

## EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

*(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.)*

 *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum).*

PROJECT	
<b>Participant:</b>	[No] – ALL (FBC,MIGS,OSF,Asociatia ANAIS,FISP)
<b>PIC number:</b>	891093896, 994534017, 947433921, 899288747, 986363610
<b>Project name and acronym:</b>	Gender-inclusive, Long-lasting and Empowered Networks and Societies G-LENS

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
<b>Event number:</b>	1
<b>Event name:</b>	Work Package 1 : Focus Groups
<b>Type:</b>	Focus group
<b>In situ/online:</b>	in-situ
<b>Location:</b>	Cyprus, Nicosia Poland, Warsaw Romania, Bucharest Bulgaria, Sofia
<b>Date(s):</b>	05/12/24, 12/12/24, 13/12/24,16/12/24, 17/12/24, 18/12/24, 16/01/24
<b>Website(s) (if any):</b>	
Participants	
Female:	54
Male:	11
Non-binary:	1
From country 1 [Cyprus]:	9F, 6M
From country 2 [Bulgaria]:	<b>12F, 4M</b>
From country 3 [Poland]:	19F, 1M
From country 4 [Romania]:	14F, 1NB
Total number of participants:	66
From total number of countries:	4
Description	
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>	

This event is part of WP1 and corresponds to SO1, which aims to explore wider national and European socio-political contexts and ecosystems where gendered disinformation and misinformation are present, as well as gather the perceptions of individuals around the phenomenon in order to create a baseline in consortium countries. As part of this WP we worked with the following target group: stakeholders from education, the media, academia/research, policy, civil society including youth organisations by **holding two national focus groups (in Romania three) in each participating country, a total of nine (9) focus groups and 66 individuals.**

As follows, are short summaries of the key insights from the Focus Groups for each country.

Cyprus(18/12/24, 16/01/25)

The focus groups held in Nicosia, were attended by important media stakeholders, who highlighted systemic issues within the media landscape, as well as youth, who voiced the everyday realities and cultural dynamics that perpetuate the phenomenon on social media. Both perspectives were essential for a holistic understanding of the existing challenges surrounding gendered disinformation in Cyprus. Women journalists face online harassment and threats, leaving them vulnerable – at the same time, there is a lack of official data that would allow for more targeted response. Sexist discourse remains prevalent in media and politics. Traditional media is often politically biased, sensationalized, and reinforces gender stereotypes. Youth face challenges with unregulated digital platforms, AI tools, and international and national influencers who spread disinformation and harmful stereotypes. Critical thinking skills are underdeveloped in Cypriot youth due to the rigid education system that sees asking questions as disobedience, lack of parental awareness and therefore guidance, and unawareness of algorithmic manipulation, making young people susceptible to far right and racist narratives online.

Poland(05/12/24,16/12/24)

The focus groups, held in Warsaw, gathered experts on disinformation, youth work, women's rights, ethnic minorities, LGBT+ issues, and refugees to discuss gender-based disinformation (GBD). While disinformation is widely studied, GBD is understood to be synonymous to hate speech or cyber violence. It primarily targets women in public life to discredit them, discouraging engagement and harming democracy, especially for marginalized groups. GBD is often politically motivated, disproportionately affecting progressive women but also men, particularly those who challenge traditional norms. The discussions highlighted gaps in research, especially on boys' perspectives, and noted that cybersecurity decision-makers, mostly men, often overlook GBD. The rise of AI-driven disinformation, visual manipulation, and right-wing media amplifying GBD were also key concerns. Addressing GBD requires legal reforms, better fact-checking, awareness in law enforcement, and education for teachers and young people, particularly in smaller communities.

Bulgaria(12/12/24, 17/12/24)

The focus groups conducted included representatives of institutions, think-tanks and NGOs active in the field of analysis and counteraction to disinformation in Bulgaria, journalists, fact-checkers and young people. Topics discussed included examples of disinformation in Bulgaria, the channels where it manifests itself, target groups, existing legislation, initiatives and good practices. Key highlights include that high-status women in politics, media, and NGOs face discrediting attacks, often fueled by sexism, racism, and homophobia. Ukrainian women are dehumanized through stereotypes, while political groups, such as the Vazrazhdane party, exploit anti-feminism and gender ideology for propaganda. Hate speech, online harassment, and threats are common tactics used to undermine women's roles in society. Additionally, traditional media contributes to the spread of these narratives by amplifying viral content that reinforces harmful stereotypes.

Romania(13/12/24,16/12/24)

The focus groups included representatives of NGOs working on girls' & women's rights, LGBTQ+, democracy, academics, and journalists/content creators. While most of the participants from the NGO sector work on topics related to gender equality, their field of expertise is very diverse, including healthcare, justice, the rule of law, and media literacy. The topic of disinformation came on the Romanian public agenda during the presidential elections in November-December 2024. The focus groups were organized only some days after the

cancelation of the results of the first round of the presidential election. While gender disinformation is not yet a topic that is broadly discussed in the Romanian society, participants to the FG perceived gender disinformation as a significant part of the disinformation phenomenon in general, anti-gender and homophobic discourse being instrumentalized for political gains. Activists, journalists, and academics promoting gender equality face threats and online harassment to silence them. Gender-based violence is often minimized, and disinformation about sexual education and abortion is widespread, exaggerating risks and manipulating fetal development imagery. Gender-inclusive language is misrepresented as an attack on traditional values, with EU guidelines falsely framed as attempts to erase terms like "mother" and "father." Religious texts are also misused to justify anti-gender narratives, reinforcing conservative propaganda.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).