, as they like yellow (bombastic) news that is often unverified. Both politicians and participants in the debate pointed out that for future pandemic recommendations, it is necessary to formulate the need for support and trust in credible media rather than social media and to develop an appropriate level of criticality towards the media information provided. At the same time, they emphasised the need to consider the ethical use of information and artificial intelligence in future epidemics. However, they added that we cannot put everything into laws or recommendations. Many problems that need to be addressed in the future arise from the question of society's morals and ethics.

### 4<sup>th</sup> sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement

#### Identified political recommendations were:

- Implement citizen engagement strategies (e.g. public consultations, virtual participation in parliamentary processes, participation in protests, digital activism, online petitions in advocating reforms) and public education campaigns to educate individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, on how to actively participate in democratic debates online,
- Implement anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability and to build the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption metrics and credibility building.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in medical supply chains

#### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the topics which urgently need to be addressed in future pandemic situations.
- Politicians and panellists highlighted the need for transparency in communication and procurement of necessary equipment for pandemic situations and the necessity of the absence of corruption.

## **Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS DEBATE**

### 1<sup>st</sup> sub-subject: Limited movement

#### Identified political recommendations were:

- Improve public access to healthcare, especially during epidemics, emphasising inclusivity and efficient delivery during crises.
- Create financial assistance programs for individuals who lose their jobs or face economic hardship due to pandemic-related measures.
- Policymakers should recognize and address the unique challenges women face, especially during crises. Implement strategies targeting women, particularly mothers, to sustain their employment.
- Countries need to form a protocol for limitation of movement, which should be grounded in scientific research.

#### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- Both politicians emphasised that the method of movement restriction as observed in Slovenia was not optimal. However, they agreed that restricting freedom of movement during the pandemic phase is necessary. At the same time, they pointed out the problem of individualization and the fact that people are no longer able to empathise with others – a person should understand that he or she has to withdraw from others when the pandemic spreads, not only to protect yourself, but also to protect others.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Engage communities in the decision-making process when formulating and implementing pandemic response measures.
- Prioritise inclusivity, ensuring voices from all segments of society are heard and considered.
- Strengthen international collaborations to uphold human rights, especially in countries with weaker health infrastructures.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- The participants and politicians also pointed out that the best option would be not to organise protests to stop the spread of the virus. On the other hand, the democratic right to be heard and to express dissatisfaction should be taken into account, so alternative ways should be found or at least health concerns related to limiting the spread of the virus should be addressed.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> sub-subject: Limited Rights**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Ensure universal healthcare access, including treatments for all.
- Implement privacy-protected digital tracing and health verification tools.
- Limiting the stigmatisation of healthcare workers during the pandemic times.
- Maintain essential services like food, water, and electricity during lockdowns.
- Create fair vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all, including vulnerable groups, and maintain freedom of movement without discriminating against unvaccinated individuals.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- The participants and politicians had slightly differing opinions on this topic. While the politicians pointed out the need to restrict rights in times of crisis, the participants pointed out that it is crucial to ensure respect for human rights and to ensure that individuals can be heard.

## **4<sup>th</sup> sub-subject: Psychological Dimension**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Establish ethical guidelines around resource allocation during health crises, ensuring fairness and equity.

- Facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and expertise among countries.
- Provide additional resources and protection to marginalised communities, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless, ensuring their human rights are upheld during pandemic responses.
- Importance of ensuring equal and fair access to psychological help to everybody in need.

Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- Both politicians noted that in the context of mental health challenges, the unpreparedness of the system became clear once again. In their opinion, the psychological component is always underestimated in a crisis, but even now, mental health is no longer, or at least not as important as physical health. Mental health is still a stigmatised topic in Slovenian society that most people do not want to talk about openly. The fact that young people are studying psychology, clinical psychology, etc. shows that the government does not understand the importance of health. As you note, we know we have a deficit in this area, but we are not addressing it. You have therefore made a policy recommendation, which is that there is a need to find a systemic solution that can more adequately address the mental health challenges that arise in crisis situations. For example, the mental health of young people is a major challenge. They believe that society and as individuals are not sensitive enough to these issues. As they noted, it is also important for military tactics that a soldier is mentally healthy first, then he can fight - and in times of crisis, people are in a sense soldiers who must fight in whatever lies ahead.

## Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN

### 1<sup>st</sup> sub-subject: Work Policies

Identified political recommendations were:

- Implementing workplace flexibility and teleworking options.
- Offering educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence.
- Ensuring job protection for women taking leave to care for family members.
- Fostering an environment of gender equality in all sectors.
- Enhancing digital literacy and remote work skills among women to expand their employment opportunities.

Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.

- Politicians and other participants in the debate emphasised the need to share the burden of crisis situations between both genders and pointed out the challenge of upward mobility or the need to further promote the advancement of women in emergency situations, which should be added as political recommendations.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- CSO's should promote their work in society and cooperate with different organisations to address women's needs for work-life balance.
- Policies could ensure that CSOs are involved in decision-making on specific issues during pandemics to advance the agenda of vulnerable groups.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the topics, which urgently need to be addressed in future pandemic situations.
- The participants and politicians emphasised the great importance of CSO for societies development and also addressing particular women's needs.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> sub-subject: Mental Health Support**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Governments should invest in mental health services.
- Providing different forms of governmental and organisational support to families to cope with the consequences of pandemic.
- Providing different governmental and organisational support for career development for women during the pandemic.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

- The participants and politicians agreed with the above political recommendations and stated that they agree these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- Participants and politicians pointed out (also in line with the previously mentioned statements) that society should make greater efforts to normalise mental health challenges and address said challenges more appropriately in critical times.

## **UPDATED POLITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following the results of the debate with politicians, the following adjustments to the project's political recommendations should be prepared.

## **Key Thematic: Democratic Debate**

- Improve communication strategies to ensure achieving clarity and consistency of given information during pandemic or other crisis situations. For example: Consider establishing advanced digital communication tools that ensure the clarity, coherence, and accessibility of information to the public to improve understanding and compliance with the necessary measures in times of crisis.
- Improve the level of knowledge of political leaders and other key actors in pandemic or other crisis situations to ensure effective crisis management and appropriate decision-making under time pressure and other forms of pressure.

### **Electoral Integrity**

- Avoid scheduling elections during a pandemic and consider secure digital voting as an alternative if necessary.
- Ensure that elections, if held during a pandemic, maintain legitimacy and trust, with improving the transparency and integrity of the electoral process.

### **Media Integrity and Information Management**

- Support and encourage credible media to disseminate information via social media.
- Promote ethical journalism and the responsible use of artificial intelligence in information management.
- Strengthen public education initiatives to improve media literacy and critical thinking when dealing with important information about the pandemic.

### **Transparency and Democratic Engagement**

- Promote a culture of transparency in governmental work, especially in procurement and crisis response.
- Ensure that the public understands and participates in democratic processes in every possible way, even in times of crisis, to maintain trust and cooperation.

## **Key Thematic: Human Rights Debate**

### **Limited Movement**

- Implement movement restrictions with clear communication and justification to balance public health needs with individual freedoms.
- Educate the public on the importance of pursuing the goal of collective responsibility in addressing health crises.

### **Freedom of Peaceful Assembly**

- Explore alternative methods of public expression that comply with health recommendations during pandemics.
- Ensure that any restrictions on assembly are justified, proportionate and face time limitations.

### **Limited Rights**

- Establish clear guidelines and provide adequate oversight to protect human rights in critical situations.

- Carefully assess the impact and necessity of limiting rights in critical situations to ensure that they are not disproportionate or unnecessarily extended.

### **Psychological Dimension**

- Prioritise mental health as much as physical health in crisis planning to ensure an appropriate response.
- Develop mental health support systems that ensure adequate mental health support for those in need and promote public awareness and stigmatisation of mental health issues.

## **Key Thematic: Work and Life of Women**

### **Work Policies**

- Implement measures to ensure that women have equal opportunities for advancement in crisis situations, which should aim to distribute responsibility and leadership opportunities fairly between the genders in emergency situations.
- Address specific challenges faced by women during crises, such as increased domestic burdens and ensure equitable support.

### **Civil Society Organizations (CSO):**

- Recognize and support the role of civil society organisations in addressing specific needs in times of crisis, especially regarding women and marginalised groups.

### **Mental Health Support**

- Integrate mental health support into public health responses, focusing on vulnerable groups including women and frontline workers.

## **ITALY - INCO**

Table: Timetable of the Event hosted on April 23rd, 2024 in Molfetta, Italy.

| TIME          | TOPIC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 18:00 – 18:05 | Welcome speech of Luigi Balacco, director of InCo Molfetta, and of Francesca Bisceglia, in representation of the “Anti-violence center Pandora”. Greetings from the present political representatives of the municipality of Molfetta. |
| 18:05 – 18:10 | Presentation of the project and project partners and presentation of political representatives as participants at the discussion. Presentation of projects already implemented and planned activities.                                 |
| 18:10 – 18:35 | Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations about the project main topics: democratic debate, human rights, work and life balance of women.                                                               |
| 18:35 – 19:00 | Open discussion regarding the presented topics, with the contribution of the public, the political representatives and experts in the field.                                                                                           |
| 19:00 – 17:15 | Conclusions and final greetings.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

## First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

### 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Partnership between government and trustworthy experts (of different sectors) must be achieved to formulate effective public health strategies with partnerships at local, national and international levels.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration for pandemic preparedness.
- Strengthening global response and resilience.
- Best practices in pandemic management should be noted and used as guidance for future governments. They can emphasise both the strategic thinking for long-term planning and policy-making.
- Independent bodies that monitor government decisions and identify any conflicts of interest, errors by both experts and government and evaluate management and strategies should be established. They should also strive for promotion and maintenance of democratic dialogue and human rights in society. Mentioned bodies could also act as risk assessment managers and identify risks for pandemics and measures on how the government can ensure democratic values in any risk.
- Ethical guidelines should be established to help ensure that decision-making during pandemics is guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for human rights in order to ensure human rights and privacy/data protection.

### Response from the public and political representatives:

- No particular comments, the politicians have agreed on given points, remarking how these times have been difficult and threatening for democracy.
- A remark by one deputy mayor was that they would agree on the presented points, but as a representative from the local government they would not have much power as there would be a need to create national laws to act in this direction.

## **2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity**

### Presented political recommendations:

- In order to promote both democratic engagement and public health security, we strongly support the use of a range of voting techniques, such as mail-in ballots and digital platforms in order to enable early and remote voting, guaranteeing that individuals who are unable to physically go to polling spaces, such as UK residents who use postal ballots, can still participate in the voting process. In order to facilitate these approaches, it is imperative to uphold transparent and user-focused websites that provide guidance to individuals during the voting procedure. These websites should address issues like the replacement of misplaced votes, thus fostering an electorate that is both inclusive and well-informed.
- Refining campaign strategies to ensure transparency of the electoral process through public disclosure of financial information on campaigns, public debates, accessible information, independent media coverage and the involvement of civil society.
- In addition, it should be ensured that the various vulnerable groups have access to all possible ways of voting and available information.

### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Politicians have agreed on both points, pointing out specifically that these measures could be enlarged to overcome barriers also for disabled people, therefore becoming more inclusive.
- Both public and political representatives have pointed out that these measures could be already set and prepared nowadays, encouraging progress and without the need to wait for a next pandemic.

## **3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management**

### Presented political recommendations:

- We must strive to achieve media transparency and objectivity, which necessitates guaranteeing its independence from government and political influences. Enforcing impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists, along with verifying and disclosing sources, could bolster media credibility.
- To combat misinformation, it's essential to educate the public on identifying fake news, emphasising the importance of relying on credible sources. This can include implementing fact-checking measures to ensure news reliability and promoting education through school curricula or government-funded courses available to all citizens. Providing digital resources on discerning fake news can further this educational effort.

### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Both public and political representatives have pointed out that these measures could be already set and prepared nowadays, encouraging progress and without the need to wait for the next crisis/pandemic.

## **4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Implement citizen engagement strategies (e.g. public consultations, virtual participation in parliamentary processes, participation in protests, digital activism, online petitions in advocating reforms) and public education campaigns to educate individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, on how to actively participate in democratic debates online,
- Implement anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability and to build the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption metrics and credibility building.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in medical supply chains

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Both public and political representatives have pointed out that these measures could be already set and prepared nowadays, encouraging progress and without the need to wait for the next crisis/pandemic.

## **Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **1st sub-subject: Limited movement**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Improve public access to healthcare, especially during epidemics, emphasising inclusivity and efficient delivery during crises.
- Create financial assistance programs for individuals who lose their jobs or face economic hardship due to pandemic-related measures.
- Policymakers should recognize and address the unique challenges women face, especially during crises. Implement strategies targeting women, particularly mothers, to sustain their employment.
- Countries need to form a protocol for limitation of movement, which should be grounded in scientific research.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- No particular comments, the politicians have agreed on given points, remarking how these times have been difficult and threatening for human rights.

### **2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Engage communities in the decision-making process when formulating and implementing pandemic response measures.
- Prioritise inclusivity, ensuring voices from all segments of society are heard and considered.
- Strengthen international collaborations to uphold human rights, especially in countries with weaker health infrastructures.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- No particular comments, the politicians have agreed on given points, remarking how these times have been difficult and threatening for human rights.

### **3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Ensure universal healthcare access, including treatments for all.
- Implement privacy-protected digital tracing and health verification tools.
- Limiting the stigmatisation of healthcare workers during the pandemic times.
- Maintain essential services like food, water, and electricity during lockdowns.
- Create fair vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all, including vulnerable groups, and maintain freedom of movement without discriminating against unvaccinated individuals.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- No particular comments, the politicians have agreed on given points, remarking how these times have been difficult and threatening for human rights.

### **4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Establish ethical guidelines around resource allocation during health crises, ensuring fairness and equity.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and expertise among countries.
- Provide additional resources and protection to marginalised communities, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless, ensuring their human rights are upheld during pandemic responses.
- Importance of ensuring equal and fair access to psychological help to everybody in need.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- No particular comments, the politicians have agreed on given points, remarking how these times have been difficult and threatening especially for the psychological dimension, but at least these consequences have left some positive points, such as the growing attention towards mental health.

## **Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN**

### **1st sub-subject: Work Policies**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Implementing workplace flexibility and teleworking options.
- Offering educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence.
- Ensuring job protection for women taking leave to care for family members.
- Fostering an environment of gender equality in all sectors.
- Enhancing digital literacy and remote work skills among women to expand their employment opportunities.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- The political representatives expressed that these points are essential towards social progress, remarking on the need for the development of policies in these fields.

### **2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- CSO's should promote their work in society and cooperate with different organisations to address women's needs for work-life balance.
- Policies could ensure that CSOs are involved in decision-making on specific issues during pandemics to advance the agenda of vulnerable groups.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- No particular comments, both the public and the political representatives have agreed on the given points.

### **3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support**

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Governments should invest in mental health services.
- Providing different forms of governmental and organisational support to families to cope with the consequences of pandemic.
- Providing different governmental and organisational support for career development for women during the pandemic.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- No particular comments, both the public and the political representatives have agreed on the given points.

## **ITALY - MUNICIPALITY OF VIMERCATE**

| TIME          | TOPIC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10:30 – 11:00 | <p>Welcome speech - <i>Riccardo Corti, Councillor of Vimercate.</i></p> <p>Presentation of the results of the PNRR in the Municipality of Vimercate - <i>Mariasole Mascia, Deputy Mayor of Vimercate.</i></p> <p>Presentation of the BELC - <i>Daniele Dossi, City Council Member.</i></p> |
| 11:00 – 11:15 | <p>Presentation of the HEARD project, project partners and presentation of political representatives as participants at the discussion - <i>Gianluca Pinnelli, European Office of Vimercate; Alessia Marzotto - Project Manager ALDA+.</i></p>                                             |
| 11:15 – 11:35 | <p>Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations from the field of democracy for future epidemic situations.</p>                                                                                                                                                |
| 11:35 – 11:55 | <p>Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations in the field of human rights rights for future epidemic situations</p>                                                                                                                                         |
| 11:55 - 12:15 | <p>Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations in the field of balancing life roles of women in future epidemics situations</p>                                                                                                                               |
| 12:15 – 12:30 | <p>Conclusions and EC satisfaction survey and conclusion thoughts</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

## First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

### 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Partnership between government and trustworthy experts (of different sectors) must be achieved to formulate effective public health strategies with partnerships at local, national, and international levels.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration for pandemic preparedness.
- Strengthening global response and resilience.
- Best practices in pandemic management should be noted and used as guidance for future governments. They can emphasise both the strategic thinking for long-term planning and policymaking.
- Independent bodies that monitor government decisions and identify any conflicts of interest, errors by both experts and government and evaluate management and strategies should be established. They should also strive for promotion and maintenance of democratic dialogue and human rights in society. Mentioned bodies could also act as risk assessment managers and identify risks for pandemics and measures on how the government can ensure democratic values in any risk.
- Ethical guidelines should be established to help ensure that decision-making during pandemics is guided by the principles of justice, equality, and respect for human rights in order to ensure human rights and privacy/data protection.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- The City Council Member Daniele Dossi is part of BELC, Building Europe for Local Councillors, a project to create a European network of locally elected politicians aimed at communicating the European Union through an unprecedented alliance between the European and local government structures. The project makes it possible for local politicians to work together and to disseminate information about EU issues that concern their constituents at the local level. This project allows the Municipality to start more engaging initiatives to involve other nearby municipalities. Cooperating with each other, engaging more citizens is easier. They just moved the first steps into the initiative, but the ideas are many, such as involving schools and associations.
- One goal is to cooperate with the European institutions to do activities in the schools.
- One active participation initiative is the Youth Municipal Council to teach what the EU, how it works and regarding the administration. The Counsellors feel the need to communicate the importance of the EU, also by engaging with the “University of Free Time” to create structured programmes on this topic.

### 2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity

#### Presented political recommendations:

- In order to promote both democratic engagement and public health security, we strongly support the use of a range of voting techniques, such as mail-in ballots and digital platforms

in order to enable early and remote voting, guaranteeing that individuals who are unable to physically go to polling spaces, such as UK residents who use postal ballots, can still participate in the voting process. In order to facilitate these approaches, it is imperative to uphold transparent and user-focused websites that provide guidance to individuals during the voting procedure. These websites should address issues like the replacement of misplaced votes, thus fostering an electorate that is both inclusive and well-informed.

- Refining campaign strategies to ensure transparency of the electoral process through public disclosure of financial information on campaigns, public debates, accessible information, independent media coverage and the involvement of civil society.
- In addition, it should be ensured that the various vulnerable groups have access to all possible ways of voting and available information.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Both the Councillor and the City Council member agreed on the importance of democratic engagement guaranteeing that individuals with mobility issues could also vote. The Municipality is committed to include all the marginalised groups in the voting process.
- Both agreed also on the importance of promoting and acting transparently towards the citizens during the electoral campaigns and debates.

### **3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management**

#### Presented political recommendations:

- We must strive to achieve media transparency and objectivity, which necessitates guaranteeing its independence from government and political influences. Enforcing impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists, along with verifying and disclosing sources, could bolster media credibility.
- To combat misinformation, it's essential to educate the public on identifying fake news, emphasising the importance of relying on credible sources. This can include implementing fact-checking measures to ensure news reliability and promoting education through school curricula or government-funded courses available to all citizens. Providing digital resources on discerning fake news can further this educational effort.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- The City Council Member Daniele Dossi stated that fake news was frequent during the pandemics, and much was spread by social channels, where everyone feels the right to express their opinion on medical or technical topics without being experts. Regarding the European Union, many fake news are present too, also supported by the difficulty of the European Union to communicate with citizens.
- It is frequent to hear that the European Union is expensive, however it costs 80 cents per day for each citizen. It is crucial to have efficient communication with citizens, that is why the Municipality has several communication channels, in particular the WhatsApp number to send messages on initiatives and information directly to citizens.

### **4th sub-subtask: Transparency and democratic engagement**

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Implement citizen engagement strategies (e.g. public consultations, virtual participation in parliamentary processes, participation in protests, digital activism, online petitions in advocating reforms) and public education campaigns to educate individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, on how to actively participate in democratic debates online,
- Implement anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability and to build the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption metrics and credibility building.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in medical supply chains

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- The Municipal Councillor Riccardo Corti stated that the issue of trust in administration and institutions is very important because trust is the basis of the democratic system. If the grassroots of citizens fail, democracy itself fails. If you take yourself out of the process, you undermine individual freedom itself, ultimately weakening society. It is important therefore to create citizenship, and the Municipality has been putting effort by starting with the Youth Municipal Council. In this year, hundreds of children took part in the project leading up to the 20-strong council.
- The Municipality has introduced a tool of shared administration to directly involve citizens in the decision-making process: they have created citizenship pacts to allow citizens to bring initiatives, ideas, projects, and sit down with the municipal administration to see their project realised, given the funding available.

## **Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **1st sub-subject: Limited movement**

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Improve public access to healthcare, especially during epidemics, emphasising inclusivity and efficient delivery during crises.
- Create financial assistance programs for individuals who lose their jobs or face economic hardship due to pandemic-related measures.
- Policymakers should recognize and address the unique challenges women face, especially during crises. Implement strategies targeting women, particularly mothers, to sustain their employment.
- Countries need to form a protocol for limitation of movement, which should be grounded in scientific research.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- The Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Vimercate, Mariasole Mascia, explained that during the pandemics a strong collaboration with the local organisations was created. The relationship between public administration and third parties improved. During the pandemics, the municipalities were obliged to apply the national legislation. That is why municipalities tried to facilitate social solidarity to help going through the dramatic situation. Enterprises put spaces and containers at disposal to increase the places for Covid-19 tests and vaccines. This was a strong sign of solidarity and collaboration.
- Moreover, the Municipality of Vimercate tried to understand the needs of citizens and requested fundings from the national "Recovery and Resilience Plan", which was fundamental. The RRP defines actions and interventions to overcome the economic and

social impact of the pandemic, acting on the country's structural nodes and successfully facing the environmental, technological, and social challenges of our time. The funds were fundamental to foster digitalisation to fix communication and participation issues, kindergartens were built to solve working necessities for families, open spaces to do physical activity but also as a space to meet as a community.

## **2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Engage communities in the decision-making process when formulating and implementing pandemic response measures.
- Prioritise inclusivity, ensuring voices from all segments of society are heard and considered.
- Strengthen international collaborations to uphold human rights, especially in countries with weaker health infrastructures.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- The Deputy Mayor Mascia explained that, during the pandemic, the government had to manage a complicated situation, and the most important thing was to execute the laws fast with considerable support from the technical department. Several mistakes were made, but the choices were due to the necessity to guarantee the health and safety of citizens first, even bypassing democracy. Due to the prohibition to reunite in assemblies, new digital tools were introduced at a governmental level, so that the Parliament could still legislate. Consequently, also the municipalities adopted digital tools to reunite and continue working. It is important to give voice to all the segments of the society and to include everyone in the decision-making processes. The introduction of digital tools to guarantee peaceful assemblies online is an example of accessibility that, even after the pandemics, must be taken into consideration: for instance, it could be useful to have hybrid meetings to also guarantee the presence of people who have mobility issues but want to participate in initiatives.

## **3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Ensure universal healthcare access, including treatments for all.
- Implement privacy-protected digital tracing and health verification tools.
- Limiting the stigmatisation of healthcare workers during the pandemic times.
- Maintain essential services like food, water, and electricity during lockdowns.
- Create fair vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all, including vulnerable groups, and maintain freedom of movement without discriminating against unvaccinated individuals.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- During Covid time, the politicians had to decide which freedoms to favour compared to others. Freedom is not individual; it requires responsibility and cooperation. It is important for citizens to remember this concept whenever an extraordinary situation could happen.

She mentioned that in the Italian constitution, there is no hierarchy among the rights, but they are all on the same level. That is the reason why the government and, consequently, the municipalities prioritised some rights instead of others, evaluating each situation step by step. In the end, she stated that the right to health is the one to prioritise in a pandemic situation, as it was done during Covid time. It is important then to create a system to ensure a universal healthcare access, implement privacy-protected digital tracing and health verification tools, limiting the stigmatisation of healthcare workers during the pandemic times, maintain essential services like food, water, and electricity during lockdowns, create fair vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all, including vulnerable groups.

## **4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Establish ethical guidelines around resource allocation during health crises, ensuring fairness and equity.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and expertise among countries.
- Provide additional resources and protection to marginalised communities, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless, ensuring their human rights are upheld during pandemic responses.
- Importance of ensuring equal and fair access to psychological help to everybody in need.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- It was agreed that it is important to consider the psychological dimension of citizens. During covid, psychological help became fundamental due to the dramatic situations that happen. The Deputy Mayor Mascia confirms the importance of guaranteeing equity and inclusion for marginalised communities in order to ensure human rights and equal access to psychological help.

## **Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN**

### **1st sub-subject: Work Policies**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Implementing workplace flexibility and teleworking options.
- Offering educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence.
- Ensuring job protection for women taking leave to care for family members.
- Fostering an environment of gender equality in all sectors.
- Enhancing digital literacy and remote work skills among women to expand their employment opportunities.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- All the policy recommendations are agreed by Mrs. Federica Villa. She mentioned how women are still considered as part of the vulnerable groups within the society. This means that it is very difficult to see women's rights guaranteed and respected nowadays. It is

important to guarantee workplace flexibility and the possibility to work from home. The financial independence and economic empowerment must be at women's disposal, as well as job protection policies for women who take leave to care about children. Gender equality in all the sectors must be guaranteed for a more inclusive environment.

- The traditional role of women in the society is to care about the families and it became even more clear during the pandemics. But this stigma must be overcome. The Municipality of Vimercate wants to ensure the parental capacity which comprehends both parents within the family, where the responsibility of the family is shared. But the solution must be found in the public institutions. That is why the Municipality of Vimercate agreed in creating a social infrastructure to facilitate the access to rights. Tools to let women in particular access jobs easily and to have more balance between the job and personal life are needed. Thanks to the PNRR funds, the kindergarten is being renovated. Moreover, the Municipality agreed to offer before and after school services to support parents who work and do not have time to pick their children after school or who need to go to work early in the morning.
- Another measure mentioned is a regulation which shaped the flexibility of work within the Municipality, with the aim to discuss the conciliation of work and personal life inside the institution as well.

## **2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- CSO's should promote their work in society and cooperate with different organisations to address women's needs for work-life balance.
- Policies could ensure that CSOs are involved in decision-making on specific issues during pandemics to advance the agenda of vulnerable groups.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Mrs. Villa emphasises the role of the CSOs, which represent the bridge between the citizens and the institutions. The Municipality of Vimercate strongly cooperates with the "Slow Working Association". The association benefits some of the municipal spaces to use them as co-working areas, which have spaces for their children as well. It represents a concrete example of support for families who have difficulties in harmonising life and work.

## **3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Governments should invest in mental health services.
- Providing different forms of governmental and organisational support to families to cope with the consequences of pandemic.
- Providing different governmental and organisational support for career development for women during the pandemic.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Mrs Villa touched the importance of mental health services. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for mental health support increased due to several reasons related to family, work,

and personal life of women. One important point to mention is that helping disadvantaged groups means helping the entire society.

## GREECE – IED

The Transnational panel discussion with political representatives in Greece took place on May 30th from 17:30 to 19:00 CET at Joist Innovation Park, located at Valtetsiou & Tripoleos, 41336, Larissa, Greece. The event featured various political representatives, both as speakers and guests, who actively participated in an open discussion. The invited speakers included [insert names of speakers]. The timetable for WP 9 is detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Timetable of the WP 9 at 16.30 pm (CET)

| TIME          | TOPIC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16:30 – 16:40 | Arrival & welcome of participants                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 16:40-17:10   | Welcome and presentation of speakers<br>Speakers:<br>- Zoe-Dorothea Pana, <i>Assistant Professor, Paediatrics, Hospital Epidemiology, Infection Control and Prevention, Former Consultant   Ministry of Health Cyprus   MohCY Member   EU COVID-19 Scientific Platform   European Commission</i><br>- Thodoris Kyropoulos, <i>Director of Health and Welfare of the Municipality of Larissa, MEDICAL BIOCHEMIST, MBBS, PhD, FERS, Doctor of Pulmonology Clinic, University of Thessaly</i><br>- Xenofontas Letsas, <i>Head of Volunteer Rescue and Health Missions Team (EODYA)</i> |
| 17:10 – 17:25 | The impact of the pandemic and how we study it,<br>Presentation of research results and policy recommendations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 17:25 – 17:55 | Open discussion                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 17:55 – 19:00 | Closing of the event                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

ΕΚΔΗΛΩΣΕΙΣ

## Ανοικτή Συζήτηση | Συστάσεις Πολιτικής για την Αντιμετώπιση Κρίσεων Πανδημίας σε Πολιτικό και Κοινωνικό Επίπεδο

Τοποθεσία: Πάρκο Καινοτομίας JOIST

30 Μαΐου 2024

ΕΓΓΡΑΦΕΙΤΕ



Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση  
Ευρωπαϊκό Ταμείο  
Περιφερειακής Ανάπτυξης



ΕΠΑΝΕΚ 2014-2020  
ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΣΙΑΚΟ ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ  
ΑΝΤΑΓΩΝΙΣΤΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ  
ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΜΑΤΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ  
ΚΑΙΝΟΤΟΜΙΑ



ΕΣΠΑ 2014-2020  
ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟ ΚΑΙΝΟΤΟΜΙΚΟ  
ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΣΙΑΚΟ ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ



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ΑΝΟΙΚΤΗ ΣΥΖΗΤΗΣΗ

**ΣΥΣΤΑΣΕΙΣ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗΣ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΑΝΤΙΜΕΤΩΠΙΣΗ ΚΡΙΣΕΩΝ ΠΑΝΔΗΜΙΑΣ ΣΕ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟ & ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΟ ΕΠΙΠΕΔΟ**  
**30.05.24 | 5:30 - 7:00 MM**



DR. ΘΟΔΩΡΗΣ ΚΥΡΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ



DR. ΖΩΗ ΔΩΡΟΘΕΑ ΠΑΝΑ



ΞΕΝΟΦΩΝΤΑΣ ΛΕΤΣΑΣ



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ΤΟΠΟΣ ΔΙΕΞΑΓΩΓΗΣ:  
ΠΑΡΚΟ ΚΑΙΝΟΤΟΜΙΑΣ JOIST,  
ΛΑΡΙΣΑ



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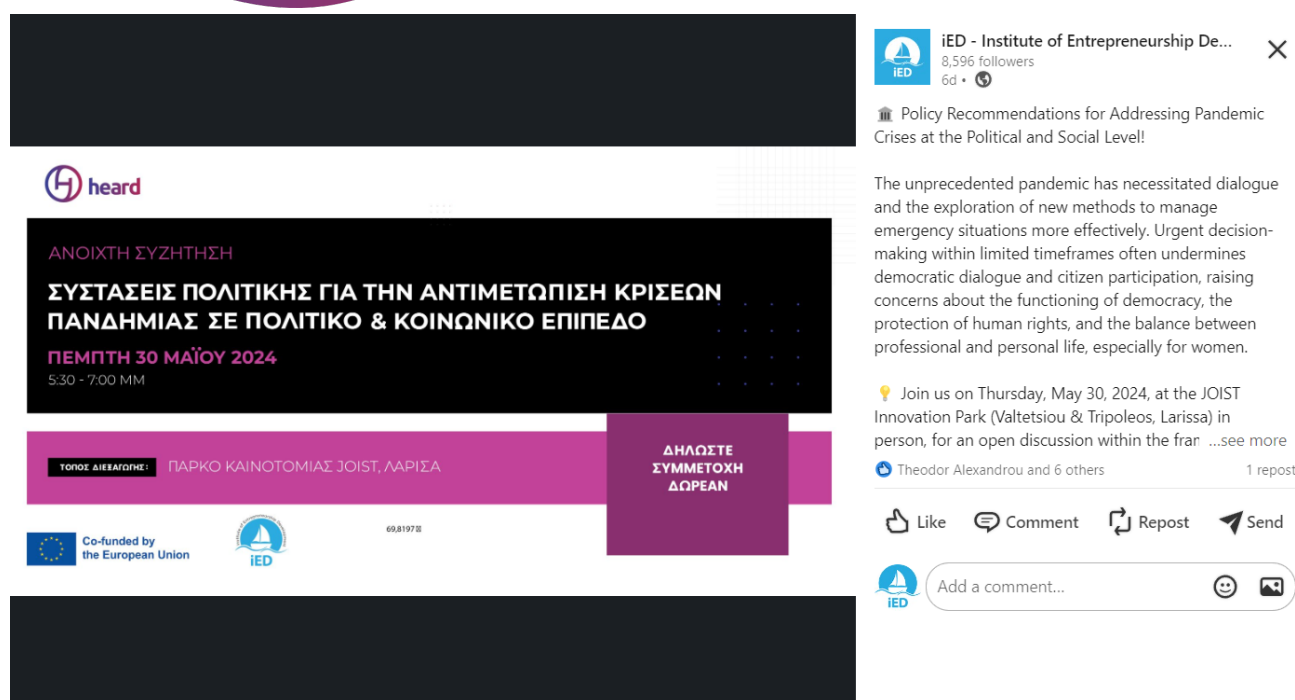
Τρεις δυναμικοί επιστήμονες και επαγγελματίες, θα μιλήσουν για την αποτελεσματική αντιμετώπιση κρίσεων πανδημίας σε πολιτικό και κοινωνικό επίπεδο:

- ♦ **Zoi-Dorothea Pana**, ως Επίκουρη Καθηγήτρια Παιδιατρικής και Επιδημιολογίας στο Νοσοκομείο, είναι αφοσιωμένη στην προώθηση και υποστήριξη επιχειρηματικών ιδεών, ενώ ενισχύει αναδυόμενες επιχειρήσεις μέσω υψηλού επιπέδου υπηρεσιών.
- ♦ **Θοδωρής Κυρόπουλος**, Ιατρικός Βιοχημικός και Διδάκτωρ Πνευμονολογικής Κλινικής, συνεισφέρει ενεργά στη διαχείριση της υγείας και της έρευνας, συμβάλλοντας στην προαγωγή της υγείας της κοινότητας.
- ♦ **Ξενοφώντας Λέτσας**, Επικεφαλής Εθελοντικής Ομάδας Διάσωσης και Υγειονομικών Αποστολών, συνεισφέρει στη διαχείριση κρίσεων και στην προαγωγή της υγειονομικής ασφάλειας.

Ημ/νια: Πέμπτη 30 Μαΐου 2024

Ώρα: 17:30 - 19:00

Τοποθεσία: Πάρκο Καινοτομίας JOIST  
(Βαλτετσίου & Τριπόλεως, Λάρισα).



**ΑΝΟΙΧΤΗ ΣΥΖΗΤΗΣΗ**  
**ΣΥΣΤΑΣΕΙΣ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗΣ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΑΝΤΙΜΕΤΩΠΙΣΗ ΚΡΙΣΕΩΝ ΠΑΝΔΗΜΙΑΣ ΣΕ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΟ & ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΟ ΕΠΙΠΕΔΟ**  
**ΠΕΜΠΤΗ 30 ΜΑΪΟΥ 2024**  
 5:30 - 7:00 PM

**ΤΟΠΟΣ ΔΙΕΞΑΓΩΓΗΣ:** ΠΑΡΚΟ ΚΑΙΝΟΤΟΜΙΑΣ JOIST, ΛΑΡΙΣΣΑ

**ΔΗΛΩΣΤΕ ΣΥΜΜΕΤΟΧΗ ΔΩΡΕΑΝ**

Co-funded by the European Union

**Policy Recommendations for Addressing Pandemic Crises at the Political and Social Level!**

The unprecedented pandemic has necessitated dialogue and the exploration of new methods to manage emergency situations more effectively. Urgent decision-making within limited timeframes often undermines democratic dialogue and citizen participation, raising concerns about the functioning of democracy, the protection of human rights, and the balance between professional and personal life, especially for women.

Join us on Thursday, May 30, 2024, at the JOIST Innovation Park (Valtetsiou & Tripoleos, Larissa) in person, for an open discussion within the framework of the project, for an open discussion within the framework of the project, for an open discussion within the framework of the project.

Theodor Alexandrou and 6 others

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The event commenced with a welcome speech by the project manager, who introduced the topic of the open discussion and presented the panel of speakers. Each speaker then gave a brief introduction, highlighting their experience in managing the pandemic within their respective roles. This was followed by a concise presentation of the project and the activities undertaken by the consortium so far, which led to the realization of research results and the development of political recommendations in three core areas: democracy, human rights, and the work-life balance of women. The research findings in these three key thematic areas and their subtopics are detailed below:

## First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

### 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Partnership between government and trustworthy experts (of different sectors) must be achieved to formulate effective public health strategies with partnerships at local, national and international levels.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration for pandemic preparedness.
- Strengthening global response and resilience.
- Best practices in pandemic management should be noted and used as guidance for future governments. They can emphasise both the strategic thinking for long-term planning and policy-making.
- Independent bodies that monitor government decisions and identify any conflicts of interest, errors by both experts and government and evaluate management and strategies should be established. They should also strive for promotion and maintenance of

democratic dialogue and human rights in society. Mentioned bodies could also act as risk assessment managers and identify risks for pandemics and measures on how the government can ensure democratic values in any risk.

- Ethical guidelines should be established to help ensure that decision-making during pandemics is guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for human rights in order to ensure human rights and privacy/data protection.

•

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

The response from the public and political representatives was overwhelmingly positive. Many attendees expressed their appreciation for the comprehensive and well-thought-out recommendations. Political representatives commended the emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration and the establishment of independent bodies to monitor government actions, noting that these steps are crucial for enhancing transparency and accountability. They also acknowledged that interdisciplinary and transnational collaboration, initiated during the pandemic, continues to develop as part of ongoing pandemic preparedness efforts. Public participants shared these views, particularly valuing the focus on ethical guidelines and the protection of human rights. They admitted that governance processes and decision-making measures were not always transparent during the pandemic, and they appreciated the recommendations' emphasis on clarifying the role and influence of experts. Several representatives highlighted the importance of incorporating best practices from the pandemic into long-term strategic planning, ensuring that future policies are both resilient and adaptable. Overall, the recommendations were seen as a significant step forward in fortifying democratic principles and preparing for future health crises.

## **2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- In order to promote both democratic engagement and public health security, we strongly support the use of a range of voting techniques, such as mail-in ballots and digital platforms in order to enable early and remote voting, guaranteeing that individuals who are unable to physically go to polling spaces, such as UK residents who use postal ballots, can still participate in the voting process. In order to facilitate these approaches, it is imperative to uphold transparent and user-focused websites that provide guidance to individuals during the voting procedure. These websites should address issues like the replacement of misplaced votes, thus fostering an electorate that is both inclusive and well-informed.
- Refining campaign strategies to ensure transparency of the electoral process through public disclosure of financial information on campaigns, public debates, accessible information, independent media coverage and the involvement of civil society.

In addition, it should be ensured that the various vulnerable groups have access to all possible ways of voting and available information.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

The response from the public and political representatives sparked a discussion about digital literacy and the need to ensure that all groups can effectively engage with such procedures. Both political representatives and the public expressed concerns about the feasibility of a multimethod voting system. They highlighted not only the capacity of various groups to adapt to such a system but also the state's ability to support it, given the heavy reliance on public procurement for these issues.

Regarding the transparency and accountability of the electoral process, there was significant discussion about the pre-election period, particularly how candidates promote their strategies and the sources of their funding. The issue of campaign financing was intensely debated, with many expressing concerns. There was a consensus that people should be well-informed about the types and sources of funding and support that candidates receive. This transparency is essential for regaining public trust and encouraging more active participation in the electoral process.

### **3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- We must strive to achieve media transparency and objectivity, which necessitates guaranteeing its independence from government and political influences. Enforcing impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists, along with verifying and disclosing sources, could bolster media credibility.
- To combat misinformation, it's essential to educate the public on identifying fake news, emphasizing the importance of relying on credible sources. This can include implementing fact-checking measures to ensure news reliability and promoting education through school curricula or government-funded courses available to all citizens. Providing digital resources on discerning fake news can further this educational effort.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

Public and political representatives engaged in a robust discussion regarding the pressing issue of media credibility and the proliferation of misinformation, particularly in Greece where traditional media outlets have seen a significant decline in trust while internet resources have become the primary source of information for many.

Participants acknowledged the challenges posed by both traditional media, often perceived as influenced by government and political agendas, and the internet, where misinformation proliferates, largely driven by user-generated content. Concerns were raised about the need for stricter guidelines for journalists to ensure impartiality and transparency, but this was met with counter-arguments emphasizing the importance of journalistic freedom.

Furthermore, political representatives highlighted instances of emergency legislation aimed at combating misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, which sometimes inadvertently impeded the work of journalists and encroached upon their freedom. Such measures were deemed potentially unjustified or disproportionate.

Despite differing perspectives, there was unanimous agreement on the paramount importance of educating the public to discern between credible and fake news, particularly during times of crisis. The recommendation to implement educational initiatives, including fact-checking measures and digital resources, garnered widespread support and was deemed essential for safeguarding society from the harmful effects of misinformation.

In conclusion, while challenges remain in balancing journalistic freedom with the need for media transparency and combating misinformation, the consensus among participants underscores the critical role of education in empowering citizens to navigate the complex media landscape effectively. As such, the adoption of educational initiatives to promote media literacy emerged as a key priority moving forward.

## **4th sub-subtask: Transparency and democratic engagement**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Implement citizen engagement strategies (e.g. public consultations, virtual participation in parliamentary processes, participation in protests, digital activism, online petitions in advocating reforms) and public education campaigns to educate individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, on how to actively participate in democratic debates online,
- Implement anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability and to build the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption metrics and credibility building.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in medical supply chains

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

The response from both the public and political representatives highlighted the pervasive issue of corruption in Greece, underscoring its detrimental impact on political engagement and public trust. There was a shared sentiment that corruption has contributed to widespread disillusionment with politics, leading to apathy and disinterest among citizens.

However, there was also acknowledgment that combating corruption requires more than just addressing its symptoms; it necessitates a shift in societal mentality towards accountability and transparency. While citizen engagement strategies were deemed promising, there was a lack of consensus on the most effective approaches. It was emphasized that inspirational ideas are needed to motivate people to participate in democratic processes actively.

Regarding anti-corruption policies, attendees expressed scepticism about the government's willingness to implement meaningful reforms, noting that existing measures often fall short of addressing systemic issues. The discussion on enhancing transparency and accountability in medical supply chains revealed a shared recognition of the problem but a lack of concrete proposals for addressing it.

Overall, while the presented recommendations were deemed important, there was a consensus on the need for a cultural shift in Greece towards greater accountability and ethical behavior, transcending reliance solely on legislative measures. It was acknowledged that addressing corruption requires a multifaceted approach, including both structural reforms and changes in societal attitudes.

## **Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **1st sub-subject: Limited movement**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Improve public access to healthcare, especially during epidemics, emphasizing inclusivity and efficient delivery during crises.
- Create financial assistance programs for individuals who lose their jobs or face economic hardship due to pandemic-related measures.
- Policymakers should recognize and address the unique challenges women face, especially during crises. Implement strategies targeting women, particularly mothers, to sustain their employment.
- Countries need to form a protocol for limitation of movement, which should be grounded in the scientific research.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

The discussion among both the public and political representatives underscored the multifaceted challenges posed by limited movement measures during the pandemic, particularly concerning their economic and psychological toll on society. Attendees unanimously acknowledged the strain placed on Greece's healthcare system, which influenced the implementation of stringent measures such as movement restrictions even in periods with few cases of coronavirus.

Among the presented recommendations, the development of a scientifically grounded protocol for limitation of movement emerged as the most favored option. Political representatives emphasized the importance of deploying expertise and scientific research to guide decision-making, thereby ensuring accountability and responsibility in navigating the complexities of a pandemic.

There was also consensus on the need for clarity in defining expertise, particularly in public discourse, where conflicting opinions from various experts often abound. Attendees stressed the importance of establishing standards for expertise to mitigate confusion and misinformation.

Regarding financial assistance programs, existing initiatives in Greece were deemed inadequate, especially for individuals experiencing prolonged unemployment or struggling businesses. Attendees expressed a collective agreement on the necessity of enhancing support measures to address the evolving economic challenges brought about by the pandemic.

The disproportionate impact of unemployment on women, compounded by the prevalence of undeclared work, was a focal point of discussion. Participants advocated for targeted strategies to support women, particularly mothers, in sustaining their employment and navigating economic uncertainties.

In summary, while acknowledging the complexities of pandemic management, attendees highlighted the importance of evidence-based decision-making, enhanced support measures, and targeted interventions to address the diverse needs of the population, with a particular emphasis on supporting women in the workforce.

## **2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Engage communities in the decision-making process when formulating and implementing pandemic response measures.
- Prioritize inclusivity, ensuring voices from all segments of society are heard and considered.
- Strengthen international collaborations to uphold human rights, especially in countries with weaker health infrastructures.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

The dialogue among both the public and political representatives echoed the importance of community engagement in crafting and executing pandemic response strategies. Attendees emphasized the need for inclusivity, advocating for the active involvement of diverse voices in decision-making processes to ensure comprehensive and effective solutions.

Building on this sentiment, there was unanimous support for prioritizing inclusivity to ensure that the concerns and perspectives of all segments of society are heard and taken into account. Participants recognized the value of diverse viewpoints in formulating policies that are equitable and responsive to the needs of the entire population.

Moreover, attendees underscored the significance of international collaborations in safeguarding human rights, particularly in regions with limited healthcare infrastructure. Some of the attendees mentioned that Greece in some cases during the pandemic could be further supported by other countries in the eliminations it had on the healthcare system. There was a shared commitment to strengthening partnerships on a global scale to promote solidarity and address disparities in access to healthcare and essential services.

In short, both the public and political representatives agreed: we need to include everyone in making decisions and work together internationally to tackle pandemics and protect human rights.

### **3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Ensure universal healthcare access, including treatments for all.
- Implement privacy-protected digital tracing and health verification tools.
- Limiting the stigmatisation of healthcare workers during the pandemic times.
- Maintain essential services like food, water, and electricity during lockdowns.
- Create fair vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all, including vulnerable groups, and maintain freedom of movement without discriminating against unvaccinated individuals.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

The public and political representatives responded positively to the recommendation for universal healthcare access, acknowledging that the healthcare system was not initially designed to handle pandemics. Efforts are underway to develop more resilient systems capable of managing unforeseen challenges. While open access to healthcare services exists in Greece, concerns about the quality of care were raised, prompting calls for the establishment of clear quality standards.

Discussion surrounding the recommendation to limit the stigmatization of healthcare workers sparked debate on vaccination policies, particularly regarding mandatory COVID-19 vaccination for healthcare workers. While opinions were divided, there was consensus that stigmatization or work suspensions should be avoided, as they pose additional challenges for healthcare workers and their families.

The maintenance of essential services was deemed critical, with unanimous agreement on the need for price controls to ensure accessibility for all, regardless of the ongoing crisis. However, there was a call for further deliberation on vaccination policies by decision-making authorities, as some attendees expressed concerns about blindly adopting policies from other countries without considering their applicability to Greece's specific circumstances.

### **4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Establish ethical guidelines around resource allocation during health crises, ensuring fairness and equity.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and expertise among countries.
- Provide additional resources and protection to marginalized communities, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless, ensuring their human rights are upheld during pandemic responses.
- Importance of ensuring equal and fair access to psychological help to everybody in need.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

Political representatives acknowledged the complexity of resource allocation, noting that it involves various factors beyond ethical considerations. They highlighted existing constraints that sometimes necessitate rules which may not fully cover everyone. While some audience members understood these points, the majority supported the recommendation to establish ethical guidelines to ensure fairness and equity during health crises.

The sharing of best practices was universally recognized as beneficial. Political representatives cited existing networks, working groups, and platforms that facilitate this exchange. However, there was consensus on the importance of tailoring these practices to consider cultural, national, and economic factors. This underscores the necessity of collaboration between experts and authorities to ensure effective implementation.

Furthermore, there was strong support for providing additional resources and protection to marginalized communities, such as refugees, migrants, and the homeless, to uphold their human rights during pandemic responses. Equal and fair access to psychological help for all in need was also highlighted as a crucial aspect of pandemic management. During the conversation attendees and political representatives shared a lot of examples, tools and recently established support mechanisms in national and EU level and highlighted the importance of disseminating them and raising awareness about their availability as they can help a lot of people tackle the challenges during and post pandemic.

## **Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN**

### **1st sub-subject: Work Policies**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Implementing workplace flexibility and teleworking options.
- Offering educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence.
- Ensuring job protection for women taking leave to care for family members.
- Fostering an environment of gender equality in all sectors.
- Enhancing digital literacy and remote work skills among women to expand their employment opportunities.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

Flexibility in the working environment and teleworking were widely discussed, with participants sharing their experiences during and after the pandemic. Notable observations included Greece's slow transition to flexible working methods and the resistance of many private sector companies to adopt hybrid systems. It was concluded that these issues are closely linked to educational and cultural mindsets, which differ significantly from those in Western Europe, impacting various aspects of Greek employment policies.

There was unanimous agreement on the need for greater support for women, with calls to further refine policy recommendations to address existing gaps in the current framework. Additionally, attendees emphasized the importance of supporting men in parenting roles, urging the state to ensure that their rights are respected. It was acknowledged that a lack of information and awareness about rights often leaves individuals vulnerable to exploitation by employers, highlighting the need for improved state oversight.

Attendees and political representatives noted that employment opportunities for women are more restricted, but this was not seen as a result of a lack of digital literacy or remote work skills. Instead,

the primary issue identified was the labor law framework. While the recommendation to improve digital literacy and remote work skills was considered beneficial, it was deemed less relevant in the Greek context, where labor law reform is seen as a more pressing need.

## **2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- CSO's should promote their work in society and cooperate with different organisations to address women's needs for work-life balance.
- Policies could ensure that CSOs are involved in decision-making on specific issues during pandemics to advance the agenda of vulnerable groups.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

The expert acknowledged that there should be a holistic approach to addressing public health and societal well-being especially when discussing about crises such as a pandemic, with several impacts in society. They emphasized that promoting the work of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and fostering cooperation among different entities can significantly enhance efforts to address women's needs for work-life balance. This is crucial for mental and physical health, as stress and burnout from poor work-life balance can lead to a range of health issues. Additionally, the representative from the Municipality of Larisa highlighted that the current data collection on different and vulnerable groups can serve as a valuable tool for tailoring pandemic response strategies to the specific needs of the community. This approach can be further enhanced through collaboration with CSOs, ensuring that the strategies are both effective and inclusive.

Additionally, involving CSOs in decision-making during pandemics is essential. Experts understand that pandemics disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, and the input of CSOs can ensure that the needs of these populations are not overlooked. By incorporating the perspectives and expertise of CSOs, policies can be more inclusive and effective in mitigating the adverse effects of health crises on vulnerable communities as they stated. Overall, experts supported these recommendations as they align with the goals of comprehensive and equitable public health strategies.

## **3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Governments should invest in mental health services.
- Providing different forms of governmental and organisational support to families to cope with the consequences of pandemic.
- Providing different governmental and organisational support for career development for women during the pandemic.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

Experts agreed with these recommendations, noting their importance for public health and societal well-being. They also mentioned that steps and measures have already been taken in this direction. For instance, the recommendation that governments should invest in mental health services is crucial, as mental health is a fundamental aspect of overall health. Many governments, among them the Greek one, have recognized this need and have increased funding for mental health services, launched public awareness campaigns, and integrated mental health support into primary

healthcare systems. An example of this is the expansion of telehealth services during the pandemic, which has made mental health support more accessible.

Providing different forms of governmental and organizational support to families to cope with the consequences of the pandemic is also vital for mitigating its impact as they stated. There have already been initiatives such as financial assistance programs, enhanced unemployment benefits, and food assistance programs. Experts mentioned that educational support for children and parental leave policies should be enhanced in Greece to help families manage during the crisis.

Additionally, providing governmental and organizational support for career development for women during the pandemic is essential for gender equality and economic recovery. In response, governments and organizations have introduced measures such as remote work policies, flexible working hours, and professional development programs specifically for women. Remote work policies in Greece should be further enhanced as experts shared as there is a strong negative mentality of employers towards this.

## FRANCE - CBE

Transnational panel discussion with political representatives in France was conducted on 30<sup>th</sup> of May from 18.00 – 20.00 at the Salle des Ferrages, 7 rue des Ferrages, 84120 La Bastidonne. We welcomed four political representatives from La Bastidonne and the surrounding areas, namely Jacques Decuignières, Eric Levantis, Sandrine Pereira, and Gérard Grelet.

In the Table 1 below, we can see the timetables of the WP 9.

Table 1. Timetable of the WP 9 at 18.00 pm (CET)

| TIME          | TOPIC                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 18:00 – 18:05 | Welcome speech                                                                                                                                         |
| 18:05 – 18:20 | Presentation of the CBE, of the project in the overall and presentation of the debate                                                                  |
| 18:20 – 19:00 | Round tables : division of the group in 3, each table about one subject                                                                                |
| 19:00 – 19:50 | Pooling of information : resumption of each theme, report of the remarks on the political recommendations, intervention of the elected representatives |
| 19:50 – 20:00 | Feedbacks, satisfaction survey                                                                                                                         |
| 20:00 – 20:10 | Conclusion, thank you                                                                                                                                  |



We began with a welcome speech thanking everyone for attending. We then gave a brief presentation of the CBE and our missions. We continued by talking about the project, using the first slides of the PowerPoint produced by the project partners. We then presented the Citizens' Table itself, i.e. its purpose, how we were going to organise ourselves in the coming hours, and what they were going to have to do.

We then divided the room into three groups, with participants choosing their group according to their affinity with the three themes of the project (democratic debate, human rights, women's work-life balance). During this discussion time, each group was able to draw on the observations made in the diagnosis report and on the policy recommendations that had already been drawn up. They were able to give their opinions and define final recommendations.

We then brought all the groups together. Each group reported on its conclusions, and the elected representatives were able to comment on the feasibility and relevance of the recommendations.

Finally, we concluded with a discussion on the participants' opinions of the event, and we thanked them before closing the meeting.

According to mentioned research findings, we formulated 3 key thematic and sub-subjects as stated below:

## First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

### 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management

#### Identified political recommendations were:

- Partnership between government and trustworthy experts (of different sectors) must be achieved to formulate effective public health strategies with partnerships at local, national, and international levels.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration for pandemic preparedness.
- Strengthening global response and resilience.
- Best practices in pandemic management should be noted and used as guidance for future governments. They can emphasise both the strategic thinking for long-term planning and policymaking.
- Independent bodies that monitor government decisions and identify any conflicts of interest, errors by both experts and government and evaluate management and strategies should be established. They should also strive for promotion and maintenance of democratic dialogue and human rights in society. Mentioned bodies could also act as risk assessment managers and identify risks for pandemics and measures on how the government can ensure democratic values in any risk.
- Ethical guidelines should be established to help ensure that decision-making during pandemics is guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for human rights in order to ensure human rights and privacy/data protection.

### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

Mistrust of government was already a hot topic before covid, but the health crisis has exacerbated this mistrust. There's an ambivalence because politicians are elected, so they're supposed to represent the people, but in recent years the vote no longer really represents the real wishes of the population. Conversely, experts may be fine connoisseurs of technical subjects but, once again, they don't always represent people's opinions. So here are the three proposals highlighted as the most important by the participants :

- Independent bodies should be set up to monitor government decisions, identify any conflicts of interest and mistakes made by experts and the government, and evaluate management and strategies.
- A partnership between government and experts (from different sectors) should be established to formulate effective public health strategies with partnerships at local, national and international levels.
- Ethical guidelines should be established to ensure that decision-making during pandemics respects the wishes of the majority of the population.

## **2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity**

### Identified political recommendations were:

- In order to promote both democratic engagement and public health security, we strongly support the use of a range of voting techniques, such as mail-in ballots and digital platforms in order to enable early and remote voting, guaranteeing that individuals who are unable to physically go to polling spaces, such as UK residents who use postal ballots, can still participate in the voting process. In order to facilitate these approaches, it is imperative to uphold transparent and user-focused websites that provide guidance to individuals during

the voting procedure. These websites should address issues like the replacement of misplaced votes, thus fostering an electorate that is both inclusive and well-informed.

- Refining campaign strategies to ensure transparency of the electoral process through public disclosure of financial information on campaigns, public debates, accessible information, independent media coverage and the involvement of civil society.
- In addition, it should be ensured that the various vulnerable groups have access to all possible ways of voting and available information.

### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

In France, elections were held during the pandemic. Unfortunately, a very large number of people did not turn out to vote, and a majority of the public felt that their right to vote had been trampled underfoot. Because of this, it seems very important to the partners to postpone elections that are, and to develop new methods of voting when absolutely necessary, without the need to travel away from home. What is needed, however, is an independent body capable of verifying the integrity of the ballot. The first recommendation has been supported a lot.

### 3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management

#### Identified political recommendations were:

- We must strive to achieve media transparency and objectivity, which necessitates guaranteeing its independence from government and political influences. Enforcing impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists, along with verifying and disclosing sources, could bolster media credibility.
- To combat misinformation, it's essential to educate the public on identifying fake news, emphasizing the importance of relying on credible sources. This can include implementing fact-checking measures to ensure news reliability and promoting education through school curricula or government-funded courses available to all citizens. Providing digital resources on discerning fake news can further this educational effort.

### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

Participants noted the rise in fake news during the pandemic, and also the major role played by social networks during this atypical period. They also had the impression that some media had become mouthpieces for the authorities and may have lost their journalistic independence. On the other hand, some media have built themselves up in opposition to the government, and may have disseminated false information with the sole aim of proving the government wrong. The participants also highlighted the educational role of journalists, who have done a great deal to explain complicated information simply.

The participants identified the following measures:

- Implementing impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists, as well as verifying and disclosing sources, could strengthen the credibility of the media.

- Implementing fact-checking measures would guarantee the reliability of information. This would require the creation of a neutral body responsible for verifying and reporting fake news.
- Media freedom and awareness of fake news should be promoted through school programmes or government-funded courses accessible to all citizens, as well as through the provision of digital resources.

## **4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Implement citizen engagement strategies (e.g. public consultations, virtual participation in parliamentary processes, participation in protests, digital activism, online petitions in advocating reforms) and public education campaigns to educate individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, on how to actively participate in democratic debates online,
- Implement anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability and to build the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption metrics and credibility building.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in medical supply chains

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

It has been a long time since there are some issues of transparency and the population is asking for more and more transparency, becoming themselves more mistrustful. Not everyone wants to make a democratic commitment even if people think democracy is important and in danger in the course of a crisis. All recommendations have been approved by the participants.

## **Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS DEBATE**

### **1st sub-subject: Limited movement**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Improve public access to healthcare, especially during epidemics, emphasising inclusivity and efficient delivery during crises.
- Create financial assistance programs for individuals who lose their jobs or face economic hardship due to pandemic-related measures.
- Policymakers should recognize and address the unique challenges women face, especially during crises. Implement strategies targeting women, particularly mothers, to sustain their employment.
- Countries need to form a protocol for limitation of movement, which should be grounded in scientific research.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

The confinement highlighted the travel problems experienced by isolated people, particularly the elderly or single people with children. Confinement was seen as a restriction of freedom, which raised questions about its justification and the transparency of the measures taken. A problem of inconsistency in the regulations was noted, damaging the economy and freedoms.

All the measures proposed seemed relevant and necessary to improve the daily life of the population if such a period were to recur.

## **2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Engage communities in the decision-making process when formulating and implementing pandemic response measures.
- Prioritise inclusivity, ensuring voices from all segments of society are heard and considered.
- Strengthen international collaborations to uphold human rights, especially in countries with weaker health infrastructures.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

The participants pointed out the decrease of peaceful assembly because of confusion in the society. The fear of contamination increased by the stressful situation of being confined and for most people being isolated, did not help to have peaceful debates.

It was suggested that more power could have been given to the elected representatives to manage the crisis closely to their citizens and so to their needs, and the specificity of each local situation.

All the recommendations were approved, but the first seemed to be the most popular. Indeed, it seems necessary to allow people to get together in one way or another to make themselves heard, especially in these extreme and unprecedented conditions.

## **3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Ensure universal healthcare access, including treatments for all.
- Implement privacy-protected digital tracing and health verification tools.
- Limiting the stigmatisation of healthcare workers during the pandemic times.
- Maintain essential services like food, water, and electricity during lockdowns.
- Create fair vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all, including vulnerable groups, and maintain freedom of movement without discriminating against unvaccinated individuals.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

Among the so-called human rights is access to healthcare. This right is fundamental, but sometimes difficult to access. The pandemic revealed the weaknesses of the healthcare system, and these weaknesses have continued to be highlighted in recent years. A certain amount of money needs to be invested in access to healthcare and in training healthcare professionals. Another inequality highlighted during the pandemic was access to digital technology. Digital access and digital poverty are very important issues in an increasingly connected society.

Here are the measures that participants felt were most important:

- Set up independent bodies to examine potential human rights violations during pandemics.
- Develop digital learning tools accessible to all, and strengthen policies and services to ensure equal access to new technologies for all.

There was intense debate about the all-vaccine policy. Some felt it was necessary for everyone to be vaccinated to protect the most vulnerable. Others, on the other hand, felt that it should be up to each individual to decide, because everyone is in control of their own body's integrity.

## **4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Establish ethical guidelines around resource allocation during health crises, ensuring fairness and equity.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and expertise among countries.
- Provide additional resources and protection to marginalized communities, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless, ensuring their human rights are upheld during pandemic responses.
- Importance of ensuring equal and fair access to psychological help to everybody in need.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

During the confinement, we had to distance ourselves from the others. We couldn't go and see our loved ones. On the contrary, others were confined together. This forced co-location or solitude may have had a very significant impact on the mental health of the patients. Certain sections of the population may have had a heightened sense of being left behind, of being excluded from society. The consequences for mental health, particularly for young people, even four years later, are significant. It is vital to put in place policies that provide simplified and free access to mental health professionals.

All the recommendations seem vital to the participants.

## **Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN**

### **1st sub-subject: Work Policies**

### Identified political recommendations were:

- Implementing workplace flexibility and teleworking options.
- Offering educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence.
- Ensuring job protection for women taking leave to care for family members.
- Fostering an environment of gender equality in all sectors.
- Enhancing digital literacy and remote work skills among women to expand their employment opportunities.

### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

The participants in the debates highlighted the fact that there was no policy specifically applied to women, particularly those with children to care for. Women may have been the first to be affected by the covid crisis because they held many of the most essential jobs (nurses, cashiers, school teachers, etc.). They had to make do on their own with their acquaintances/family to organise childcare. They were also on the front line of contamination because of their direct contact with the public.

All the recommendations were approved by the participants. They all felt that they were essential to help women in similar situations in the future.

## **2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)**

### Identified political recommendations were:

- CSO's should promote their work in society and cooperate with different organisations to address women's needs for work-life balance.
- Policies could ensure that CSOs are involved in decision-making on specific issues during pandemics to advance the agenda of vulnerable groups.

### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

CSO have stronger power than individuals and are gaining more and more recognition over time so an action of them is more efficient. Their work to protect women, particularly victims of domestic violence, is essential and vital. They need to be given the resources to continue their work. Union trades could also be a tool to create change in women's work-life balance because they are fighting for the interest of workers and so this is the case here. But, associations fighting for more rights to women seem to raise high awareness against the life of women. The issue is that the major actions of these organisations are strikes and it was not possible to make them during lockdowns.

For some participants, it is necessary to rely on civil society organisations to bring about a change of mentality regarding gender equality in the world of work. For others, the most important thing is to get things moving at the top of the pyramid, and action needs to come first from political decision-makers, who need to regularise all this.

The second recommendation seemed the most logical to the participants, as it seemed essential that those in direct contact with victims should be able to explain their work, their needs and the situation on the ground.

### 3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support

#### Identified political recommendations were:

- Governments should invest in mental health services.
- Providing different forms of governmental and organisational support to families to cope with the consequences of pandemic.
- Providing different governmental and organisational support for career development for women during the pandemic.

#### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

Participants pointed out that women faced increased stress and mental health problems due to the burden of care, remote working and societal expectations. Young women in particular continue to suffer from declining mental health since the consecutive confinements.

During the crisis, the attention was more on the contamination than mental health. It was not the priority. Psychiatric services do not have enough resources to manage the growing number of cases. The deterioration in mental health following the crisis has not been sufficiently addressed, and the effects are still being felt today, despite the fact that people are speaking out. Those present felt that it was essential to develop mental health services because there are not many of them.

When there is a crisis, we can see the society taking a turning point and it is frightening most of the time because of the violence exploding. These situations show us the instability of some people and the necessity of more care on the mental health of the citizens.

## BULGARIA - FECE

| TIME          | TOPIC                                                                                                                            |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|               |                                                                                                                                  |
| 16:05 – 16:15 | Presentation of the project and project partners and presentation of political representatives as participants at the discussion |
| 16:15 – 16:25 | Presentation of projects already implemented and planned activities                                                              |

|               |                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16:25 – 16:40 | Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations from the field of democracy for future epidemic situations                   |
| 16:40 – 17:00 | Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations in the field of human rights rights for future epidemic situations           |
| 17:00 – 17:20 | Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations in the field of balancing life roles of women in future epidemics situations |
| 17:20 – 17:30 | Short discussion                                                                                                                                      |
| 17:30 – 17:35 | EC satisfaction survey and conclusion thoughts                                                                                                        |

## First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

### **1<sup>st</sup> sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management**

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Partnership between government and trustworthy experts (of different sectors) must be achieved to formulate effective public health strategies with partnerships at local, national and international levels.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration for pandemic preparedness.
- Strengthening global response and resilience.
- Best practices in pandemic management should be noted and used as guidance for future governments. They can emphasise both the strategic thinking for long-term planning and policy-making.
- Independent bodies that monitor government decisions and identify any conflicts of interest, errors by both experts and government and evaluate management and strategies should be established. They should also strive for promotion and maintenance of democratic dialogue and human rights in society. Mentioned bodies could also act as risk assessment managers and identify risks for pandemics and measures on how the government can ensure democratic values in any risk.
- Ethical guidelines should be established to help ensure that decision-making during pandemics is guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for human rights in order to ensure human rights and privacy/data protection.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- In general, the political representatives and citizens expressed their reservations to the recommendations because they are too general - so they are like directions for future work. The participants thought that it would be better to have concrete recommendations together with examples, which would show the need for measures in the respective domain.
- Regarding the first recommendation, the participants discussed the term “trustworthy” experts - it is too vague and there is a threat of neglecting different opinions. When such an

event like COVID-19 happens, the coordination on the municipal level is quite more important than the government's reaction. In the Municipality of Varna were created networks among the municipality, hospitals, social services, and Bulgarian Red Cross to answer the needs and challenges even before receiving any instructions from the government.

- The participants were against the idea of coordination on the EU level as the administration in Brussels cannot judge the realities on a local spot. The creation of “independent bodies” was not perceived well by the participants in the event. They believe that the focus should be on functional literacy - how people should react to such events (earthquakes, fires, floods, pandemics, etc.). The participants saw human rights more as “paper rights” but not actually in practice. People should know not only their rights but responsibilities in case of a pandemic (for instance how to protect people around them).

## **2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- In order to promote both democratic engagement and public health security, we strongly support the use of a range of voting techniques, such as mail-in ballots and digital platforms in order to enable early and remote voting, guaranteeing that individuals who are unable to physically go to polling spaces, such as UK residents who use postal ballots, can still participate in the voting process. In order to facilitate these approaches, it is imperative to uphold transparent and user-focused websites that provide guidance to individuals during the voting procedure. These websites should address issues like the replacement of misplaced votes, thus fostering an electorate that is both inclusive and well-informed.
- Refining campaign strategies to ensure transparency of the electoral process through public disclosure of financial information on campaigns, public debates, accessible information, independent media coverage and the involvement of civil society.
- In addition, it should be ensured that the various vulnerable groups have access to all possible ways of voting and available information.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- During the pandemic, in Bulgaria, there were 4 rounds of national elections. The authorities took measures to provide mobile stations to visit all people under quarantine at their homes and collect their votes. The campaign is part of a broader measure to reach all people who have physical disabilities and cannot visit the voting places.

## **3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- We must strive to achieve media transparency and objectivity, which necessitates guaranteeing its independence from government and political influences. Enforcing impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists, along with verifying and disclosing sources, could bolster media credibility.
- To combat misinformation, it's essential to educate the public on identifying fake news, emphasising the importance of relying on credible sources. This can include implementing fact-checking measures to ensure news reliability and promoting education through school

curricula or government-funded courses available to all citizens. Providing digital resources on discerning fake news can further this educational effort.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Some of the problems related to the pandemic were the mainstream narrative and neglecting different viewpoints. The efforts should be directed to safeguarding the media pluralism and combating fake news. However, the transparency and independence of media outlets from government and politicians is another topic outside of the context of Covid-19.

### **4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement**

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Implement citizen engagement strategies (e.g. public consultations, virtual participation in parliamentary processes, participation in protests, digital activism, online petitions in advocating reforms) and public education campaigns to educate individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, on how to actively participate in democratic debates online,
- Implement anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability and to build the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption metrics and credibility building.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in medical supply chains

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- The recommendations in this section are not related to Covid-19. The citizen engagement practices are related to the national legislation, which is quite different across the countries. For instance, in Bulgaria, there is voting with machines but it is not remote. The public consultations on legislation and programmes are online and remote. The anti-corruption policies are one of the top priorities of the leading political parties but they are related to problems in the harmonisation of the Bulgarian legislation to the European directives and the processes are not related in any sense to covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, we introduced electronic medical receipts to have better control of medicines in Bulgaria, but every medical doctor in Bulgaria would say that they cannot prescribe any drugs without holding a physical examination of the patient (otherwise, this would be unethical and criminal).

## **Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **1st sub-subject: Limited movement**

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Improve public access to healthcare, especially during epidemics, emphasising inclusivity and efficient delivery during crises.
- Create financial assistance programs for individuals who lose their jobs or face economic hardship due to pandemic-related measures.
- Policymakers should recognize and address the unique challenges women face, especially during crises. Implement strategies targeting women, particularly mothers, to sustain their employment.
- Countries need to form a protocol for limitation of movement, which should be grounded in scientific research.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- During COVID-19, many people were encouraged not to visit hospitals for regular examinations. The covid-19 had a longstanding negative effect on medical screening and outpatient care. As a result, many people are suffering from complications (chronic diseases, cancer) because they did not visit any medical doctors during COVID-19. The emphasis in this section should be on creating stimulus and more recognition for nurses, paramedics, and healthcare and social workers who spent all of their time physically with COVID-19 patients. During COVID-19, one measure was quite crucial for those individuals - 1000 BGN a month (about 511 EUR), which was given to all nurses, paramedics and medical doctors who were on the first line fighting COVID-19. Bulgaria introduced very good measures to support women and mothers during COVID-19 (unlimited sick leave for mothers, remote jobs, paying for staying at home with the children, etc.), which can be presented to other EU countries. The movement limitation was not justified during COVID-19 (it was for a brief period at the beginning of the pandemic).

## **2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Engage communities in the decision-making process when formulating and implementing pandemic response measures.
- Prioritise inclusivity, ensuring voices from all segments of society are heard and considered.
- Strengthen international collaborations to uphold human rights, especially in countries with weaker health infrastructures.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- In all Bulgarian cities, there were regional and municipal headquarters of experts (policymakers, administration, medical experts, etc.) who performed decision-making based on the actual local situation. Communities with low functional literacy need more guidelines even if the measures are against their desires. In ensuring inclusivity, the social service providers were those who took care of disadvantaged people and answered their needs through creating new services. The international collaborations can be formulated for supplying medicines and other materials but for upholding human rights is too vague formulation.

## **3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Ensure universal healthcare access, including treatments for all.
- Implement privacy-protected digital tracing and health verification tools.
- Limiting the stigmatisation of healthcare workers during the pandemic times.
- Maintain essential services like food, water, and electricity during lockdowns.
- Create fair vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all, including vulnerable groups, and maintain freedom of movement without discriminating against unvaccinated individuals.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Healthcare access is one of the Constitution's rights. So, the country has already ensured that every citizen has access to medical care (not related to COVID-19). The country has health verification tools in place created for better coordination. More should be done for nurses and paramedics as the country has a shortage of these specialists (low salaries, not attractive working conditions). There is no stigmatisation but more stimulus is needed to

ensure that the country has enough healthcare workers in an extraordinary event (earthquakes, floods, pandemics, etc.). In Bulgaria, there were no problems in delivering food, water and electricity during the whole period of the pandemic. Even the country introduced at the beginning of the pandemic different hours for visiting supermarkets and pharmacies (from 8:00 until 10:00, only people over 65 could visit those commercials). The vaccine obligations were unjustified, and the countries should not discriminate against unvaccinated individuals.

#### **4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension**

##### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Establish ethical guidelines around resource allocation during health crises, ensuring fairness and equity.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and expertise among countries.
- Provide additional resources and protection to marginalised communities, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless, ensuring their human rights are upheld during pandemic responses.
- Importance of ensuring equal and fair access to psychological help to everybody in need.

##### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Everything (support for marginalised groups) was done by social service providers, the Bulgarian Red Cross and other non-governmental organisations with the strong support of the local municipality. The sharing of best practices and resources should be between regions to be most effective. The municipality opened a phone line for psychological help at the beginning of the pandemic.

### **Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN**

#### **1st sub-subject: Work Policies**

##### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Implementing workplace flexibility and teleworking options.
- Offering educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence.
- Ensuring job protection for women taking leave to care for family members.
- Fostering an environment of gender equality in all sectors.
- Enhancing digital literacy and remote work skills among women to expand their employment opportunities.

##### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- The municipality and all professionals and organisations who fought against COVID-19 couldn't switch entirely to online mode. However, workplace flexibility and teleworking options were introduced to all public institutions in the country. The private companies had an opportunity to keep staff through target financial support from the state (especially for closed businesses due to the pandemic situation - restaurants, hotels, etc.). There were measures for the job protection of women and working mothers. Educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence are done by the government, educational institutions, NGOs and private companies but it is not related to COVID-19.

## **2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- CSO's should promote their work in society and cooperate with different organisations to address women's needs for work-life balance.
- Policies could ensure that CSOs are involved in decision-making on specific issues during pandemics to advance the agenda of vulnerable groups.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- According to Bulgarian legislation, CSOs have tools and mechanisms to be involved in decision-making through public consultative bodies, public consultations, petitions, etc. This is not related to COVID-19, as the legislation has been active for many years. The policy and strategy of a CSO to promote their work is an internal process and cannot be formulated as a recommendation.
- In the future, in order for mental health to be preserved, society must be prepared for future accidents and pandemics. Work on mental health should be serious work on preparing an adequate response - maybe some time ago society was much better prepared for disasters, accidents and catastrophes and it is good to pay more attention in this direction, because this will prepare us for future situations. Already on an individual level - before we didn't think about being sick (cough or runny nose)... but now we try to protect others (put on a mask). So there were positives that we took from the pandemic. And the growth of civil society to have the right view that we have a democracy that is about discipline and interacts with rights and responsibilities.
- Finally, after this crisis, institutions have learned a lesson about what needs to be improved, but even now there are many things that need to be improved - for example, investment in health care professionals, improved communication with institutions and investing funds to increase trust in institutions - this is something to note and walk through.

## **3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Governments should invest in mental health services.
- Providing different forms of governmental and organisational support to families to cope with the consequences of pandemic.
- Providing different governmental and organisational support for career development for women during the pandemic.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- During COVID-19, women's employability didn't change. Hence, there is no need for additional measures to cope with the consequences of the pandemic in terms of jobs and employability.

# **SWEDEN - NDF**

Table. Timetable of the WP 9 at 9.00 am (CET)

| SCHEDULE      | PROGRAM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 09:00 - 09:30 | Registration and Opening Ceremony by Nordic Diaspora Forum<br>Introduction of speaker and political representatives who will be part of the transnational panel discussion<br>Presentation of the HEARD Project: overview of the project's goals, activities, and outcomes + highlight from the 3 debate panels |
| 9:30 - 11:00  | Policy recommendations and discussion of debate findings divided in thematic areas<br>Q&A session<br>Evaluation of the event-fill in the EU survey and closing remarks.                                                                                                                                         |

## First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

### 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Partnership between government and trustworthy experts (of different sectors) must be achieved to formulate effective public health strategies with partnerships at local, national and international levels.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration for pandemic preparedness.
- Strengthening global response and resilience.
- Best practices in pandemic management should be noted and used as guidance for future governments. They can emphasise both the strategic thinking for long-term planning and policy-making.
- Independent bodies that monitor government decisions and identify any conflicts of interest, errors by both experts and government and evaluate management and strategies should be established. They should also strive for promotion and maintenance of democratic dialogue and human rights in society. Mentioned bodies could also act as risk assessment managers and identify risks for pandemics and measures on how the government can ensure democratic values in any risk.
- Ethical guidelines should be established to help ensure that decision-making during pandemics is guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for human rights in order to ensure human rights and privacy/data protection.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Participants emphasised the importance of relying on expertise from public health officials and scientists during crises such as COVID-19. They underscored the necessity for elected leaders to base their decisions on the best available evidence rather than political considerations. Transparency and accountability were highlighted as crucial elements to ensure that decisions are made in the public interest.
- However, concerns were raised about instances where government actions seemed to prioritise political motives over scientific advice. Participants stressed the need for

transparency and accountability to prevent decisions from benefiting a select few at the expense of the broader population.

- On the other hand, some participants expressed trust in their government's ability to manage the crisis effectively, citing access to top experts and resources. They urged the public to support government decisions during challenging times like the pandemic.
- Political representatives affirmed their commitment to following expert guidance in pandemic management. They highlighted the establishment of robust advisory committees composed of scientists and healthcare professionals to inform decision-making processes.
- Nevertheless, opposition leaders emphasised the importance of transparency and accountability in governmental actions. They pointed out missteps and lack of coordination in the pandemic response, advocating for better governance and oversight to address these issues.
- In conclusion, there was a consensus among participants and political representatives for a balanced approach that respects both expertise and democratic principles. Collaboration and communication between governments, experts, and the public were deemed essential for effective crisis management.

## **2nd sub-subject Electoral integrity**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- In order to promote both democratic engagement and public health security, we strongly support the use of a range of voting techniques, such as mail-in ballots and digital platforms in order to enable early and remote voting, guaranteeing that individuals who are unable to physically go to polling spaces, such as UK residents who use postal ballots, can still participate in the voting process. In order to facilitate these approaches, it is imperative to uphold transparent and user-focused websites that provide guidance to individuals during the voting procedure. These websites should address issues like the replacement of misplaced votes, thus fostering an electorate that is both inclusive and well-informed.
- Refining campaign strategies to ensure transparency of the electoral process through public disclosure of financial information on campaigns, public debates, accessible information, independent media coverage and the involvement of civil society.
- In addition, it should be ensured that the various vulnerable groups have access to all possible ways of voting and available information.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Concerned citizens stressed the foundational importance of electoral integrity in democracy. They emphasised the necessity of ensuring that every vote counts and that the electoral process remains free from manipulation or interference, as any threat to this undermines trust in the government and erodes democratic foundations.
- Voter advocates echoed these sentiments, emphasising the need for robust measures to safeguard electoral integrity. They called for actions to prevent voter suppression, ensure fair and transparent electoral processes, and combat misinformation and foreign interference. They emphasised that citizens must have confidence that their voices are heard and their votes are counted.
- A sceptical observer cautioned against potential misuse of electoral integrity as a pretext for limiting legitimate political participation or stifling dissent. They highlighted the importance of balancing the need for integrity with protecting the rights of voters and political actors to maintain a healthy democracy.

### From the political representatives' standpoint:

- A politician reiterated their commitment to upholding electoral integrity through measures such as voter identification requirements, election monitoring, and cybersecurity protocols. They emphasised the importance of conducting elections in a fair, transparent, and secure manner.
- The opposition leader emphasised electoral integrity as a top priority for democracy while expressing concerns about recent attempts to enact restrictive voting laws. They warned against measures that could disproportionately affect marginalised communities and restrict access to the ballot box, stressing that any enhancements to electoral integrity must not disenfranchise voters or undermine democratic principles.
- An independent representative advocated for a comprehensive approach to maintaining electoral integrity, addressing both internal and external threats to the electoral process. They emphasised the importance of strengthening cybersecurity measures, promoting voter education and participation, and ensuring transparency and accountability in electoral proceedings to uphold fairness and impartiality.
- In conclusion, the debate underscored the critical importance of electoral integrity in sustaining democracy, with calls for robust measures to safeguard the electoral process while also protecting the rights and participation of citizens.

### **3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management**

#### Presented political recommendations:

- We must strive to achieve media transparency and objectivity, which necessitates guaranteeing its independence from government and political influences. Enforcing impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists, along with verifying and disclosing sources, could bolster media credibility.
- To combat misinformation, it's essential to educate the public on identifying fake news, emphasising the importance of relying on credible sources. This can include implementing fact-checking measures to ensure news reliability and promoting education through school curricula or government-funded courses available to all citizens. Providing digital resources discerning fake news can further this educational effort.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- The discussion on media integrity and information management elicited diverse perspectives from both the public and political representatives, emphasising the critical role of media in democratic societies and the challenges posed by misinformation in the digital age.
- Public responses underscored the significance of media integrity for a well-functioning democracy. Informed citizens highlighted the reliance on media for accurate and unbiased information, essential for making informed decisions. Concerns were raised about the proliferation of misinformation, particularly on social media platforms, emphasising the need for media organisations to uphold journalistic standards and verify information before dissemination. Active consumers emphasised the responsibility of individuals to critically evaluate information and seek out reputable sources, emphasising the importance of media literacy education.
- Political representatives acknowledged the importance of media integrity in fostering an informed citizenry. The government official expressed support for measures promoting transparency and accountability in media organisations, including strengthening regulations for fair and ethical reporting practices. The opposition leader cautioned against

government censorship under the pretext of upholding integrity, stressing the need to preserve press freedom while combating misinformation through responsible journalism. The independent representative advocated for a collaborative approach involving media organisations, government, and civil society to address media integrity and information management challenges. This approach includes initiatives to enhance transparency, implement fact-checking mechanisms, and promote media literacy among the public.

- In conclusion, the debate highlighted the critical importance of media integrity in democratic societies and the necessity for collaborative efforts to address misinformation challenges. Both the public and political representatives emphasised the significance of upholding journalistic standards, promoting transparency, and fostering media literacy to safeguard information integrity in the digital age.

#### **4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement**

##### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Implement citizen engagement strategies (e.g. public consultations, virtual participation in parliamentary processes, participation in protests, digital activism, online petitions in advocating reforms) and public education campaigns to educate individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, on how to actively participate in democratic debates online,
- Implement anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability and to build the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption metrics and credibility building.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in medical supply chains

##### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- The transnational panel discussion brought together diverse perspectives on the importance of transparency and democratic engagement in fostering trust, accountability, and inclusive governance.
- Public responses underscored the fundamental role of transparency in building trust between governments and citizens. Engaged citizens emphasised that transparent decision-making processes empower individuals to participate in democracy and hold their leaders accountable. They stressed the necessity for readily accessible information and inclusive decision-making to facilitate democratic engagement.
- Concerned observers acknowledged the challenges in achieving transparency, particularly in complex political systems, cautioning against the superficial use of transparency as a buzzword. They advocated for meaningful reforms to increase accountability and public participation, emphasising the importance of active involvement and responsiveness from elected officials.
- Civic activists highlighted the importance of open dialogue between governments and civil society in fostering democratic engagement. They emphasised that transparency enables citizens to contribute meaningfully to policymaking processes and ensures diverse perspectives are considered. They called for governments to actively seek input from the public and demonstrate responsiveness to their concerns.

##### **From the political representatives' standpoint:**

- Government officials reaffirmed their commitment to transparency as a fundamental principle of democratic governance. They cited measures such as open data initiatives and public consultation processes implemented to enhance transparency. They emphasised that transparent decision-making fosters public trust and strengthens democratic legitimacy.
- Opposition leaders stressed the importance of transparency for holding governments accountable and preventing abuses of power. They advocated for mechanisms for public

oversight and inclusive decision-making processes, asserting that true transparency requires more than just disclosing information.

- An international representative highlighted transparency as a global issue, emphasising its importance in fostering trust between nations and facilitating transnational cooperation. They emphasised that transparency fosters collaboration on global challenges such as climate change, global health, and human rights, emphasising the need for accountability and inclusive decision-making processes at the international level.
- In summary, the panel discussion underscored the critical importance of transparency and democratic engagement in both domestic and international contexts. Participants emphasised the need for meaningful reforms to enhance transparency, promote public participation, and strengthen democracy.

## **Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **1st sub-subject: Limited movement**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Improve public access to healthcare, especially during epidemics, emphasising inclusivity and efficient delivery during crises.
- Create financial assistance programs for individuals who lose their jobs or face economic hardship due to pandemic-related measures.
- Policymakers should recognize and address the unique challenges women face, especially during crises. Implement strategies targeting women, particularly mothers, to sustain their employment.
- Countries need to form a protocol for limitation of movement, which should be grounded in scientific research.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

##### **Public Perspectives:**

- **Concern for Health and Safety:** Many members of the public prioritise collective well-being over individual freedoms during crises, supporting movement limitations to protect public health and prevent disease spread.
- **Frustration and Discontent:** Conversely, some individuals express frustration and concerns about personal freedom, livelihoods, and mental well-being due to prolonged or stringent movement restrictions.
- **Need for Clarity and Transparency:** Certain members demand clear communication and transparency from authorities regarding the reasons for restrictions, criteria for implementation, and expected duration to avoid confusion and mistrust.
- **Equity and Accessibility:** Discussions arise about the disproportionate impact of restrictions on specific groups, such as low-income individuals, essential workers, and marginalised communities lacking access to healthcare and resources.

##### **Political Representatives:**

- **Balancing Act:** Representatives navigate the delicate balance between public health concerns, individual liberties, and economic considerations, aiming to curb virus spread while minimising disruptions to daily life and economic activities.
- **Policy Effectiveness:** Some advocate for evidence-based policies like targeted lockdowns, travel restrictions, and mass testing/vaccination efforts, prioritising data-driven decision-making to justify movement restrictions.

- **Democratic Oversight:** Debates ensue regarding the extent of government authority to impose restrictions, emphasising the need for democratic oversight, accountability, and ensuring emergency measures are proportionate, necessary, and temporary.
- **Support and Assistance:** Representatives highlight the importance of providing support and assistance to individuals and businesses affected by restrictions, including financial aid, access to healthcare, and mental health services, emphasising solidarity and community resilience.

## **2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Engage communities in the decision-making process when formulating and implementing pandemic response measures.
- Prioritise inclusivity, ensuring voices from all segments of society are heard and considered.
- Strengthen international collaborations to uphold human rights, especially in countries with weaker health infrastructures.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- **Value of Civil Liberties:** Both the public and political representatives recognize the significance of upholding fundamental rights, including the freedom of peaceful assembly, even in times of crisis. They underscore that these rights are intrinsic to democratic societies and must be safeguarded.
- **Safety Concerns:** While acknowledging the importance of civil liberties, there is a shared concern among both groups regarding the potential health risks associated with large gatherings during a pandemic. They acknowledge the necessity of measures to limit assembly to prevent the spread of disease and protect public health.
- **Adaptation and Innovation:** There's a mutual recognition of the need for innovative approaches to exercise the right to peaceful assembly while adhering to public health guidelines. Suggestions include virtual protests, online organising, or smaller-scale gatherings with appropriate social distancing measures.
- **Government Accountability:** Both the public and political representatives stress the imperative of transparency and accountability in government decision-making regarding assembly restrictions. They call for clear communication about the rationale behind restrictions and meaningful opportunities for public input and oversight.
- **Public Health Imperative:** Political representatives emphasise the paramount importance of protecting public health during crises, including through measures to limit large gatherings and minimise the spread of infectious diseases. They highlight the necessity of balancing individual rights with collective responsibilities.
- **Balancing Rights and Responsibilities:** While acknowledging civil liberties, representatives underscore the need to balance these rights with public health concerns during emergencies. They argue that temporary restrictions on assembly may be necessary to safeguard public health and save lives.
- **Legal Framework:** Both groups discuss the legal framework governing the right to peaceful assembly during emergencies, emphasising international human rights standards and domestic laws. They highlight the principles of proportionality, necessity, and non-discrimination in implementing restrictions.
- **Dialogue and Engagement:** Political representatives stress the importance of engaging with civil society, including protest organisers, to find mutually acceptable solutions that protect

both public health and fundamental rights. They encourage dialogue and collaboration to address concerns and explore alternative forms of expression.

### **3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Ensure universal healthcare access, including treatments for all.
- Implement privacy-protected digital tracing and health verification tools.
- Limiting the stigmatisation of healthcare workers during the pandemic times.
- Maintain essential services like food, water, and electricity during lockdowns.
- Create fair vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all, including vulnerable groups, and maintain freedom of movement without discriminating against unvaccinated individuals.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

##### **Public Perspective:**

- Members of the public emphasised the detrimental impact of limited rights on marginalised communities. They underscored the importance of governments ensuring equal access to fundamental rights and freedoms for all individuals, regardless of race, religion, gender, or other factors. Personal experiences were shared, illustrating the profound effects of limited rights on dignity and respect.

##### **Political Representatives:**

- Political representatives acknowledged the necessity of balancing security concerns with individual liberties. While recognizing that limited rights may sometimes be justified in the interest of public safety or national security, they stressed the importance of ensuring that such limitations are proportionate, necessary, and subject to strict oversight. Commitment to upholding human rights principles was reiterated, with a call for open dialogue with civil society to inform policy decisions.

### **4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Establish ethical guidelines around resource allocation during health crises, ensuring fairness and equity.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and expertise among countries.
- Provide additional resources and protection to marginalised communities, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless, ensuring their human rights are upheld during pandemic responses.
- Importance of ensuring equal and fair access to psychological help to everybody in need.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

##### **Public Perspective:**

- Members of the public emphasised the hidden scars of human rights abuses, highlighting the long-lasting psychological effects such as trauma, anxiety, and depression. They underscored the importance of acknowledging and addressing the psychological well-being of survivors, as well as the broader community affected by systemic discrimination and violence. Personal testimonies illuminated the pervasive culture of fear and silence perpetuated by rights violations, emphasising the need for initiatives promoting resilience, empowerment, and healing.

##### **Political Representatives:**

- Political representatives acknowledged the responsibility of governments to not only respect and protect human rights but also to address the psychological impact of violations. They emphasised the importance of preventive measures, early intervention, and international cooperation in promoting mental health and well-being, particularly in conflict-affected regions. There was a consensus on the need for political will to prioritise mental health as an integral component of human rights policies, supported by adequate resources and a shift in societal attitudes.

#### Conclusion:

- The panel discussion underscored the interconnectedness of human rights and mental health, highlighting the urgent need for a holistic approach to addressing rights violations.
- It emphasised the role of both individual and collective action in promoting healing, resilience, and reconciliation. Moving forward, continued dialogue, advocacy, and political commitment will be essential in advancing the psychological dimension of human rights on the global agenda, ensuring that the dignity and well-being of all individuals are upheld and protected.

## **Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN**

### **1st sub-subject: Work Policies**

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Implementing workplace flexibility and teleworking options.
- Offering educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence.
- Ensuring job protection for women taking leave to care for family members.
- Fostering an environment of gender equality in all sectors.
- Enhancing digital literacy and remote work skills among women to expand their employment opportunities.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- "Sweden has made significant strides in gender equality, particularly in its progressive work policies. However, there remains a consensus among both the public and political representatives that more can be done to address persistent challenges faced by women in the workforce."
- "Generous parental leave, flexible working arrangements, and subsidised childcare are commendable policies that have supported many women in balancing work and family responsibilities. Yet, there's recognition of the need for ongoing evaluation and improvement to ensure accessibility and equity for all."
- "While Sweden has laid a strong foundation for gender equality, there's a shared commitment to challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes within the workforce. This involves not only supporting women but also encouraging men to take on caregiving responsibilities and fostering inclusive workplace cultures."
- "Addressing the gender gap in leadership positions and combating workplace discrimination are key priorities for both public and political representatives. Measures to promote women's representation in leadership roles and support their re-entry into the workforce after caregiving responsibilities are crucial for achieving true equality."
- "The Swedish government reaffirms its commitment to promoting gender equality in the workplace through legislative reforms, investment in childcare infrastructure, and

initiatives to foster work-life balance for all citizens. Additionally, international cooperation is seen as essential for sharing best practices and advocating for gender equality globally."

## **2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- CSO's should promote their work in society and cooperate with different organisations to address women's needs for work-life balance.
- Policies could ensure that CSOs are involved in decision-making on specific issues during pandemics to advance the agenda of vulnerable groups.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

#### **Public Perspective:**

- "Civil society organisations play a vital role in advocating for the rights and empowerment of women in Sweden. They provide essential support services, amplify marginalised voices, and hold governments and institutions accountable for gender equality."
- "As a member of a civil society organisation focused on women's issues, I've seen firsthand the impact of our work in driving positive change. From grassroots activism to policy advocacy, these organisations are instrumental in shaping a more inclusive and equitable society for women."
- "Civil society organisations provide a platform for women to come together, share experiences, and mobilise for collective action. They offer valuable resources, networks, and opportunities for skill-building and leadership development, empowering women to become agents of change in their communities."
- "It's essential for policymakers to recognize the expertise and contributions of civil society organisations in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by women. Collaboration between government agencies and civil society can lead to more effective policies and programs that respond to the diverse needs of women."

#### **Political Representatives:**

- "The Swedish government values the role of civil society organisations as partners in advancing gender equality and women's rights. We are committed to fostering an enabling environment for these organisations to thrive, including providing financial support, promoting dialogue, and consulting them in policy development."
- "Civil society organisations serve as important watchdogs, holding governments accountable for their commitments to gender equality. Their advocacy efforts complement government initiatives and provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of women across different sectors of society."
- "Sweden recognizes the importance of amplifying the voices of marginalised women and ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making processes. Civil society organisations play a crucial role in advocating for the rights of these women and elevating their concerns on the national and international agenda."
- "International cooperation is essential for strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations and promoting knowledge-sharing and best practices. Sweden is committed to supporting women's organisations globally and working collaboratively to advance gender equality and women's empowerment on the global stage."

## **3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Governments should invest in mental health services.

- Providing different forms of governmental and organisational support to families to cope with the consequences of pandemic.
- Providing different governmental and organisational support for career development for women during the pandemic.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- "Access to mental health support is deemed essential for women navigating the complexities of work and life in Sweden. Many face unique stressors and challenges, emphasising the necessity of culturally sensitive and gender-responsive services for their holistic well-being."
- "As a woman managing various roles and responsibilities, I've experienced firsthand the toll it can take on mental health. Having access to support networks, counselling services, and resources for managing stress and anxiety has been pivotal in maintaining my overall well-being."
- "Both the public and political representatives acknowledge the intersectionality of gender and mental health, particularly among marginalised communities. There's an increasing recognition that mental health services must be inclusive and accessible to all women, irrespective of their background or circumstances."
- "Empowering women to prioritise their mental health is underscored not only for individual well-being but also for promoting gender equality and social justice. Investments in mental health support are crucial for fostering a society where all women can thrive and realise their potential."
- "The Swedish government reaffirms its commitment to promoting mental health and well-being as integral components of our social welfare system. Efforts are underway to strengthen mental health support for women, including increased funding for community-based services, expansion of telehealth options, and training programs for healthcare professionals on gender-sensitive care."
- "Legislative reforms and policy initiatives are being pursued to bolster mental health support for women in Sweden, encompassing increased funding for community-based services, expansion of telehealth options, and training programs for healthcare professionals on gender-sensitive care."

## SPAIN - MISLATA

### **Report for panel discussion transnational with representatives politicians (WP 9) in the HEARD project ( carried out in Spain by the Mislata City Council )**

On April 30, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., a transnational round table was held with political representatives of Mislata at the La Fábrica sociocultural centre. Four political representatives attended the event:

- María Luisa Martínez Mora, Vice Mayor, Spokesperson and Deputy Mayor. Area of the Presidency, Interior, Treasury and Citizen Services. Mislata Town Hall .
- Department of the Presidency and Institutional Relations. Communication and Transparency. Tax authorities. Equality Policies. Citizen Participation and Proximity.
- Joaquín Moreno Porcal, Third Deputy Mayor. Area of Social Welfare, Municipal Services and Resource Management. Mislata Town Hall .
- Department of Human Resources. Citizen security. Hiring and Subsidies. Failures. Technology, Innovation and European Projects.

- Mercedes Caballero Carrasco, Fifth Deputy Mayor. Sustainable Territory, Housing and Climate Action Area. Mislata Town Hall .
- Department of Urban Planning and Urban Discipline. Public Works. Accessibility. Living place. Large Projects and Infrastructures.
- Alejandro Gómez Vendrell. Department of Social Welfare. Environment and Climate Action. Public company. Parks and gardens. Mislata Town Hall .

In Table 1 below, we can see the schedules for WP 9.

| SCHEDULE      | PROGRAM                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12:30 – 12:35 | Welcome to WP9 of the HEARD project .                                                                                                                                 |
| 12:35 – 12:45 | Presentation of the Project, of the project and representation partners politics that participates in the debate.                                                     |
| 12:45 – 13:30 | Presentation of recommendations policies indicated previously .<br>recommendations policies contributed from the field of democratic debate for future epidemics .    |
| 13:30 – 14:00 | Presentation of recommendations policies indicated previously<br>recommendations policies in the field of rights humans . rights for future situations epidemic       |
| 14:00 – 14:30 | Presentation of recommendations policies indicated previously<br>recommendations policies in the area of balance , life roles of women in future epidemics situations |

Following each of the discussion blocks and within each of the subsections , the wording of the conclusions drawn from the debates carried out are presented.

## First key thematic: Democratic Debate

### **1<sup>st</sup> sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management**

#### Policy recommendations presented:

- A partnership between the government and trusted experts (from different sectors) must be achieved to formulate effective public health strategies with partnerships at local, national and international levels.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration for pandemic preparedness.
- Strengthen global response and resilience.
- Best practices in pandemic management should be noted and used as guidance for future governments. They can emphasise both strategic thinking for long-term planning and policy formulation.

- Independent bodies should be established to monitor government decisions and identify any conflicts of interest, errors of both experts and the government and evaluate management and strategies. They should also strive to promote and maintain democratic dialogue and human rights in society. The aforementioned bodies could also act as risk assessment managers and identify pandemic risks and measures on how the government can guarantee democratic values in any risk.
- Ethical guidelines should be established to help ensure that decision-making during pandemics is guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for human rights to ensure human rights and privacy/data protection.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Strengthening collaboration between the government and the associative fabric during the management of a pandemic situation allows for joining efforts, improving the identification of the needs of citizens in general and the most vulnerable situations, and improving the scope of management decisions and proposals. .
- Identify the existing differences in the management carried out during the pandemic by the different governments, in relation to the use of human, material, technological and economic resources, and provision of services, analyse and evaluate their suitability or not and establish a resource map and services that integrate the most valuable and successful recommendations that serve as a reference in the future.
- Expedited the reorganisation of the government team in a pandemic situation, in relation to the areas of intervention, functions and responsibilities of its members, taking as a reference the experience lived in the pandemic crisis. In this way, we can anticipate an intervention and action protocol in a pandemic situation, and its monitoring and evaluation to improve management.
- Manage from the government the solidarity and volunteerism of citizens and commercial establishments, in times of crisis to respond to needs not initially covered, such as the preparation and development of PPE for health personnel.

## **2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity**

#### Policy recommendations presented:

- To promote both democratic engagement and public health safety, we strongly support the use of a variety of voting techniques, such as mail-in ballots and digital platforms, to enable early and remote voting, ensuring that people who cannot physically go to the polls, such as UK residents who use postal voting, can still participate in the voting process. To facilitate these approaches, it is imperative to maintain transparent and user-centric websites that provide guidance to people during the voting procedure. These websites should address issues such as replacing lost votes, thus fostering an inclusive and well-informed electorate.
- Refine campaign strategies to ensure transparency of the electoral process through public disclosure of campaign financial information, public debates, accessible information, independent media coverage and civil society participation.
- Furthermore, it must be ensured that the various vulnerable groups have access to all possible ways of voting and to the information available.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Use of digital identification that is used in dealings with the public administration through electronic means for identity verification and its use in electronic voting.
- Establish differentiated methods for casting votes for those people who lack this electronic identification or the electronic means necessary for its use in times of pandemic.
- Create an elective strategy that guarantees electoral integrity in times of pandemic supported by a multidisciplinary team of experts that integrates the IT and political aspects.

### **3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management.**

#### **Policy recommendations presented:**

- We must strive to achieve media transparency and objectivity, which requires ensuring its independence from government and political influences. Enforcing impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists, along with verifying and disclosing sources, could bolster media credibility.
- To combat misinformation, it is essential to educate the public on how to identify fake news, emphasising the importance of trusting credible sources. This may include implementing fact-checking measures to ensure the reliability of news and promoting education through school curricula or government-funded courses available to all citizens. Providing digital resources to detect fake news can promote this educational effort.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Highlight the importance of adapting the official information on the state government's restrictions related to the pandemic for citizens in a didactic manner, summarising the most relevant aspects to facilitate its understanding for all citizens and using different communication channels to make it accessible to all the entire population.
- Create an on-call telephone support system during the pandemic and also a dissemination channel through mobile messaging apps to make it possible to consult any questions.
- Emphasise the need to promote inter-administrative collaboration with the administration responsible for public health to improve the management of information intended for citizens.

### **4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic commitment**

#### **Policy recommendations presented:**

- Implement citizen participation strategies (e.g. public consultations, virtual participation in parliamentary processes, participation in protests, digital activism, online petitions to advocate for reforms) and public education campaigns to educate people, particularly vulnerable groups, about how to actively participate in democratic debates online.
- Implement anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability and build the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption metrics and credibility building.
- Improve transparency and accountability in medical supply chains.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Guarantee in citizen participation processes a balanced presence of women, children and adolescents, people at risk of social exclusion, diversity of sexual orientation and identity, older people, people with functional diversity, migrants and other groups.
- Facilitate different means and resources made available to citizens to participate and ensure the elimination of barriers that hinder their participation.

- Redefine the public budget in a pandemic situation, allocating budgetary applications to meet new emerging needs, such as increasing cleaning and disinfection tasks, offering financial aid to cover basic needs to have a decent life for the most vulnerable people, offering material resources as technological devices intended for children and adolescents to continue their education.

## **Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **1st sub-subject: Limited movement**

#### Policy recommendations presented:

- Improve public access to healthcare, especially during epidemics, emphasising inclusion and efficient delivery during crises.
- Create financial assistance programs for people who lose their jobs or face economic hardship due to pandemic-related measures.
- Policymakers must recognize and address the unique challenges women face, especially during crises. Implement strategies aimed at women, particularly mothers, to sustain their employment.
- Countries must develop a protocol to limit movement, which must be based on scientific research.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Influence the intensity of measures restricting movement, such as: establishment of schedules, reorganisation of the direction of circulation, conversion of road traffic routes into pedestrians at certain times, closure of playgrounds, all of this with more impact on spaces with high demographic density.
- Reconvert and adapt public facilities for health uses that favour proximity of access to the health service, for example, in the case of the massive administration of vaccines at a regional level.

### **2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly**

#### Policy recommendations presented:

- Involve communities in the decision-making process when formulating and implementing pandemic response measures.
- Prioritise inclusion, ensuring that the voices of all segments of society are heard and taken into account.
- Strengthen international collaborations to defend human rights, especially in countries with weaker health infrastructures.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- During a pandemic crisis situation, form interdisciplinary research teams that integrate both physical and mental health, that take into consideration health conditions and establish appropriate measures to avoid having to limit peaceful gatherings and guarantee freedom of assembly as a right. fundamental.

### **3rd sub-subject: Limited rights**

#### **Policy recommendations presented:**

- Ensure universal access to healthcare, including treatments for all.
- Implement privacy-protected health verification and digital tracking tools.
- Limit the stigmatisation of health workers during the pandemic.
- Maintain essential services such as food, water and electricity during closures.
- Create fair vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all, including vulnerable groups, and maintain freedom of movement without discriminating against unvaccinated people.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Carry out citizen participation processes to find out the population's opinion on the limitation of rights to transform these decision-making processes into participatory ones.
- Enable the technological tools necessary to introduce consultations through new information and communication technologies, making these means accessible to the entire population.

### **4th sub-subject: Psychological dimension**

#### **Policy recommendations presented:**

- Establish ethical guidelines around the allocation of resources during health crises, guaranteeing justice and equity.
- Facilitate the exchange of best practices, resources and experience between countries.
- Provide additional resources and protection to marginalised communities, including refugees, migrants and the homeless, ensuring their human rights are respected during responses to the pandemic.
- Importance of guaranteeing equal and fair access to psychological help for all people who need it.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Expand within the framework of public health the services, economic, human and material resources intended for the psychological care of the population.
- Prepare awareness campaigns for citizens with guidelines for psychological management in a pandemic with recommendations to achieve psychological well-being.
- Increase specialised resources in crisis situations for the psychological care of women victims of gender violence.
- Establish mechanisms for attention and monitoring of cases of gender violence during the pandemic, both in situations in which there is no coexistence and in those where there is.

## **Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN**

### **1st sub-subject: Work Policies**

#### **Policy recommendations presented:**

- Implement work flexibility and teleworking options.

- Offering educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence.
- Guarantee labour protection for women who take leave to care for family members.
- Foster an environment of gender equality in all sectors.
- Improve digital literacy and remote work skills among women to expand their employment opportunities.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Seriously involve the male population in domestic responsibilities and caring for dependent people.
- Promote measures to reconcile personal, work and family life from public and private initiatives.
- Public powers must articulate conciliation and co-responsibility projects to ensure that the commitment of men and women in this matter is equitable.
- Enable Wi-Fi zones in cities to meet the needs of people who do not have particular access to these means.
- Unify the criteria for presenting information in the electronic headquarters of public administrations, to eliminate the existing barriers for the population when it comes to being autonomous in dealings with the different administrations, since on many occasions they use particular and very specific virtual environments. differentiated from the rest of the public administrations, a fact that makes negotiations with the public administration considerably difficult for natural and legal persons.

### **2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organizations (CSO)**

#### Policy recommendations presented:

- CSOs should promote their work in society and cooperate with different organisations to address women's work-life balance needs.
- Policies could ensure that CSOs are involved in decision-making on specific issues during pandemics to advance the agenda of vulnerable groups.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- That the public administration collaborates closely with CSOs, collaborating in detecting the needs of the population and promoting the provision of services intended for citizens.
- Facilitate entities in the provision of physical and virtual public spaces to address the conciliation and co-responsibility needs of women and men.

### **3rd sub-subject: Mental health support**

#### Policy recommendations presented:

- Governments should invest in mental health services.
- Provide different forms of government and organisational support to families to cope with the consequences of the pandemic.
- Provide different government and organisational supports for the professional development of women during the pandemic.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Expand within the framework of public health the services, economic, human and material resources intended for the mental health of the population and pay special attention in crisis situations to people with mental health illnesses.
- That entities specialised in the care of mental health illnesses can participate in decision-making processes in crisis situations.

## CYPRUS - CARDET

Transnational panel discussion with political representatives in Cyprus was conducted on the 15th of May 2024 from 18.30 – 21.30 on Garrison bar and grill (Porfyriou Dikaioy 16, Egkomi, 2414). We hosted four candidates for the European parliament 2024, Christiana Ksenofontos under the political party DYSI, Andros Karagiannis under the political party AKEL, Dr. Leontios Kostrikis under the political party DHKO and Vivian Kanari under the political party of EDEK. The moderator of the event was Iakovos Iakovou- journalist of Alpha channel in Cyprus.

In the Table 1 below, we can see the timetables of the WP 9.

The event started the presentation of the project and project partners and presentation of European parliament candidates as participants at the discussion. We then presented and started a discussion regarding already prepared political recommendations from the field of democracy, human rights, and balancing life roles of women for future epidemic situations. We continue the event with a discussion and Q&A. Above is the official design of the event in social media.

Table. Timetable of the WP 9 at 18.00 pm (CET)

| TIME          | TOPIC                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 18:30 - 18:45 | Registrations to the event                                                                                                                  |
| 18:45 - 19:00 | Presentation of the project and project partners and presentation of European elections candidates as participants at the discussion        |
| 19:15 - 19:30 | Presentation of projects already implemented and planned activities                                                                         |
| 19:30 - 19:45 | Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations from the field of democracy for future epidemic situations         |
| 19:45 - 20:00 | Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations in the field of human rights rights for future epidemic situations |

|               |                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 20:00 - 20:15 | Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations in the field of balancing life roles of women in future epidemics situations |
| 20:15 - 21:15 | Discussion                                                                                                                                            |
| 21:15 - 21:30 | Q&A                                                                                                                                                   |

According to mentioned research findings, we formulated 3 key thematic and sub-subjects as stated below:

## First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

### 1st sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management

#### Identified political recommendations were:

- Partnership between government and trustworthy experts (of different sectors) must be achieved to formulate effective public health strategies with partnerships at local, national, and international levels.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration for pandemic preparedness.
- Strengthening global response and resilience.
- Best practices in pandemic management should be noted and used as guidance for future governments. They can emphasise both the strategic thinking for long-term planning and policymaking.
- Independent bodies that monitor government decisions and identify any conflicts of interest, errors by both experts and government and evaluate management and strategies should be established. They should also strive for promotion and maintenance of democratic dialogue and human rights in society. Mentioned bodies could also act as risk assessment managers and identify risks for pandemics and measures on how the government can ensure democratic values in any risk.
- Ethical guidelines should be established to help ensure that decision-making during pandemics is guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for human rights in order to ensure human rights and privacy/data protection.

#### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- The candidates agreed that policy recommendations are necessary in a future pandemic situation.
- Some of the recommendations were to ensure best practices and then adapt them to the Cyprus context. Candidates discussed the importance of finding these best practices from around the world and then adapting them to the Cyprus reality. One of the candidates was on the Cyprus government's expert panel and highlighted the difficulty during the first

lockdown to ensure that the government was taking a line that would help citizens rather than following examples from other countries. For example, the UK was not in a lockdown and the Cyprus government found it difficult to make the decision based only on the opinion of the experts which was a necessity because other countries did not. Also, the importance of experts in this particular case helped the country and saved the lives of many people.

## **2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- In order to promote both democratic engagement and public health security, we strongly support the use of a range of voting techniques, such as mail-in ballots and digital platforms in order to enable early and remote voting, guaranteeing that individuals who are unable to physically go to polling spaces, such as UK residents who use postal ballots, can still participate in the voting process. In order to facilitate these approaches, it is imperative to uphold transparent and user-focused websites that provide guidance to individuals during the voting procedure. These websites should address issues like the replacement of misplaced votes, thus fostering an electorate that is both inclusive and well-informed.
- Refining campaign strategies to ensure transparency of the electoral process through public disclosure of financial information on campaigns, public debates, accessible information, independent media coverage and the involvement of civil society.
- In addition, it should be ensured that the various vulnerable groups have access to all possible ways of voting and available information.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

- Participants and politicians agreed with the policy recommendations made and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation. The candidates expressed the belief that elections should be held during pandemics or crises and we need to ensure that every person can vote. For example, voting by mail or online.
- The candidates also believed that ensuring transparency during elections is essential, especially with regard to the election process and the candidates' agenda.
- In addition, candidates discussed campaigning during elections and the importance of explaining to people what/why they should vote.
- One suggestion was also to directly register everyone aged 18 and over to vote. As a result, every citizen would have the right to vote and would not have to register to do so.

## **3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- We must strive to achieve media transparency and objectivity, which necessitates guaranteeing its independence from government and political influences. Enforcing impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists, along with verifying and disclosing sources, could bolster media credibility.
- To combat misinformation, it's essential to educate the public on identifying fake news, emphasising the importance of relying on credible sources. This can include implementing fact-checking measures to ensure news reliability and promoting education through school

curricula or government-funded courses available to all citizens. Providing digital resources on discerning fake news can further this educational effort.

#### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- Participants and politicians agreed with the policy recommendations made and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- Candidates at the event noted that independence and transparency are important and must be achieved during the crisis to ensure that journalists are not pressured by financial or political incentives. In addition, transparency will ensure that the public is informed about who pays for what, who benefits, etc.
- In addition, the candidates discussed education on misinformation for both citizens and journalists. The creation of an ethical guide on how to use artificial intelligence and how to identify the misinformation on the internet created by it. AI should also be institutionalised.
- In addition, journalists should ensure that everything they present is true and have resources to prove it and for citizens to be able to check the sources. As a result, resources become an essential part of proper reporting.

### **4th sub-subject: Transparency and democratic engagement**

#### Identified political recommendations were:

- Implement citizen engagement strategies (e.g. public consultations, virtual participation in parliamentary processes, participation in protests, digital activism, online petitions in advocating reforms) and public education campaigns to educate individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, on how to actively participate in democratic debates online,
- Implement anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability and to build the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption metrics and credibility building.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in medical supply chains.

#### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- Participants and politicians agreed with the policy recommendations made and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in future pandemic situations.
- Candidates stressed the need for transparency in decision making, communication and to achieve this citizen participation is essential, but also measures on corruption to be ensured by independent teams.

## **Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS DEBATE**

### **1st sub-subject: Limited movement**

#### Identified political recommendations were:

- Improve public access to healthcare, especially during epidemics, emphasising inclusivity and efficient delivery during crises.
- Create financial assistance programs for individuals who lose their jobs or face economic hardship due to pandemic-related measures.

- Policymakers should recognize and address the unique challenges women face, especially during crises. Implement strategies targeting women, particularly mothers, to sustain their employment.
- Countries need to form a protocol for limitation of movement, which should be grounded in scientific research.

#### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- The candidates agreed that restricting freedom of movement during the pandemic phase was and is necessary, but at the same time the government must ensure that people do not lose their jobs or face challenges at home and ensure this with policies and the support of the European Parliament.

### **2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly**

#### Identified political recommendations were:

- Engage communities in the decision-making process when formulating and implementing pandemic response measures.
- Prioritise inclusivity, ensuring voices from all segments of society are heard and considered.
- Strengthen international collaborations to uphold human rights, especially in countries with weaker health infrastructures.

#### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- Participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- Participants noted that freedom of peaceful assembly is a right of citizens and must be guaranteed. Also, citizens should have the right to be heard and digital activism can be another option for how people can protest.

### **3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights**

#### Identified political recommendations were:

- Ensure universal healthcare access, including treatments for all.
- Implement privacy-protected digital tracing and health verification tools.
- Limiting the stigmatisation of healthcare workers during the pandemic times.
- Maintain essential services like food, water, and electricity during lockdowns.
- Create fair vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all, including vulnerable groups, and maintain freedom of movement without discriminating against unvaccinated individuals.

#### Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.

- The politicians pointed out that it is crucial to guarantee access to healthcare for all and respect for human rights. Additionally, the vaccine policies should not be discriminating against people.

#### **4th sub-subject: Psychological Dimension**

##### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Establish ethical guidelines around resource allocation during health crises, ensuring fairness and equity.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and expertise among countries.
- Provide additional resources and protection to marginalised communities, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless, ensuring their human rights are upheld during pandemic responses.
- Importance of ensuring equal and fair access to psychological help to everybody in need.

##### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- Candidates discuss the challenges of mental health and stigma during the pandemic and then mental health issues. The importance of ensuring people are treated and educating people to be able to seek support at critical times.

### **Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN**

#### **1st sub-subject: Work Policies**

##### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Implementing workplace flexibility and teleworking options.
- Offering educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence.
- Ensuring job protection for women taking leave to care for family members.
- Fostering an environment of gender equality in all sectors.
- Enhancing digital literacy and remote work skills among women to expand their employment opportunities.

##### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- Politicians highlighted the need to support all people in the workplace and the importance of ensuring that vulnerable members of society are protected. In addition, gender should be taken into account and women should be able to combine their career and working life not only during the crisis but also in general.

## **2nd sub-subject: Civil Society Organisations (CSO)**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- CSO's should promote their work in society and cooperate with different organisations to address women's needs for work-life balance.
- Policies could ensure that CSOs are involved in decision-making on specific issues during pandemics to advance the agenda of vulnerable groups.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

- The participants and politicians agreed with stated political recommendations and agreed that these are the topics which urgently need to be addressed in future pandemic situations.
- Politicians emphasised that CSOs play a vital role in society and must be respected and supported in order to ensure human rights in general.

## **3rd sub-subject: Mental Health Support**

### **Identified political recommendations were:**

- Governments should invest in mental health services.
- Providing different forms of governmental and organisational support to families to cope with the consequences of pandemic.
- Providing different governmental and organisational support for career development for women during the pandemic.

### **Opinion regarding mentioned recommendations from the participants' and politicians' side was:**

- The participants and politicians agreed with the above political recommendations and stated that they agree these are the issues that need to be urgently addressed in a future pandemic situation.
- Politicians pointed out that mental health support should be ensured and that governments should normalise the need for support in workplaces, schools, etc.

# **PORTUGAL - FAJUB**

The Transnational panel discussion with political representatives organised by FAJUB took place on April 12th, 2024 starting from 17:00 to 19:00 in the Auditorium of the Braga Youth Center. The transnational Panel discussion counted on 10 political representatives from local, regional and national level, as well as 4 participants from a country that is not part of the consortium (Romania). The panel started with the presentation of the project HEARD ad to its activities and results achieved until now, more specifically the political recommendation for each of the three pillars tackled by the project: democratic debate, human rights and work and life of women.

All of the political recommendations were presented and then debated with the politicians and the rest of the participants. The scientific monograph was also printed and shared with the participants to have as a base for the discussion and also for the participants to study it later with more time.

The Transnational panel was a success in terms of raising awareness of the political recommendations and reaching politicians and decision makers at different levels, but also in terms of engaging the other participants, part of the civil society in a discussion about the political recommendations.

Table. Timetable of the WP 9 at 17.00 pm (CET)

| TIME          | TOPIC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 17:00 – 19:00 | <p>Presentation of the project and project partners and presentation of political representatives as participants at the discussion.</p> <p>Presentation of projects already implemented and planned activities.</p> <p>Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations from the field of democracy for future epidemic situations.</p> <p>Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations in the field of human rights rights for future epidemic situations.</p> <p>Presentation and discussion regarding prepared political recommendations in the field of balancing life roles of women in future epidemics situations.</p> |

## First key thematic: DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

### 1<sup>st</sup> sub-subject: Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Partnership between government and trustworthy experts (of different sectors) must be achieved to formulate effective public health strategies with partnerships at local, national and international levels.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration for pandemic preparedness.
- Strengthening global response and resilience.
- Best practices in pandemic management should be noted and used as guidance for future governments. They can emphasise both the strategic thinking for long-term planning and policy-making.
- Independent bodies that monitor government decisions and identify any conflicts of interest, errors by both experts and government and evaluate management and strategies should be established. They should also strive for promotion and maintenance of democratic dialogue and human rights in society. Mentioned bodies could also act as risk assessment managers and identify risks for pandemics and measures on how the government can ensure democratic values in any risk.

- Ethical guidelines should be established to help ensure that decision-making during pandemics is guided by the principles of justice, equality and respect for human rights in order to ensure human rights and privacy/data protection.

### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Many panellists and audience members agreed that a collaborative approach between government officials and experts from various sectors was crucial for effective pandemic management. However, there were concerns raised about ensuring the independence and trustworthiness of these experts, as well as the transparency of their advice to the government.
- There was widespread support for the idea of interdisciplinary collaboration in pandemic preparedness. Participants emphasised the importance of bringing together experts from different fields such as healthcare, economics, sociology, and psychology to develop comprehensive strategies that address the multifaceted impacts of a pandemic.
- Political representatives recognized the need for stronger international cooperation and coordination in response to pandemics. Many highlighted the importance of sharing best practices, resources, and information across borders to enhance global resilience against future health crises.
- There was agreement among participants that governments should learn from the successes and failures of past pandemic responses. Emphasising the importance of evidence-based policymaking, several panellists suggested establishing mechanisms to document and disseminate best practices for future reference.
- There was strong support for the establishment of independent bodies tasked with monitoring government decisions and evaluating pandemic management strategies. Participants stressed the importance of these bodies in safeguarding democratic principles, promoting transparency, and holding governments accountable for their actions during health crises. Many panellists emphasised the need for clear ethical guidelines to guide decision-making during pandemics.
- They stressed the importance of upholding principles of justice, equality, and respect for human rights, particularly in areas such as privacy and data protection. However, there were differing opinions on how these guidelines should be formulated and enforced.
- The responses from both the public and political representatives underscored the importance of collaborative, evidence-based approaches to pandemic management that prioritise democratic values and human rights.

## **2nd sub-subject: Electoral integrity**

### Presented political recommendations:

- In order to promote both democratic engagement and public health security, we strongly support the use of a range of voting techniques, such as mail-in ballots and digital platforms in order to enable early and remote voting, guaranteeing that individuals who are unable to physically go to polling spaces, such as UK residents who use postal ballots, can still participate in the voting process. In order to facilitate these approaches, it is imperative to uphold transparent and user-focused websites that provide guidance to individuals during the voting procedure. These websites should address issues like the replacement of misplaced votes, thus fostering an electorate that is both inclusive and well-informed.
- Refining campaign strategies to ensure transparency of the electoral process through public disclosure of financial information on campaigns, public debates, accessible

information, independent media coverage and the involvement of civil society. In addition, it should be ensured that the various vulnerable groups have access to all possible ways of voting and available information.

### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Participants emphasised the importance of embracing a variety of voting methods to accommodate the diverse needs and circumstances of voters, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mail-in ballots and digital platforms were highlighted as effective means to enable early and remote voting, allowing individuals who may be unable to physically go to polling places to participate in the electoral process.
- Accessibility was a key focus, with discussions centering on ensuring that voters with disabilities, elderly individuals, those with health concerns, and residents in remote or rural areas have equal opportunities to cast their votes. This includes providing clear instructions and support for using alternative voting methods, as well as addressing any technological barriers that may exist.
- Transparency and security were also highlighted as critical considerations when implementing diverse voting techniques. Participants stressed the importance of robust verification processes and safeguards to protect against fraud or manipulation, while maintaining the confidentiality and integrity of the voting process.
- Participants emphasised the need for greater transparency in campaign finance to prevent undue influence and ensure a level playing field for all candidates. Public disclosure of financial information on campaigns was seen as essential for fostering trust and accountability in the electoral process.
- Public debates were highlighted as an important forum for candidates to articulate their platforms, engage with voters, and demonstrate their readiness for public office. Ensuring accessibility to these debates, both in terms of participation and viewership, was deemed crucial for informing voters and promoting informed decision-making.
- Independent media coverage was identified as a critical safeguard against misinformation and propaganda. Participants stressed the importance of supporting a free and pluralistic media landscape that provides impartial coverage of electoral campaigns and facilitates meaningful public discourse.
- The involvement of civil society was seen as integral to ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the electoral process. NGOs, advocacy groups, and grassroots organisations play a vital role in monitoring elections, promoting voter education, and advocating for electoral reforms that uphold democratic principles.
- Participants highlighted the importance of addressing barriers to participation faced by vulnerable and marginalised groups, including minorities, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency. Providing accessible information and resources in multiple languages and formats was identified as a key strategy for reaching diverse communities and ensuring that all voters have the information they need to participate effectively.
- Outreach efforts targeted at vulnerable populations, such as community-based voter registration drives, voter education workshops, and partnerships with local organisations, were seen as essential for increasing electoral participation and representation.
- Ensuring that polling places are physically accessible and equipped with accommodations for voters with disabilities was identified as a priority for promoting inclusivity and removing barriers to voting for all citizens.

- Overall, the discussions highlighted the importance of adopting inclusive, transparent, and accessible practices to safeguard electoral integrity and promote democratic participation for all citizens.

### **3rd sub-subject: Media integrity and information management**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- We must strive to achieve media transparency and objectivity, which necessitates guaranteeing its independence from government and political influences. Enforcing impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists, along with verifying and disclosing sources, could bolster media credibility.
- To combat misinformation, it's essential to educate the public on identifying fake news, emphasising the importance of relying on credible sources. This can include implementing fact-checking measures to ensure news reliability and promoting education through school curricula or government-funded courses available to all citizens. Providing digital resources on discerning fake news can further this educational effort.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Many participants voiced strong support for efforts to safeguard media independence and objectivity, emphasising the importance of ensuring that media outlets remain free from government and political influences. There was consensus on the need to enforce impartiality and transparency guidelines for journalists to uphold media credibility and public trust.
- Concerns were raised about the growing trend of media consolidation and the concentration of ownership in the hands of a few powerful corporations or individuals. Participants stressed the importance of diversifying media ownership and promoting plurality in the media landscape to prevent undue influence and bias.
- Participants underscored the importance of educating the public on identifying and combating misinformation, particularly in an era of rampant disinformation and fake news. There was widespread agreement on the need to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills to empower individuals to distinguish between credible and unreliable sources of information.
- Suggestions were made to integrate media literacy education into school curricula and to offer government-funded courses or workshops on digital literacy and fact-checking for citizens of all ages. Participants emphasised the importance of providing accessible digital resources and educational materials to reach a wide audience.
- There was strong support for implementing fact-checking measures to ensure the reliability of news sources and combat the spread of misinformation. Participants highlighted the role of independent fact-checkers and news organisations in verifying the accuracy of information and holding media outlets accountable for their reporting.
- Some participants expressed concern about the spread of misinformation on social media platforms and the challenges of regulating online content. Strategies to address this included promoting transparency and accountability among social media companies, as well as empowering users to report false or misleading content. Additionally, there was discussion about the importance of promoting transparency in media reporting by verifying and disclosing sources, particularly in sensitive or controversial topics. Participants stressed the need for journalists to adhere to ethical standards and best practices to maintain public trust and credibility.

## **4th sub-subject Transparency and democratic engagement**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Implement citizen engagement strategies (e.g. public consultations, virtual participation in parliamentary processes, participation in protests, digital activism, online petitions in advocating reforms) and public education campaigns to educate individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, on how to actively participate in democratic debates online,
- Implement anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability and to build the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption metrics and credibility building.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in medical supply chains

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Many participants expressed support for citizen engagement strategies as a means to foster democratic participation and accountability. Public consultations, virtual participation in parliamentary processes, and online activism were seen as effective ways to amplify diverse voices and promote inclusive decision-making. There was recognition of the importance of public education campaigns to empower individuals, especially vulnerable groups, to participate meaningfully in democratic debates online. Participants emphasised the need for accessible resources and training programs to equip citizens with the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in digital activism and advocacy.
- There was widespread agreement on the need to implement robust anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability in government institutions. Participants stressed the importance of building the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption measures and fostering a culture of integrity and ethical conduct.
- Suggestions were made to establish clear guidelines and procedures for reporting and investigating instances of corruption, as well as mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of anti-corruption initiatives. Participants emphasised the importance of public trust in government institutions and the role of transparency in building credibility and legitimacy.
- Participants highlighted the critical importance of transparency and accountability in medical supply chains, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. There was widespread concern about issues such as price gouging, supply shortages, and distribution inequalities. Suggestions were made to implement measures to enhance transparency throughout the supply chain, including disclosing information on procurement processes, pricing, and distribution channels. Participants emphasised the need for greater oversight and regulation to ensure that medical supplies are allocated equitably and efficiently to those in need.
- There was also discussion about the role of international cooperation and collaboration in addressing global health challenges and promoting transparency in medical supply chains. Participants emphasised the importance of sharing best practices, data, and resources to strengthen pandemic preparedness and response efforts.
- The responses generally highlighted the importance of transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement in promoting democratic values and addressing key societal challenges such as corruption and public health crises. Participants called for concrete action to strengthen democratic institutions, empower citizens, and build trust in government through open and inclusive governance processes.

## Second key thematic: HUMAN RIGHTS

### 1st sub-subject: Limited movement

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Improve public access to healthcare, especially during epidemics, emphasising inclusivity and efficient delivery during crises.
- Create financial assistance programs for individuals who lose their jobs or face economic hardship due to pandemic-related measures.
- Policymakers should recognize and address the unique challenges women face, especially during crises. Implement strategies targeting women, particularly mothers, to sustain their employment.
- Countries need to form a protocol for limitation of movement, which should be grounded in scientific research.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Many participants expressed strong support for improving public access to healthcare, particularly during epidemics or other health crises. There was consensus on the need for inclusive and efficient delivery of healthcare services to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic status or geographic location, have access to essential medical care. Suggestions were made to expand healthcare coverage, invest in healthcare infrastructure, and strengthen primary care systems to better respond to the needs of the population during emergencies. Participants emphasised the importance of prioritising vulnerable and marginalised groups, including low-income individuals, minorities, and those with pre-existing health conditions.
- Participants widely supported the creation of financial assistance programs to support individuals who lose their jobs or face economic hardship due to pandemic-related measures. There was recognition of the profound economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on vulnerable populations who were disproportionately affected by job losses or reduced income. Suggestions included providing direct cash transfers, unemployment benefits, food assistance, and housing support to individuals and families in need. Participants emphasised the importance of targeted assistance programs that reach those most in need and mitigate the long-term socio-economic consequences of the pandemic.
- There was broad acknowledgement of the unique challenges faced by women, particularly mothers, during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants emphasised the need for policymakers to implement strategies targeting women to sustain their employment and support their economic empowerment. Suggestions included providing childcare support, flexible work arrangements, and access to affordable healthcare services for women juggling caregiving responsibilities and employment. Participants stressed the importance of addressing gender disparities in employment, wages, and access to social services to ensure gender equality and women's rights are upheld during times of crisis.
- Participants recognized the importance of developing protocols for limitation of movement grounded in scientific research to protect public health while upholding human rights. There was consensus on the need for evidence-based decision-making and transparent communication from government authorities regarding movement restrictions. Suggestions included establishing clear criteria and procedures for implementing and lifting movement restrictions, as well as mechanisms for monitoring compliance and addressing

potential abuses of power. Participants emphasised the importance of balancing public health imperatives with respect for individual freedoms and human rights principles.

- Thus, the responses highlighted the importance of prioritising human rights, equity, and social justice in the response to public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants called for comprehensive and rights-based approaches that address the interconnected challenges of healthcare access, economic support, gender equality, and freedom of movement.

## **2nd sub-subject: Freedom of peaceful assembly**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Engage communities in the decision-making process when formulating and implementing pandemic response measures.
- Prioritise inclusivity, ensuring voices from all segments of society are heard and considered.
- Strengthen international collaborations to uphold human rights, especially in countries with weaker health infrastructures.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Many participants emphasised the importance of engaging communities in the decision-making process when formulating and implementing pandemic response measures, including those related to restrictions on peaceful assembly. There was consensus on the need for transparent and participatory governance processes that involve input from diverse stakeholders, including civil society organisations, community leaders, and marginalised groups. Suggestions included holding public consultations, town hall meetings, and participatory forums to solicit feedback and input from affected communities. Participants stressed the importance of building trust and fostering collaborative relationships between government authorities and the public to ensure that pandemic response measures are both effective and respectful of human rights.
- Participants underscored the importance of prioritising inclusivity in decision-making processes related to freedom of peaceful assembly. There was recognition of the need to ensure that voices from all segments of society, including marginalised and vulnerable populations, are heard and considered in the formulation of policies and regulations. Suggestions included adopting a human rights-based approach to decision-making that prioritises equity, diversity, and inclusion. Participants emphasised the importance of addressing structural inequalities and barriers to participation to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to exercise their right to peaceful assembly without discrimination or exclusion.
- There was widespread support for strengthening international collaborations to uphold human rights, especially in countries with weaker health infrastructures. Participants emphasised the importance of solidarity and cooperation among nations to address the global challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic while respecting fundamental rights and freedoms. Suggestions included sharing best practices, resources, and expertise to support countries in implementing pandemic response measures that are both effective and rights-respecting. Participants stressed the need for international institutions, such as the United Nations and World Health Organization, to play a central role in coordinating efforts and advocating for human rights protections on a global scale.
- The responses highlighted the importance of inclusive and participatory decision-making processes, both at the local and international levels, in safeguarding the right to freedom

of peaceful assembly during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Participants emphasised the need for collaborative and rights-based approaches that prioritise the voices and concerns of all members of society, especially those who are most vulnerable or marginalised.

### **3rd sub-subject: Limited Rights**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Ensure universal healthcare access, including treatments for all.
- Implement privacy-protected digital tracing and health verification tools.
- Limiting the stigmatisation of healthcare workers during the pandemic times.
- Maintain essential services like food, water, and electricity during lockdowns.
- Create fair vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all, including vulnerable groups, and maintain freedom of movement without discriminating against unvaccinated individuals.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Participants expressed strong support for ensuring universal healthcare access, particularly during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. There was consensus on the need to prioritise equitable access to healthcare services and treatments for all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic status or insurance coverage. Suggestions included expanding healthcare coverage, reducing barriers to access, and investing in healthcare infrastructure to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to receive necessary medical care without facing financial hardship or discrimination.
- While recognizing the potential benefits of digital tracing and health verification tools in containing the spread of infectious diseases, participants also raised concerns about privacy and data protection. There was a strong emphasis on the need to implement robust safeguards to protect individuals' privacy rights and prevent misuse of personal data. Suggestions included adopting transparent and accountable data governance frameworks, ensuring informed consent and user control over personal data, and conducting regular audits and oversight to monitor compliance with privacy regulations.
- Participants expressed solidarity with healthcare workers and underscored the importance of protecting their rights and well-being during the pandemic. There was widespread condemnation of stigmatisation and discrimination against healthcare workers, who have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response.
- Participants emphasised the critical importance of maintaining essential services such as food, water, and electricity during lockdowns and other public health measures. There was consensus on the need to ensure that basic needs are met for all individuals, especially vulnerable populations who may be disproportionately impacted by disruptions to essential services.
- Participants stressed the importance of implementing fair and equitable vaccine policies to ensure accessibility for all individuals, including vulnerable groups who may face barriers to access. There was consensus on the need to prioritise public health while upholding individual rights and freedoms. Suggestions included prioritising vaccine distribution based on public health criteria, such as vulnerability to severe illness or exposure risk, rather than socio-economic status or political influence. Participants also emphasised the importance of maintaining freedom of movement while respecting individual choices regarding vaccination status.

- The responses highlighted the importance of balancing public health imperatives with respect for individual rights and freedoms during times of crisis. Participants called for comprehensive and rights-based approaches to pandemic response that prioritise equity, inclusion, and respect for human dignity.

## **4th sub-subject Psychological Dimension**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Establish ethical guidelines around resource allocation during health crises, ensuring fairness and equity.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and expertise among countries.
- Provide additional resources and protection to marginalised communities, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless, ensuring their human rights are upheld during pandemic responses.
- Importance of ensuring equal and fair access to psychological help to everybody in need.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Participants expressed support for establishing ethical guidelines to guide resource allocation during health crises, ensuring fairness and equity in the distribution of essential goods and services. There was consensus on the need to prioritise vulnerable and marginalised communities in resource allocation decisions, taking into account factors such as socio-economic status, health disparities, and access barriers.
- Panellists emphasised the importance of international collaboration and solidarity in responding to health crises, including the sharing of best practices, resources, and expertise among countries. There was widespread recognition of the interconnected nature of global health challenges and the need for collective action to address them effectively. Suggestions included strengthening partnerships and networks for knowledge exchange and capacity-building, supporting initiatives to promote technology transfer and innovation, and advocating for equitable access to vaccines, treatments, and medical supplies on a global scale.
- Participants called for increased support and protection for marginalised communities, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless, during pandemic responses. There was consensus on the importance of upholding the human rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their immigration status or social standing. Suggestions included expanding access to healthcare, housing, food assistance, and social services for vulnerable populations, as well as addressing underlying structural inequalities and discrimination that exacerbate their vulnerability to health risks and socio-economic hardships.
- The importance of ensuring equal and fair access to psychological help for all individuals in need was also emphasised, recognizing the significant mental health impacts of health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. There was consensus on the need to prioritise mental health support as an integral component of pandemic response efforts. Suggestions included expanding mental health services, including telehealth and online counselling options, to reach individuals who may face barriers to accessing traditional care. Participants also stressed the importance of reducing stigma and promoting awareness of mental health issues, as well as providing training and support for frontline healthcare workers and other caregivers.
- The responses generally highlighted the importance of addressing the psychological dimension of

- health crises and ensuring that responses are guided by principles of equity, solidarity, and respect for human rights. Participants called for comprehensive and rights-based approaches that prioritise the well-being and dignity of all individuals, particularly those who are most vulnerable or marginalised.

## Third key thematic: WORK AND LIFE OF WOMEN

### 1st sub-subject: Work Policies

#### Presented political recommendations:

- Implementing workplace flexibility and teleworking options.
- Offering educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence.
- Ensuring job protection for women taking leave to care for family members.
- Fostering an environment of gender equality in all sectors.
- Enhancing digital literacy and remote work skills among women to expand their employment opportunities.

#### Response from the public and political representatives:

- Participants expressed strong support for the implementation of workplace flexibility and teleworking options, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. There was consensus on the importance of accommodating diverse work-life balance needs and providing opportunities for remote work to enhance productivity and job satisfaction. They highlighted the importance of offering educational programs and resources for economic empowerment and financial independence among women. There was recognition of the need to address systemic barriers to women's participation in the workforce and promote equal opportunities for career advancement and economic self-sufficiency. Suggestions included providing vocational training, mentorship programs, and access to entrepreneurship resources to support women in gaining skills and confidence in pursuing economic opportunities. Participants also emphasised the importance of promoting financial literacy and empowering women to advocate for their rights and interests in the workplace.
- Participants emphasised the need to ensure job protection for women taking leave to care for family members, including children, elderly parents, or individuals with disabilities. There was consensus on the importance of supporting caregivers in balancing their work and caregiving responsibilities without fear of discrimination or retaliation. Strengthening labour laws and workplace policies to guarantee job security and benefits for caregivers, as well as providing access to affordable and high-quality childcare and eldercare services were mentioned. Participants also stressed the importance of destigmatizing caregiving roles and promoting gender-neutral policies that support all caregivers, regardless of gender.
- Participants underscored the importance of fostering an environment of gender equality in all sectors of society, including the workplace, education, healthcare, and politics. There was consensus on the need to address systemic inequalities and biases that perpetuate gender discrimination and hinder women's advancement and leadership opportunities. Suggestions included promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives, implementing gender-sensitive

policies and practices, and supporting women's leadership development programs to ensure equal representation and participation in decision-making processes. Participants also emphasised the importance of challenging gender stereotypes and promoting positive role models to inspire future generations of women leaders.

- The importance of enhancing digital literacy and remote work skills among women to expand their employment opportunities and adapt to the changing demands of the labour market was stressed. There was consensus on the need to bridge the digital divide and provide women with access to technology and training to thrive in remote work environments, by offering digital skills training programs, promoting access to affordable and reliable internet connectivity, and providing support for women to overcome barriers to remote work, such as lack of access to technology or childcare. Participants also emphasised the importance of promoting women's participation in STEM fields and encouraging girls to pursue careers in technology and innovation.
- Hence, the responses highlighted the importance of implementing policies and initiatives that support women's work-life balance, economic empowerment, and professional advancement. Participants called for comprehensive and gender-sensitive approaches to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by women in the workforce and promote greater gender equality in all sectors of society.

## **2nd sub-subject Civil Society Organisations (CSO)**

### **Presented political recommendations:**

- CSO's should promote their work in society and cooperate with different organisations to address women's needs for work-life balance.
- Policies could ensure that CSOs are involved in decision-making on specific issues during pandemics to advance the agenda of vulnerable groups.

### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Participants expressed support for CSO promoting their work in society and collaborating with different organisations to address women's needs for work-life balance. There was recognition of the valuable role that CSO plays in advocating for women's rights and advancing gender equality initiatives. Providing funding and resources to support CSO activities, raising awareness about the work of CSO through public education campaigns and media outreach, and fostering partnerships between CSO, government agencies, and private sector entities to amplify their impact were mentioned.
- Participants emphasised the importance of ensuring that civil society organisations are involved in decision-making processes on specific issues during pandemics, particularly to advance the agenda of vulnerable groups such as women. There was consensus on the need for inclusive and participatory governance mechanisms that engage CSO as stakeholders in pandemic response efforts. Suggestions included establishing formal channels for CSO participation in decision-making bodies, task forces, and advisory committees, as well as providing opportunities for CSO to contribute their expertise and perspectives to policy development and implementation. Participants also stressed the importance of transparent and accountable governance processes that prioritise the needs and rights of marginalised communities.
- The responses highlighted the importance of supporting and empowering civil society organisations to advocate for women's rights and contribute to inclusive decision-making processes during pandemics and other crises. Participants called for policies and initiatives

that recognize the unique role of CSOs in addressing women's needs and promoting gender equality, and that provide them with the resources and opportunities to effectively carry out their work.

### **3rd sub-subject Mental Health Support**

#### **Presented political recommendations:**

- Governments should invest in mental health services.
- Providing different forms of governmental and organisational support to families to cope with the consequences of pandemic.
- Providing different governmental and organisational support for career development for women during the pandemic.

#### **Response from the public and political representatives:**

- Participants expressed strong support for the recommendation to invest in mental health services. There was widespread recognition of the significant mental health challenges faced by individuals and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, including increased stress, anxiety, depression, and social isolation and the suggestions included expanding access to mental health care through increased funding for mental health programs, services, and facilities. Participants also emphasised the importance of integrating mental health support into primary healthcare systems, promoting awareness and destigmatization of mental illness, and addressing barriers to access for marginalised and underserved populations.
- Participants welcomed the recommendation to provide different forms of governmental and organisational support to families to cope with the consequences of the pandemic. There was recognition of the profound impact of the pandemic on families, including disruptions to childcare, education, employment, and social support networks. Some suggestions included offering financial assistance, childcare subsidies, and housing support to families facing economic hardship, as well as providing access to mental health and counselling services to support family well-being. Participants also emphasised the importance of flexible work arrangements, paid leave policies, and support for remote learning and homeschooling to help families navigate the challenges of the pandemic.
- The recommendation to provide different forms of governmental and organisational support for women's career development during the pandemic was enhanced. There was recognition of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women's employment and career advancement opportunities, particularly due to caregiving responsibilities and job losses in sectors with high female representation.
- It was suggested the need of offering training programs, mentorship opportunities, and networking resources to support women's career development and reentry into the workforce. Participants also emphasised the importance of addressing systemic barriers to women's advancement, such as gender discrimination, unequal pay, and lack of access to childcare and family support services.
- The responses overall highlighted the importance of prioritising mental health support, family well-being, and women's career development in the pandemic response efforts. Participants called for comprehensive and coordinated government and organisational interventions to address the multifaceted impacts of the pandemic on individuals, families, and communities, and to promote resilience, recovery, and social inclusion.

# New Policy Recommendations

| VITAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS (THEMES) | RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS (DESCRIPTION)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Governance and expertise in pandemic crisis management</b>   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Form a partnership between government and trustworthy experts   | Improve communication strategies to ensure achieving clarity and consistency of given information during pandemic or other crisis situations. For example: Consider establishing advanced digital communication tools that ensure the clarity, coherence, and accessibility of information to the public to improve understanding and compliance with the necessary measures in times of crisis. |
| Best Practices for management                                   | Improve the level of knowledge of political leaders and other key actors or experts in pandemic or other crisis situations to ensure effective crisis management and appropriate decision-making under time pressure and other forms of pressure.                                                                                                                                                |
| International cooperation                                       | Highlight the necessity for stronger international cooperation and coordination in responding to pandemics. Numerous voices stressed the importance of sharing best practices, resources, and information across borders to bolster global resilience against future health crises.                                                                                                              |
| Independent bodies for monitoring                               | Support for creating independent bodies to monitor government decisions and evaluate pandemic management strategies. Ensure an upholding of democratic principles, promote transparency, and hold governments accountable for their actions during health crises.                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Electoral integrity</b>                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Voting Techniques                                               | Avoid scheduling elections during a pandemic and consider secure digital voting as an alternative if necessary.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Campaigns                                                       | Ensure that elections, if held during a pandemic, maintain legitimacy and trust, with improving the transparency and integrity of the electoral process.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Transparency                                                    | Ensure a greater transparency in campaign finance to prevent undue influence and ensure a fair playing field for all candidates. Disclose financial information on campaigns in order to foster trust and accountability in the electoral process.                                                                                                                                               |
| Independent media                                               | Implementation of independent media coverage as a crucial defence against misinformation and propaganda.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Media integrity and information management</b>               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Media Transparency</b>                              | Support and encourage credible media to disseminate information via social media.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Education on misinformation</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote ethical journalism and the responsible use of artificial intelligence in information management.</li> <li>● Strengthen public education initiatives to improve media literacy and critical thinking when dealing with important information about the pandemic.</li> </ul>          |
| <b>Media diversification</b>                           | Promote diversity in media ownership and ensure plurality in the media landscape to prevent excessive influence and bias.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Transparency and democratic engagement</b>          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Citizen Engagement and Anti-corruption policies</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote a culture of transparency in governmental work, especially in procurement and crisis response.</li> <li>● Ensure that the public understands and participates in democratic processes in every possible way, even in times of crisis, to maintain trust and cooperation.</li> </ul> |
| <b>anti-corruption</b>                                 | Implementation of robust anti-corruption policies to ensure transparency and accountability in government institutions. Enhance the capacity of government officials on anti-corruption measures and foster a culture of integrity and ethical conduct.                                                                              |
| <b>Limited movement</b>                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Access to healthcare</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement movement restrictions with clear communication and justification to balance public health needs with individual freedoms.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Education (financial programs)</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Educate the public on the importance of pursuing the goal of collective responsibility in addressing health crises.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Women's employment</b>                              | Elevate the need for policymakers to implement strategies specifically targeting women to sustain their employment and support their economic empowerment. Provide childcare support, flexible work arrangements, and access to affordable healthcare services for women balancing caregiving responsibilities and employment.       |
| <b>Freedom peaceful assembly</b>                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Engagement in decision making</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore alternative methods of public expression that comply with health recommendations during pandemics.</li> <li>● Ensure that any restrictions on assembly are justified, proportionate and face time limitations.</li> </ul>                                                           |
| <b>Human rights collaborations</b>                     | Improve the strengthening of international collaborations to uphold human rights, particularly in countries with weaker health infrastructures. Share best practices, resources, and expertise to help                                                                                                                               |

|                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                | countries implement pandemic response measures that are both effective and respect human rights.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Limited Rights</b>                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Access to healthcare</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish clear guidelines and provide adequate oversight to protect human rights in critical situations.</li> <li>● Carefully assess the impact and necessity of limiting rights in critical situations to ensure that they are not disproportionate or unnecessarily extended.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Essential services</b>                      | Underline the importance of maintaining essential services like food, water, and electricity during lockdowns and other public health measures.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Protection of healthcare workers</b>        | Provide solidarity to healthcare workers and foster their rights and well-being, especially during pandemics.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Psychological Dimension</b>                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Ethical Guidelines</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prioritise mental health as much as physical health in crisis planning to ensure an appropriate response.</li> <li>● Develop mental health support systems that ensure adequate mental health support for those in need and promote public awareness and stigmatisation of mental health issues.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Access to psychological help</b>            | Ensure a fair access to psychological help for everyone in need c. There was a consensus on prioritising mental health support as an integral component of pandemic response efforts. Suggestions included expanding mental health services, such as telehealth and online counselling options, to reach those who face barriers to traditional care. Participants also stressed the importance of reducing stigma and raising awareness about mental health issues, along with providing training and support for frontline healthcare workers and other caregivers. |
| <b>Work Policies</b>                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Workplace flexibility</b>                   | Implement measures to ensure that women have equal opportunities for advancement in crisis situations, which should aim to distribute responsibility and leadership opportunities fairly between the genders in emergency situations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Job protection for women and caregivers</b> | Improve the need to ensure job protection for women taking leave to care for family members, including children, elderly parents, or individuals with disabilities. There was a consensus on the importance of supporting caregivers in balancing their work and caregiving responsibilities without fear of discrimination or retaliation. Strengthening labour laws and workplace policies to guarantee job                                                                                                                                                         |

|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                          | security and benefits for caregivers, as well as providing access to affordable and high-quality childcare and eldercare services, were mentioned. The importance of destigmatizing caregiving roles and promoting gender-neutral policies that support all caregivers, regardless of gender, was also stressed. |
| <b>Domestic Violence</b>                 | Address specific challenges faced by women during crises, such as increased domestic burdens and ensure equitable support.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Civil Society Organisations (CSO)</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Sharing of work</b>                   | Recognise and support the role of civil society organisations in addressing specific needs in times of crisis, especially regarding women and marginalised groups.                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Mental Health Support</b>             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Mental health services</b>            | Integrate mental health support into public health responses, focusing on vulnerable groups including women and frontline workers                                                                                                                                                                                |

## Conclusions

The Transnational Panel Discussions held within the project "HEARD" were successfully conducted. Ten different events took place in 9 Countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy (2 regions: Lombardia and Puglia), Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

These events revealed the unique challenges and opportunities faced by different regions in Europe, highlighting the varied yet interconnected political and social landscapes across the continent. By bringing together diverse perspectives, the events offered a clear understanding of Europe's current state in terms of democratic engagement, human rights, and the work-life balance of women, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

The involvement of political representatives in each event across all countries was essential. Their participation ensured that existing political recommendations were addressed and expanded upon. These politicians engaged with the discussions, responding to current recommendations, and contributing to the development of new ones.

This direct involvement helped bridge the gap between theoretical discussions and practical actions. Their participation and interaction with the public, organising partners, and experts fostered a dynamic exchange of ideas, making the events more impactful and ensuring that the outcomes were both practical and relevant for policy-making.

The discussions generated significant new perspectives and updated political recommendations, which were the direct outcome of the discussions between the political representatives and the public.

Key outcomes indeed emphasised the urgent need for more robust democratic engagement strategies to ensure inclusive and participatory governance across Europe.

The protection of human rights emerged as a critical priority, with recommendations calling for stronger legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms to safeguard these rights in times of crisis.

Additionally, the events highlighted the importance of developing targeted policies to support the work-life balance of women, recognizing that the pandemic has disproportionately impacted women's professional and personal lives.

These political recommendations are crucial for shaping inclusive post-pandemic societies, ensuring that Europe can effectively address and adapt to both current and future challenges.

## Meet the partnership



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