

27/03/25

ICONS

INNOVATION STRATEGIES

28^o March 2025, EINSTEIN project webinar

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About ICONS

Building the bridge between research and society via public communication, business and social innovation

Funded in 1999, ICONS has **25 years experience** in communication & dissemination, exploitation, social innovation of EU-funded projects.

During its lifetime ICONS has been involved in more than 100 EU funded collaboration projects - 40 in H2020 and more than 60 in Horizon Europe so far.

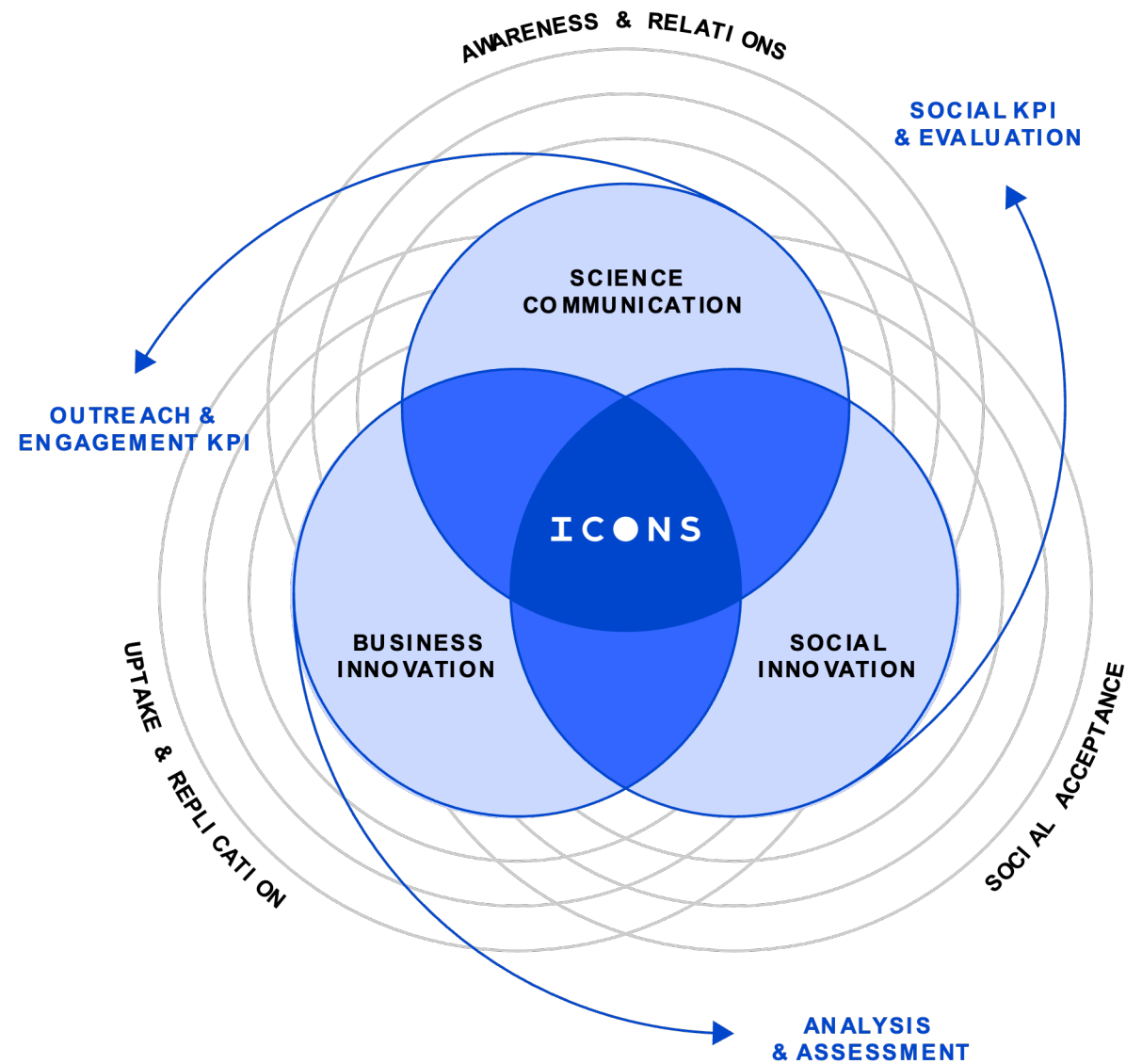
ICONS has set up its **Gender Equality** group to enlarge the RRI focus and approach, expand in-house knowledge to identify new project opportunities across diverse fields of expertise while addressing internal existing gender-related challenges across projects and units.

Our approach

Integrated, impact-driven and measurable

ICONS designs and implements effective, integrated and impact-oriented **communication, dissemination, social** and **business innovation** strategies, **measured** via dedicated and innovative **KPIs**.

We raise awareness, foster engagement and social acceptance, support market uptake and replication, to boost **impacts** of EU research & innovation projects on **society**.



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Communicating Gender Equality in Research and Innovation

Why it matters?

- Communication is not neutral — it **shapes and reflects values**
- It plays a crucial role in **challenging stereotypes** and promoting **inclusive narratives**
- Communication as a driver for **equal and inclusive research and innovation**
- According to EIGE*, gender-sensitive language should be preferred when possible.
 - **Gender-neutral language:** this is not gender-specific and considers people in general, with no reference to women or men. Example: “Under the law, all people are equal”
 - **Gender-sensitive language:** is preferred when possible. It is gender equality made manifest through language. Example “Under the law, all women and men are equal.”

Gender equality in Horizon Europe

- A **cross-cutting priority**
- **Gender Equality Plans** required for participation
- Integration of the **gender dimension** in research content is key
- Significant support toward an **intersectional approach** to equality policy

→ Communication supports and amplifies these efforts set by the EC

Challenges in gender-sensitive communication

- **Unconscious bias** in language and visuals
- **Underrepresentation** in narratives and imagery
- **Lack of diverse voices** and stories

Can AI assist developing and implementing gender-sensitive communication? Is it unbiased?

ARTICLES



Women have conquered space, but still struggle to break the glass ceiling of the construction sector. How robots will tackle gender imbalances, foster safety and save the industry from the “ticking bomb” of labour force shortage

Credit: [BEEYONDERS project](#)

create an image of a person working in the construction sector



Created with DALL E

- Check for gender bias: are pronouns and language appropriate and inclusive? (e.g., avoiding assumptions like "doctor" = "he" and "nurse" = "she")
- Be mindful not to associate certain backgrounds with specific clothing or environments that may reinforce stereotypes
- Check that diverse voice options are used (genders, ages, tones) to ensure inclusivity and prevent over-reliance on stereotypical voices accents types

Practical approaches in your R&I projects

- Integrate gender objectives into the communication plan
- Set KPIs: gender balance in visuals, quotes, stories, spokespersons
- Monitor and evaluate impact
- Highlight gender-related findings and contributions
- Use inclusive visuals (e.g., diverse teams, leadership roles)
- Collaborate with gender experts and project partners to raise awareness

Examples from R&I projects

- Example 1: Use of storytelling to highlight women innovation in agriculture
- Example 2: Campaign featuring women in STEM roles



Credit: [ICONS](#)



JOURNALISTIC ARTICLE – 17 OCT 2023

**The minority factor:
empowering women in
agriculture to boost
productivity and social
justice**

Credit: [dRural project](#)

Conclusions

- Gender equality is everyone's responsibility
- Communication is a powerful lever for cultural change
- Make inclusivity a metric of success

References

- EIGE Toolkit for Gender-Sensitive Communication
- European Council Conclusions, 2015. Council Conclusions On Advancing Gender Equality in the European Research Area, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14846-2015-INIT/en/pdf>
- Giuliani, D. (2023). Robots for gender balance: helping women conquer the construction sector. BEEYONDERS project
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