



Ethics, Gender, and Inclusivity Guide

Deliverable D6.4

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

ABBREVIATION/TERM	DESCRIPTION
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALICE	Alliance for Logistics Innovation through Collaboration in Europe
AMB	Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona
AR	Augmented Reality
ARMINES	Association pour la Recherche et le Développement des Méthodes et Processus Industriels
CA	Consortium Agreement
CERTH	Centre for Research and Technology Hellas
CINEA	European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency
DMP	Data Management Plan
DNSH	Do not Significant Harm principle
DT	Digital Twin
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
eFTI	Electronic freight transport information
EGE	European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies
ENERI	European Network for Research Ethics and Integrity
EU	European Union
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
HE	Horizon Europe
ICCS	Institute of Communication and Computer Systems
INLE	Inlecom Group
IoT	Internet of Things
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LI	Logistics Innovation
LLM	Large Language Model
ML	Machine Learning
MINES	École des mines de Paris
OBI	Othering and Belonging Institute
OLF	Open Logistics Foundation
PI	Physical Internet

RRI	Responsible Research and Innovation
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
T	Task (within Work Packages)
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
UN	United Nations
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
WiLAT	Women in Logistics and Transport
WP	Work Package
XR	Extended Reality

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Deliverable D6.4 Ethics, Gender and Inclusivity Guide presents IKIGAI's commitments to all its activities and actions being characterised by ethical principles while at the same time being inclusive and gender – balanced. The deliverable starts with discussing the core ethical principles that guide the project's consortium and all phases of its implementation, such as transparency, equality and fair participation. Following that, a summary of the self-assessment process that IKIGAI conducted is included, focusing on the components that are more relevant to the project such as activities that involve human participants and the use of Artificial Intelligence. The ethics management, monitoring and reporting framework is then established, highlighting the role and responsibilities of the Ethics and Data Protection Officer. The next part of the deliverable provides valuable insights into gender equality commitments and compliance, building on the partners' Gender Equality Plans and exploring how their content can support project activities. The baseline gender composition of the IKIGAI consortium is examined under the lens of how gender balance can be further improved internally, but also in terms of stakeholder engagement. Inclusivity beyond gender is another important part of the deliverable. D6.4 ends with a reflection on how the work of IKIGAI in the area of ethics, gender and inclusivity can continue after the end of the project.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 IKIGAI IN A NUTSHELL

IKIGAI's goal is to accelerate the realisation of the Physical Internet (PI) by 2040 and achieve decarbonized freight transport and logistics by 2050. The project focuses on the establishment of affordable, collaborative, and coordinated Systems of Logistics Networks across Europe. It promotes the adoption of open standardised processes to enhance efficiency and reduce emissions, aligning with the UN 2030 sustainable development agenda. IKIGAI will scale up five complementary and forward-looking Logistics Innovations (LIs) (advancing them from TRL5 to 8, looking also into other scalability aspects e.g. regulation, market and social), building collaboration on shared resources and capacity, respect, openness, transparency and trust:

- [LI1] Online and offline trustee matchmaking and volume pooling for electrification and increased intermodality,
- [LI2] eFTI compliance Collaborative Service Platform for SMEs,
- [LI3] Smart and synchromodal hubs for hyperconnected urban logistics,
- [LI4] Intelligent, standard end-to-end chain of custody for carbon emission calculation,
- [LI5] Open volume pooled governance for reusable standard modular boxes.

Recognising that companies can better evolve collaboratively, aligning logistics and decarbonisation within a unified transition path, IKIGAI will drive the Twin Transition to net-zero logistics by mobilising an open and collaborative ecosystem of global supply chain players committed to systemic change. Beyond adopting the LIs and testing them in real-world pilots, IKIGAI will re-engineer supply chain logistics services such as volume pooling/asset sharing, warehousing, freight forwarding/intermodality, cross-docking and last-mile delivery.

2.2 DELIVERABLE OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of D6.4 Ethics, Gender and Inclusivity Guide include:

- Defining the ethical principles and governance structures guiding IKIGAI project
- Presenting the processes and tools for ethics management, monitoring and reporting and the role of the Ethics and Data Protection Officer
- Summarising the outcomes of the ethics self-assessment and describing how ethical compliance will be maintained throughout the project
- Presenting the consortium's commitments to gender equality, diversity and inclusivity, including partner Gender Equality Plans and gender balance monitoring mechanisms
- Describing how ethical, gender and inclusivity principles are operationalised in stakeholder engagement, data management and communication activities
- Ensuring that IKIGAI's ethical and inclusivity practices are transferable and can contribute to broader EU policy goals

2.3 DELIVERABLE MAPPING TO GA REQUIREMENTS

Table 1. Deliverable Adherence to GA Deliverables and Work Description

IKIGAI GA Item	IKIGAI GA Item Description	DR Chapter(s)	Justification
DELIVERABLE			
D6.4: Ethics, Gender, and Inclusivity Guide	Ethics framework and guidelines for ensuring gender-balance and inclusivity in IKIGAI.	Chapters 3 to 6	This deliverable presents the framework for Ethics, Gender and Inclusivity in IKIGAI. Committed adherence to the implementation of these imperative elements, will align each Deliverable with the project's overall established standards and policies, ultimately leading to successful outputs.
TASK 6.1 Project coordination and ethics (FIT)			
ST6.1.4 Ethics respecting policies (ICCS)	According to the GA, this task identifies and manages equity and ethical issues that might arise during the lifecycle of IKIGAI, and includes tasks such as designing consent forms for research experiments, with guidelines considering AI ethics by design principles.	Chapter 3 to 6	These chapters elaborate on all ethics respecting policies (including the components of gender and inclusivity).
TASK 6.3 Data Management Plan (ICCS)			
	This deliverable does not include the Data Management Plan of IKIGAI - D6.6 is the dedicated deliverable	Chapter 3	This chapter includes references to the interconnections

	for this. Nevertheless, the Ethics framework described herein is developed in close collaboration with the Data Management Part, as some aspects of the Ethics self-assessment such as the use of personal data in the context of interviews and/or surveys in IKIGAI, and ensuring the employment of FAIR principles while collecting, processing and storing the data are defined in D6.6. Therefore, this task is strongly interlinked with the present deliverable (D6.4) although not the primary focus of it.		between D6.4 and D6.6 of IKIGAI.
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2.4 INTENDED AUDIENCE

The dissemination level of D6.4 is “Public”, therefore the deliverable is intended to be read by a broad audience, within and beyond the IKIGAI consortium, such as policy-makers and regulators, public authorities, academics and researchers, developers and innovation practitioners, decision – makers as well as citizens’ organisations.

3. IKIGAI Ethics Framework

3.1 KEY ETHICAL PRINCIPLES GUIDING IKIGAI

IKIGAI is founded on a robust ethical framework which ensures that all project activities will be conducted in line with Article 14 – Ethics and Values of the Grant Agreement according to which the project must be carried out following the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles. The key sources of EU and international law are [1] the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2012/C 326/02) [2] and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) [3] while another important source is the UN Declaration of Human Rights [4]. The project integrates ethical values into its governance, stakeholder engagement, research, technological development and collaborative innovation processes.

The following core principles guide decision-making across the IKIGAI consortium and provide a common foundation for a responsible and inclusive transformation of the European logistics ecosystem.

- ***Respect for Fundamental Rights***

IKIGAI is fully aligned with the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the human rights agreement of the EU, which became legally binding with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (2009). Therefore, all 50 fundamental rights and freedoms included in the Charter have the same value as binding primary law. They are grouped under six titles: dignity, freedoms, equality, solidarity, citizens’ rights and justice [5] and IKIGAI is committed to safeguarding each one of them throughout the project lifecycle, paying particular attention to ethical implications of digitalization and automation in logistics. By aligning with the Charter, IKIGAI ensures that

technological and organisational innovation serves social needs while supporting human rights in all phases of project development and deployment.

- ***Research Integrity and Responsibility***

According to the revised European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2023) [6], good research practices are based on the principles of reliability, honesty, respect and accountability. In line with these principles, all IKIGAI partners are committed to conducting rigorous research and produce reliable and verifiable results, following well-established methodologies and maintaining high quality in data collection, management and reporting. Every aspect of IKIGAI's work – from Logistics Innovations (LIs) conceptualization and development to the communication of outcomes and findings – will be characterized by honesty, as all partners are expected to complete their role in the project and present any finding as is, avoiding falsification or misinterpretation. Respect is demonstrated through fair collaboration, openness to diverse perspectives and thorough consideration of the rights and well-being of all individuals and organisations involved. Accountability is incorporated in the project's coordination, monitoring and quality assurance processes (see also deliverable D6.1), as each partner is responsible for ensuring that all their actions comply with legal requirements and ethical standards.

- ***Transparency and Openness***

Transparency and openness are central to IKIGAI's ethical culture and its collaborative approach to innovation, following UNESCO's recommendation on Open Science (2021) [7], which calls for greater accessibility, inclusivity and collaboration in the production and dissemination of knowledge and in line with the Horizon Europe legal obligation to make data and results "as open as possible, as closed as necessary" [8]. Roles, responsibilities and procedures are clearly defined in the project's Consortium Agreement and Quality Assurance and Risk Management framework (D6.1), to ensure clarity and traceability in all internal decisions. Externally, IKIGAI fosters openness through stakeholder engagement and dialogue, and will share lessons learned with other initiatives, policy actors and industry associations, contributing to broader goals towards digitalization, decarbonization and innovation in logistics.

- ***Democracy, Fair Participation, Collaboration and Trust***

Democracy within IKIGAI is expressed through participatory governance and collaborative decision-making; each consortium partner, regardless of its size (e.g. SME or large industrial player), has an equitable voice in defining priorities, shaping outcomes and influencing the project's strategic direction. Related to that, fair participation is an essential part of IKIGAI's collaborative model, with mechanisms such as regular WP cross collaboration meetings and the Steering Committee and General Assembly meetings, safeguarding that no stakeholder group dominates and that every contribution is assessed based only on its value and relevance. In terms of collaboration, the project encourages co-creation of knowledge, joint problem-solving and the sharing of data, insights and experiences among partners and with external stakeholders.

- ***Inclusiveness, Equality and Gender Balance***

IKIGAI recognises that social inclusion, gender equality and diversity are not only ethical requirements, but key drivers for innovation, creativity and sustainability and it is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all individuals involved or affected by the project, irrespective of gender, age, nationality, race, or socioeconomical background. All actions of IKIGAI will be fully aligned with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 [9] and the Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan (GEP) requirements [10]. More information about how IKIGAI deals with the principles of gender equality and inclusivity can be found in sections 4 to 6 of this deliverable report.

- **Data Protection and Privacy**

IKIGAI fully complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) ((EU) 2016/679) [11] and all applicable data protection laws. The IKIGAI Data Management Plan (for more information see D6.6) will outline specific safeguards, access controls and storage procedures for both personal and non-personal data, ensuring full alignment with FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) and Open Science principles while maintaining confidentiality and security.

- **Environmental and Social Responsibility**

Environmental and social responsibility are core ethical imperatives guiding IKIGAI's contribution to Europe's twin digital and green transition. The project acknowledges that decarbonization and sustainability are not only environmental goals but also expressions of ethical duty towards present and future generations. In line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [12] and the European Green Deal [13], IKIGAI integrates sustainability principles into every phase of its research, innovation and demonstration activities. By integrating social responsibility in its governance, research design and innovation pathways, IKIGAI makes sure that is in line with EU emphasis on a human – centric digital transition [14] and the UN vision for a green transition that leaves no one behind [15].

- **Responsible Innovation and Ethics-by-Design**

IKIGAI applies Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) principles so that all the innovations and solutions developed in its context are ethical and societally relevant. The term RRI made its appearance in the context of Horizon 2020 [16] and continues to inform Horizon's Europe approach, highlighting the need of engaging all societal actors in the research and innovation process to align outcomes with the values, needs and expectations of society [17]. Ethics-by-design [18], embedded in the development of IKIGAI's digital tools, AI-based services and collaborative platforms, is a way to operationalize RRI, so that ethical considerations and potential relevant risks are integrated from the earliest stages of the project and the innovations developed are trustworthy and human-centric.

- **AI Trustworthiness**

IKIGAI AI applications, especially LLMs (Generative AI) applications, will be evaluated to comply with the EU's AI Act and other European regulations, reinforcing a commitment to ethical practices and regulatory compliance.

3.2 ETHICS SELF-ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The ethics self-assessment process for IKIGAI already took place during the proposal stage and its results are included in the Grant Agreement document (Sections 4.1 Ethical dimension of the objectives, methodology and likely impact and 4.2 Compliance with ethical principles and relevant legislations). A summary of this process is presented herein. The EU guidelines on how to complete the self-assessment of EU grants beneficiaries in the context of Horizon Europe, include an Ethics issues table/checklist [19] to help projects identify and address any potential ethical issues that may arise during the project's lifecycle. The sections of this checklist that refer to the potential use of embryonic stem cells and human embryos, human cells and tissues, as well as animals are not applicable in this project, as IKIGAI's focus is not on medical/bio sciences and no such experiment is required.

One of the sections of the checklist asks whether the project activities involve human participants, which will indeed occur in the case of IKIGAI, as some user groups may be invited to test the developed services e.g. as part of the Requirements Definition Surveys or Forum of stakeholders' co-creation process. IKIGAI will not work with any vulnerable categories of

individuals such as patients, discriminated people or persons unable to give consent. IKIGAI also involves collecting and processing personal data in case co-creation/evaluation activities need to include them in the analysis (e.g. video/photo recording, ethnography, interviews, surveys and questionnaires). Stringent measures are established to ensure data confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent. Data collected is treated securely, and personal data is not shared externally. Primary data collected during the project is treated with the utmost confidentiality. Collected data remains within each IKIGAI Pilot (Logistic Innovation), secured on controlled servers. Anonymization techniques protect data confidentiality, and results are shared collaboratively while raw data remains confidential. IKIGAI will not collect special categories of personal data (known as ‘sensitive data’). For a detailed overview of all the mechanisms and techniques employed by IKIGAI regarding the issue of data collection, management and storage, please refer to the Data Management Plan included in D6.6. All activities within IKIGAI involving human beings will be designed in such way as to comply with the legal standards and be aligned with the key ethical values discussed in Section 3.1.

Another category of the Ethics issues table concerns the environment, health and safety, in terms of whether the project activities involve the use of processes or technologies that may cause harm to humans or/and the environment. IKIGAI aims to empower collaborative logistics stakeholders through employing Internet of Things (IoT), Data Spaces, Augmented Reality/Extended Reality (AR/XR), Digital Twins (DTs), Blockchain technology and Machine Learning (ML). These technologies facilitate dynamic data-driven simulations, enhancing comprehension of market changes and automation requirements. They also support the formulation of optimal response strategies, estimating investment costs, and monitoring environmental impact. IKIGAI pilot demonstrations involve the use of IoT for real-time monitoring, blockchain for traceability, AI-driven dynamic routing for real-time route adjustments. However, the safety and security of these technologies will be assured, posing no significant risk to humans or the environment. IKIGAI research and demonstration activities adhere to the core ethical principles described in section 3.1 of this report.

The last pillar of the Ethics issues table refers to the use of Artificial Intelligence in the context of the project – it needs to be clarified whether the project activities include the development, deployment and/or use of AI-based systems and in case they do, whether these systems/techniques can be potentially harmful to humans, the environment, or to society as a whole. This aspect will be clarified in the second release of this deliverable (D6.5). IKIGAI will enforce strict ethical guidelines to ensure AI technologies are robust and trustworthy, respect human rights, protect privacy, and avoid exacerbating social inequalities. This will be done through testing, continuous bias monitoring, and adaptability to emerging threats. The project focuses on AI robustness from both technical and social perspectives, categorizing all the IKIGAI AI solutions as limited risk under the 4-level risk framework for AI systems [20] included in the AI Act ((EU) 2024/1689) [21]. For Generative AI (IKIGAI data transformation Large Language Model - LLM), safeguards will prevent the generation of misleading or harmful content, supported by ethical usage guidelines to ensure beneficial AI outcomes. IKIGAI aims to enhance human capabilities and promote sustainability and safety by aligning with the AI Act to improve decision-making and operational efficiency. The AI models prioritize security, safety, accuracy, and reliability, with fallback plans and reproducibility protocols to meet stringent data security standards.

IKIGAI adheres to the “Do not Significant Harm” (DNSH) principle, ensuring the none of its activities cause significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives outlined in Regulation (EU) 2020/852 [22] on sustainable finance taxonomy. Continuous monitoring and evaluation will ensure compliance with EU regulations, reinforcing commitment to ethical practices and regulatory compliance. The IKIGAI Ethics and Data Protection Officer (Section 3.3) will oversee

all activities involving human participants, data collection/processing or AI deployment, ensuring compliance with ethical requirements throughout the duration of the project.

3.3 ETHICS MANAGEMENT, MONITORING AND REPORTING IN IKIGAI

Building on the ethical principles outlined in Section 3.1, and the ethics self-assessment process summarized in Section 3.2, IKIGAI has established a dedicated ethics management framework under WP6: Project Management and Coordination, to ensure that these principles are effectively implemented and continuously monitored throughout the project's lifecycle. ICCS acts as the project's Ethics and Data Protection Officer, as leader of ST6.1.4: Ethics respecting Policies and T6.3 Data Management Plan. The Ethics and Data Protection Officer identifies and manages any ethical issues that might arise and oversees all ethics-related aspects of the project. Moreover, Ethics and Data Protection Officer is responsible for making sure that all research, innovation and demonstration activities conform to Horizon Europe standards and international, EU and national legislation while respecting the key ethical principles of the project such as integrity, transparency, equality and accountability.

ICCS provides continuous guidance on all ethical matters including research with human participants, data protection, AI ethics and environmental and social responsibility and works closely with the Project Coordinator (FIT), Technical Manager (FIT), Risk Manager (FIT), Innovation and Quality Manager (INLE), Impact, Dissemination and Communication Manager (ALICE) and the Work Package Leaders, to ensure that ethical safeguards are integrated in the project workflows and decision-making processes. As the and Data Protection Officer, ICCS also coordinates the preparation of ethics-related deliverables including this Ethics, Gender and Inclusivity Guide and its updated version towards the end of the project (M40) and the interim and final Data Management Plan (DMP) (M6, M18, M30, M42) and undertakes tasks such as designing consent forms for research experiments with guidelines considering AI ethics-by-design principles. ICCS will maintain an Ethics Compliance Register, a living document where all relevant activities and any emerging issue will be added and updated throughout the project. The Ethics Compliance Register will be kept in the project's SharePoint so that all project partners can easily access it anytime. All ethics-related documentation, including informed consent forms and compliance records will be securely stored online or offline and made available for audit upon request.

Any concern related to ethics will be reported immediately to the Project Coordinator and, where relevant, reflected in the project's Risk Register and periodic reports to the EC. The Ethics and Data Protection Officer will coordinate mitigation measures and, if considered necessary or beneficial for the project, seek external advice from ethics experts to address any major issue. To support continuous learning and training, ICCS will inform partners about existing resources they can refer to when in doubt, such as the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) [23] and the European Network for Research Ethics and Integrity (ENERI) [24]. Each beneficiary is responsible for the ethical conduct of its staff and for ensuring that project activities undertaken by them respect the principles of integrity, transparency and accountability. Moreover, ICCS will ensure coordination and alignment between institutional frameworks of the partner organisations and the project's central ethics governance. Issues specifically related to Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) are presented in Section 4.1. Towards the end of the project (M40), a revised version of this guide will be prepared (D6.5: Ethics, Gender and Inclusivity Guide v2), presenting all the work done in this direction throughout the project, presenting lessons learned, and reflecting on any potential challenges and how they will have been addressed.

4. Gender Equality Commitments and Compliance

4.1 OVERVIEW OF PARTNERS' GENDER EQUALITY PLANS (GEPs)

Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) are a key instrument for ensuring gender equality and promoting structural change within organisations. Within the context of the Horizon Europe Programme, the existence of a GEP is a mandatory eligibility criterion for all *public bodies, research organisations and higher education institutions* established in EU Member States and Associated Countries. Each GEP must necessarily be a public document with dedicated resources, and it should include arrangements for data collection and monitoring and be supported by training and capacity-building.

In line with these requirements, all eligible partners in IKIGAI have confirmed the existence of institutional GEPs or equivalent frameworks that meet the Horizon Europe standards. These plans complement IKIGAI's broader commitment to inclusivity and equality, as described in Section 3.1, and ensure that gender considerations are integrated not only in organisational structures but also in project implementation, communication and stakeholder engagement.

The following table (Table 1) provides an overview of the eleven IKIGAI partners that have Gender Equality Plans available. Please note that the Open Logistics Foundation (OLF) and the Digital Hub Management (DHM) have published a common GEP, so in total the table includes ten different GEPs.

Table 2. Overview of IKIGAI partners' Gender Equality Plans

	Partner Acronym	Country	Publicly Available Link to GEP
1	FIT	IT	https://www.fitconsulting.it/en/gender-equality-plan/
2	INLECOM	EL	https://inlecom.gr/gep/
3	ALICE	BE	https://www.etp-logistics.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/GEP-ALICE.pdf
4	OLF	DE	https://openlogisticsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/GEP_DHM_OLF_IDSA_2024.pdf
5	ARMINES	FR	https://www.armines.net/sites/default/files/armines_gender_equality_plan_final_signed-ew.pdf
6	MINES	FR	https://www.minesparis.psl.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/3893-ENG-Action-plan-for-professional-equality-between-women-and-men-14-DEC-2021-YV-1.pdf
7	ICCS	EL	https://www.iccs.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/ICCS-Gender-Equality-Plan-2024.pdf
8	CERTH	EL	https://www.certh.gr/DDCBA921.en.aspx
9	DHM	DE	https://openlogisticsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/GEP_DHM_OLF_IDSA_2024.pdf
10	ESPLUGUES	ES	https://www.esplugues.cat/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Pla-Igualtat-Intern-Ajuntament-Esplugues-2018-2022.pdf
11	AMB	ES	https://www.amb.cat/en/web/amb/empleats-publics-i-retribucions/igualtat-de-genero

4.2 HOW INSTITUTIONAL GEPs SUPPORT PROJECT ACTIVITIES

A review of the institutional Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) across IKIGAI partners reveals a strong commitment to advancing gender equality through structured, measurable and transparent actions. The plans converge around the following five main topics that directly support IKIGAI's implementation:

- **Governance and Accountability:** Most GEPs establish clear monitoring procedures (through dedicated committees/managers), usually on an annual basis, and often integrated in the HR processes or/and connected to sustainability targets. For instance, the plans of ALICE and CETH set specific objectives, responsibilities and establish relevant indicators to be reviewed on a regular basis.
- **Recruitment, Career Progression and Pay Equity:** Plans include commitments that the recruitment process, as well as the shortlists of potential candidates and the evaluation processes will be transparent. The GEP of ARMINES focuses on five fields, namely equality in salaries, access to training and career development, work-life balance, requirements for reintegration and eliminating sexual harassment in workplaces, and uses the French Index of Professional Equalityⁱ as a reference value.
- **Work-life Balance and Flexibility in Working locations:** Flexibility as well as remote/hybrid work is a common option that appears in most GEPs. The plan of INLE highlights established teleworking processes and flexible working hours to support balance and ALICE's GEP adds to this special parental leave policies and support for caring responsibilities.
- **Training, Awareness and Safe Environments:** Mandatory/targeted training on inclusive leadership and on how to avoid biases appear across different GEPs. ALICE for example includes harassment prevention and awareness raising as a key priority. The GEP of MINES guarantees the facilitation of the processing of reports of acts of sexual and gendered-based violence and discrimination.
- **Gender in Research and Innovation content:** The partners which perform research commit to integrate sex/gender analysis in research design. The GEP of ICCS underlines gender strategy in research while the one of INLE puts emphasis on the integration of gender dimensions to avoid biased solutions.

Moreover, several partners include in their plans baseline data and targets for their organisations. The joint GEP of OLF and DHM gives insights into current workforce distributions, providing a quantitative basis for progress tracking. Public authorities such as AMB keep dedicated transparency records on gender equality policies and actions.

Transparent recruitment and continuous monitoring in the context of partners' GEPs support balanced representation in IKIGAI leadership, WPs and pilot governance. Dedicated training sessions targeting harassment enable safe, respectful working spaces, improving participation quality across different stakeholder groups. Moreover, commitments to incorporate gender/sex-based analysis in research design, further supports IKIGAI's plan to align with the EU Gendered Innovations framework in LIs, KPIs, evaluation and communication (see also Section 5.1). In addition to that, existing relevant indicators and quantitative baselines across partners' GEPs provide an evidence-based approach to be included in IKIGAI's monitoring and reporting outputs. Building on this strong institutional foundation, IKIGAI ensures that gender equality and inclusivity are not only embedded in partner organisations but also actively promoted within the project's own structures and activities. The following section (Section 5.1) therefore outlines the gender composition of the IKIGAI consortium, and the specific actions undertaken to promote gender balance, inclusive participation and equal representation in decision-making, research and communication processes.

5. Consortium's Gender Balance and Baseline Data

5.1 GENDER COMPOSITION OF THE IKIGAI CONSORTIUM AND ACTIONS PROMOTING GENDER BALANCE

The logistics sector remains a male-dominated and socially imbalanced sector, where technologies and operational practices often overlook the needs of women and underrepresented groups. Moreover, according to the latest She Figures report (2024) [26], only 34% of researchers in the EU are women and just 16% of authorship research teams are gender-balanced. These imbalances highlight the need for gender – responsive innovation. IKIGAI will apply the Gendered innovations 2 framework [27] as well as the EC's Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025, including the Roadmap for Women's Rights [28] which was adopted in March 2025, to integrate sex, gender, and intersectional analysis across its innovation activities.

By addressing how gender and other social attributes influence interactions with logistics systems and logistics sites operations, the project aims to contribute to increased representation and participation of women and minorities in the sector. IKIGAI will also explore indicators to monitor inclusivity and gender-balance across its activities such as diversity of involved stakeholders, and will engage with relevant stakeholder networks such as the ALICE Women in logistics initiative [29] and WiLAT (Women in Transport and Logistics, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport) [30] and employ new EU available tools such as the She Figures Index, which is used to track progress across six dimensions of research equality: pipeline segregation, research sectors, career progression, decision-making, research participation, and the incorporation of a gender dimension in research and innovation content. With 100 representing full gender equality, each dimension is assigned a score between 0 and 100.

The baseline gender composition data of the IKIGAI consortium as of M4 of the project (October 2025) show that out of 138 persons involved in IKIGAI in different roles, 55 are women and 83 are men. This corresponds to a 40% women – 60% men composition of the consortium (Figure 1). Please note that this calculation is conducted based on the contact list of IKIGAI and takes into consideration all roles including project managers, researchers/technical experts, support roles, administrative and financial staff etc. This level of representation already indicates a strong degree of gender balance compared to the logistics sector in general, where women represent less than 25% of the workforce with even lower proportions in managerial levels and in technical roles, according to a recent (2025) EC report on Women in Transport – EU Platform for Change [31]. Moreover, it is aligned with the EC Directive 2022/2381 for expert groups composition on corporate boards (at least 40% representation of each gender by June 2026).

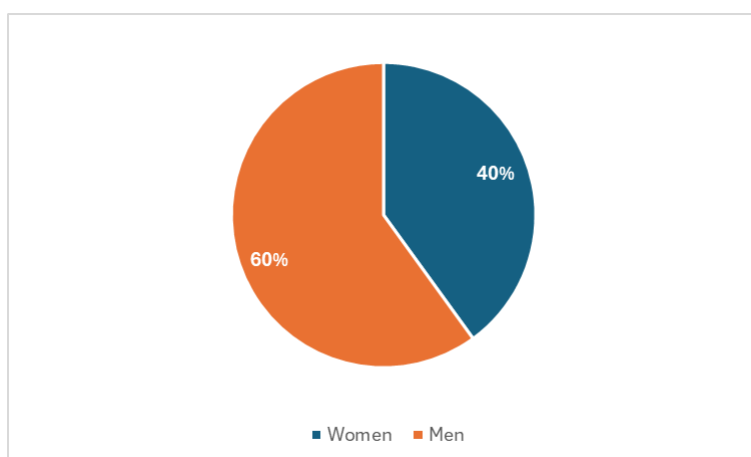


Figure 1. Baseline gender composition of the IKIGAI consortium

In terms of the leadership roles of the project, it is worth highlighting that the Project Coordinator, Technical Project Manager, Innovation and Quality Manager, as well as Impact, Dissemination and Communication Manager are all women. The consortium aims to maintain and further improve this composition throughout the project's lifecycle. Gender composition data will be collected in full compliance with GDPR and according to the Data Management Plan entailed in D6.6. Through this balanced consortium synthesis, proactive monitoring and gender-responsive governance, IKIGAI aims to set a positive example for gender equality and inclusivity in the transport and logistics innovations ecosystem.

5.2 GENDER INTEGRATION, CAPACITY BUILDING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

IKIGAI adopts a dynamic and evidence – based approach to gender equality combining institutional commitments (see Section 4.2) with targeted project – level actions. The project aims to continuously improve gender representation and incorporate gender perspectives in its research, innovation and demonstration activities. Building on the baseline gender composition of the consortium (40% women – 60% men), IKIGAI will promote gender balanced representation in any panel or/and event, ensuring that this EC threshold of 40% (as mentioned in Section 5.1) is kept – and when possible, surpassed -. Furthermore, to support women's visibility, female experts will be nominated when possible for advisory roles and internal peer-review tasks. All IKIGAI partners will be encouraged by the Ethics and Data Protection Officer to align with their institutional GEPs and exchange good practices and lessons learned with one another throughout project implementation. In cases where numerical balance is not possible to be achieved due to different constraints (e.g. certain technical logistics functions), IKIGAI is committed to document the reasons transparently and focus on qualitative improvements such as equal speaking opportunities.

It should be highlighted that IKIGAI acknowledges that gender identity exists along a spectrum and embraces women, men, and people of all gender identities and expressions, including non-binary, transgender, and gender-diverse individuals, ensuring that project activities, data collection and communications are inclusive and respectful of gender diversity.

Gender equality performance will be monitored systematically throughout the life duration of the project, in line with the Ethics management framework established under WP6 of the project, as described earlier in this report (see Section 3.3). Gender composition data will be collected at the beginning, mid-term and end of the project. The Ethics and Data Protection Officer (ICCS) in close collaboration with the Project Coordinator (FIT) will review the data on an annual basis to monitor trends and ensure balanced representation in leadership, advisory and technical roles and to recommend adjustments (e.g. encouraging balanced representation in meetings, workshops and panels) when feasible.

While Section 5 focuses on gender balance and equality, IKIGAI adopts a broader inclusivity perspective, recognizing the diversity of gender identities and expressions, cultural backgrounds and abilities represented across its consortium and stakeholder community. Further details are presented in the following section.

6. Inclusivity Beyond Gender

6.1 DEFINITION AND SCOPE

IKIGAI recognizes that inclusivity extends beyond gender balance to the full spectrum of human diversity. The project aims to create an environment in which all individuals, regardless of their gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, cultural background, socio-economic status, religion or belief, disability or any other characteristic, are valued, respected and empowered to contribute meaningfully to project activities. This is in line with the Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace Action Plan of the EC (2023-24) [32]. With partners across several EU and Associated Member States, IKIGAI promotes culturally sensitive collaboration and communication. Partners are expected to acknowledge linguistic and cultural diversity within teams and working groups and ensure that all engagement and collaboration practices are respectful and context-appropriate.

IKIGAI also aligns with the concept of “belonging” and adopts the definition of the Othering and Belonging Institute of UC Berkeley (OBI) [33], according to which “at its core, belonging means ensuring that everyone has the right to contribute to and demand change within the political, social, and cultural systems that shape our world. It is a vision for a radically inclusive society where mutual power, access, and opportunity exist for all. Belonging offers a way to design a world that works for everyone, counteracting the forces of backlash, exclusion and division” [34]. Building on this vision, IKIGAI aims to promote a sense of belonging within its consortium and stakeholder community. IKIGAI will explore the several available tools of OBI, such as the Belonging Design Principles [35] and its Equity Metrics [36], and examine if and how they can be used in the context of the project. These tools can help identify practical strategies to ensure inclusivity beyond gender across all phases of IKIGAI.

6.2 VULNERABLE AND UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS IN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

IKIGAI acknowledges that certain individuals and communities remain underrepresented of face barriers to participation in logistics innovation, policymaking and research.

To address this, the following groups will receive particular attention during the stakeholder and user groups mapping and engagement process:

- Women and gender-diverse professionals in transport and logistics, especially in technical and managerial positions
- Early-career researchers, to strengthen intergenerational inclusion in the field
- Persons with disabilities, ensuring accessibility of digital tools and physical pilot environments
- Minority, migrant and low-income communities potentially affected by the proposed logistics innovations
- SME representatives and local actors, who may face structural disadvantages compared to large players in the field of logistics

In all stakeholder consultations, workshops and pilot activities, IKIGAI will apply inclusive recruitment criteria and encourage the participation of organisations representing vulnerable groups.

6.3 INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND ACCESSIBILITY OF MATERIALS

IKIGAI will ensure the use of gender-neutral, bias-free and inclusive language across all written and spoken communications, avoiding stereotypes and ensuring balanced representation of

individuals in visuals, examples and narratives, in line with the EC Inclusive Communication Guidelines [37]. In order to guarantee equitable access to information, all public materials and digital tools developed in the project will follow the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) [38]. The Impact, Communication and Dissemination Manager (ALICE) will provide partners with internal guidance on inclusive language and accessibility standards to ensure consistency across all project outputs. Partners will be encouraged to apply these principles not only in formal deliverables and scientific publications, but also in day-to-day project communication, to encourage an inclusive project culture.

7. Sustainability, Legacy and Continuity

IKIGAI's approach to ethics, gender equality and inclusivity is designed to extend beyond the duration of the project, leaving a tangible legacy across the partner organisations and the wider European research, innovation and logistics ecosystems. Sustainability in this context refers to both the continuity of ethical and inclusive practices within the consortium and their transferability outside IKIGAI. Throughout its implementation, cross-project collaboration and clustering activities (e.g. with sister project HOLOGISTICS), knowledge-sharing workshops and participation in EC-organised events and international scientific conferences and forums (e.g. the International Physical Internet Conference (IPIC) or the ITS European Congress), IKIGAI will document and share its good practices and lessons learned in ethics governance and inclusivity. Uptake by other institutions and/or projects will also be facilitated through the PI Coalition, the network governance model developed within IKIGAI to support open and collaborative logistics ecosystems and the scale the impact of the Lis. More information about legacy, continuity and the exit strategy of the project will be included in D6.5: Ethics, Gender and Inclusivity Guide v2 (M40).

8. CONCLUSIONS

This deliverable presents the Ethics, Gender and Inclusivity framework of IKIGAI. The framework aims to contribute to the overall aim of IKIGAI to support the twin digital and green transition of the logistics ecosystem, ensuring that this will happen in an ethical, equal and human-centred way. Ethics, gender-balance and inclusivity are incorporated in every stage of the project, from design to deployment and dissemination. This includes not only the internal community of IKIGAI (i.e. the relationship among partners) but it also affects the way the stakeholder community will be engaged and involved, aiming at enabling trust and cultivating fair collaboration and equal participation. Equality in IKIGAI is not limited only to gender-balance, but it also entails respecting diversity in every form; linguistic, cultural, racial, religious etc. Putting such emphasis on inclusivity is particularly important, as IKIGAI is a project in the field of logistics, a traditionally male-dominated field. By actively working on making sure that its work will be based on the ethical principles discussed herein and that inclusivity will not stay a theoretical component but will become a working reality during the lifecycle of the project, IKIGAI will set a good example for future projects that seek to advance the logistics ecosystem while adhering to strong ethics and empower inclusivity and diversity. This deliverable sets out the different roles and responsibilities of IKIGAI partners in safeguarding these principles, including procedures for monitoring and reporting ethical concerns, ensuring transparency and accountability. The results of ethics monitoring throughout the project's duration will be reported in deliverable D6.5, an updated version of the present guide, in M40 - two months before the planned end of the project. In D6.5, a reflection on how successful the strategies presented herein will have actually been will be included, highlighting potential challenges confronted and discussing measures by which they were mitigated.

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