

**INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS
AS CRITICAL ACTORS
FOR GENDER EQUALITY:**

A REVIEW FROM THE OSCE REGION



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*Institutional Mechanisms as Critical Actors for Gender Equality:
A Review from the OSCE Region*

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Designed by homework



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INTRODUCTION

Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and gender equality, referred to in this publication as IMs, have a unique potential for making women's and men's lives better and, more generally, making democracies stronger, more resilient and egalitarian. Institutional mechanisms are defined in this publication as “state-based structures at all levels and across all formal government areas assigned to promote the rights, status and condition of women and strike-down gender-based bias”¹. In these challenging times for democracy, institutional mechanisms play an important role in preventing the reversal of gender equality in practice.

As ‘critical actors’² in promoting gender equality policy, IMs can compel governments to keep gender equality as a top priority and they are a major vector for gender mainstreaming and targeted approaches to those policy areas that are critical to the equality of women and men throughout society. IMs also collaborate with women's civil society organizations to give voice to the unheard, often through an intersectional approach, and work with international organizations to better achieve their complex policy goals. As government insiders, these state-based gender equality officers, initially called ‘femocrats’ by Australian feminist political science researchers, are better able to promote a gender equality agenda in policy and practice when they form alliances with women's groups.³

IMs first appeared as early as the 1920s in the USA and consisted of small administrative offices focused on women's employment. A new, second wave of women's movements swept the globe in the 1970s and changed this piecemeal presence. With rising demands on governments to address deep-seated gender biases and to enhance women's rights, governments in all regions of the world responded by creating governmental mechanisms with a much broader scope and remit. In parallel, international standards on the status and establishment of IMs started to develop. A list of today's key international standards on IMs is provided in Box 1.

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- 1 Dorothy McBride and Amy G. Mazur, “Women's Policy Agencies and State Feminism”, in Georgina Waylen, Karen Celis, Johanna Kantola and S. Laurel Weldon (eds), *Oxford University Press Handbook on Gender and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). pp. 654-78.
 - 2 Sarah Childs and Mona Lena Krook, “Analyzing Women's Substantive Representation: From Critical Mass to Critical Actors”, *Government and Opposition*, Vol.44 (2), 2009, pp. 125-145.
 - 3 For example see, Hester Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators: Australian Femocrats and the State* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996) or Marian Sawer, *Sisters in Suits: Women and Public Policy in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

Box 1. Major international documents with explicit reference to institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and gender equality

- United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, Priority area H: Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women⁴
- OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality, 2004, Area of Special Interest: Building national mechanisms for the advancement of women⁵
- OSCE, Decision on Women’s Participation in Public and Political Life, 2009⁶
- Council of Europe, Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms, 2007⁷
- 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life⁸

In 1995, through its **Beijing Platform of Action**, the United Nations helped to put IMs firmly on the map, **defining** them as the

“central policy-coordinating unit inside government [whose] main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas”⁹

IMs, often also called ‘**women’s policy machineries**’, including in the Beijing Platform for Action (chapter H), have become permanent and pervasive state actors at all levels of government worldwide.

Given the crucial role of IMs, their potential for making a difference to gender equality and democracy, and the United Nation’s approach to IMs as part of its overall gender

4 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, (Beijing Declaration), UN Fourth World Conference on Women, adopted on 16 September 1995.

5 Ministerial Council Decision 14/04, “2004 OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality” (Action Plan), Sofia, 7 December 2004.

6 Ministerial Council Decision 7/2009, “Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life”, OSCE, Athens, 2 December 2009.

7 Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17 on gender equality standards and mechanisms, Council of Europe, adopted 21 November 2007.

8 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life, OECD Publishing, Paris, 8 March 2016.

9 Beijing Declaration, p. 84

equality strategy, it is no surprise that these highly complex and diverse machineries have been studied both by international organizations and academic researchers in large-scale studies (see Box 2). The study designed for this guide builds upon and contributes to this important body of work.

Box 2. A selection of major international studies on institutional mechanisms

- UN Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW, now UN Women), Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. A Global Synthesis Study, with sub-regional studies on IMs in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia as well as in EU Member States and candidate countries, and other developed economies of the UNECE Region. Published in 2010¹⁰.
- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Gender Equality: Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States¹¹, 2014.
- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), The Pathway to Progress: Strengthening Effective Structures for Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming in the EU¹², 2023.
- Dorothy McBride and Amy G. Mazur, The Politics of State Feminism: Innovation in Comparative Research,¹³ (an overall study from the Research Network on Gender, Politics and the State (RNGS). The Network studied IM activities in five different policy sectors in 17 countries in Western Europe and North America, publishing multiple edited volumes.

The aforementioned studies do not all come to the same conclusions.

¹⁰ Rounaq Jahan, Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. A Global Synthesis Study, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2010.

¹¹ Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Gender Equality: Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States, European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Luxembourg, 5 March 2014.

¹² The Pathway to Progress: Strengthening Effective Structures for Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming in the EU, EIGE, Luxembourg, 27 February 2023.

¹³ Dorothy McBride and Amy G. Mazur, *The Politics of State Feminism: Innovation in Comparative Research*, (Pittsburgh, PA: Temple University Press, 2010).

The 2010 UNDAW Global Study identifies the following **challenges faced by IMs**:

- The sustainability of IMs work is at risk because of a lack of funding when international support ends;
- Gender mainstreaming is still resisted and has not been established or institutionalized as an indispensable state strategy; and
- There is a lack of political will among members of the executive branch and limited sensitivity and commitment to gender equality as a priority of state policy.

On one hand, the same study, along with the 2014 EIGE study, asserts that enhancing political will requires increasing the power of IMs and developing strong civil society links, as well as “increase[ing] the political power of the mechanism itself, by constructing a powerful base that will support the mechanism when threatened by opposition from socially conservative forces.”¹⁴ On the other hand, RINGS finds that the most powerful and well-resourced IMs were not necessarily the most successful. This study revealed that proximity to power, links between IM leaders and the women’s movement and alliances with left-wing political parties mattered more for the success of IMs.

The latest research data, from the 2023 EIGE study, reaffirms that challenges still exist. Countries included in the study still lack a clear commitment to the promotion of gender equality, demonstrated by the absence of gender action plans in 11 Member States, the weak position of the IMs in 18 of them, and in 19 states, overburdened IMs, whose mandates are too broad. Resources are the key to implementing the mandate and function of IMs. In the case of nine IMs, fewer than 10 staff are working on gender equality issues, making it very challenging to fulfil all the tasks and functions necessary for an effective institutional mechanism. Even though there are formal gender mainstreaming mandates, the majority of EU states have not translated them into consistent use of gender mainstreaming tools and methods.

The research carried out for this guide provides a complementary dive into these diverse findings.

14 Jahan, *Strengthening National Mechanisms*, p.66.

1.1 FRAMEWORK AND PURPOSE

For many years, modern societies have recognized that gender inequality remains a fundamental impediment to progress and prosperity. This is recognized in the **1991 OSCE Moscow Document**, which states:

“Full and true equality between men and women is a fundamental aspect of a just and democratic society based on the rule of law. [Participating States] recognize that the full development of society and the welfare of all its members require equal opportunity for full and equal participation of men and women”.¹⁵

The **OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 14/04** on the “2004 Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality” further codifies the theory of change from the Moscow Document, specifically when it comes to the establishment and functioning of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and gender equality. According to paragraph 42 of the 2004 Action Plan, participating States are recommended to “establish or strengthen existing mechanisms for ensuring gender equality”. Building national mechanisms for the advancement of women is also one of the six sectoral priority areas set out in the 2004 Action Plan.

Paragraph 44 (g) of the 2004 Action Plan provides a **clear mandate for ODIHR** to support OSCE participating States related to “Building national mechanisms for the advancement of women”, stating that ODIHR will:

“...continue to provide know-how and support for the building-up of democratic institutions for advancing gender equality, such as Ombudsman’s offices at local and national levels, as appropriate.”

“...facilitate dialogue and co-operation between civil society, media and government in promoting gender-mainstreaming.”¹⁶

Given the emphasis on national level institutional mechanisms in the OSCE Action Plan and in the United Nation’s Beijing Platform of Action, this guide **focuses on bodies within governmental executives at the national level** rather than gender equality bodies in other branches of government, such as within parliaments or National Human Rights Institutions or IMs below the national level. At the same time, the analysis does cover administrative units and offices under the formal authority of national IMs that may operate across national governments as well as at the regional or local level.

¹⁵ Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, OSCE, 3 October 1991.

¹⁶ 2004 Action Plan, para. 44 (g), p. 14.

Taking this into account, the purpose of this guide is to help OSCE participating States and their governmental IMs for the advancement of women and of gender equality to enhance their roles as critical actors in promoting gender equality and a more gender-just society. To this end, the guide:

- Presents a study of 42 countries from across the OSCE region;
- Examines both gender mainstreaming and targeted efforts through the lens of the personal observations and experiences of people who work for IMs rather than via external assessment; and
- Provides concrete, evidence-based recommendations to help governments and IMs with their important and ongoing efforts to pursue the complex and highly challenging agenda for gender equality.

1.2 METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The guide is based on two phases of research. In the first phase, data was collected through desk research and an online survey (Appendix B), which was sent, in November 2021, to the IMs in 56 of the 57 participating States (excluding the Holy See). IMs from 42 States responded. In the second phase, from May to August 2022, 18 IMs from the 42 responding countries were studied in more detail through in-person interviews.

The complete list of IMs covered in the online survey, including their year of establishment, location and IM type, can be found in Appendix A. The online survey, which had both closed and open-ended questions, asked the officials in charge of each IM to provide information about their structure and authority, administrative capacity, policy tools and consultation practices. The IMs were invited to **record what they considered to be successful actions, based on self-assessment**. In addition, they were asked to provide concrete examples of recent policy success related to a) the overall achievement of gender equality goals, b) the use of gender mainstreaming tools, c) advisory council actions, and d) civil society consultations. Analysis of these success stories shows remarkable achievements have been made in at least one of the four studied areas in all 42 countries.

In the **second phase**, confidential interviews were held with IMs that had agreed to a follow-up interview in their survey response. Interviews were conducted with officials working for the IMs, gender experts and civil society representatives in 18 of the 42 countries; a total of 65 interviews. The goal of the interviews was better to understand the tools, components and dynamics of these concrete policy successes. Interviews, via video conference calls, were conducted in 16 countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Italy, Mongolia, Norway, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine. Two countries, Germany and Slovenia, — diverse in IM size, mandate, tradition and current

developments — were selected for field visits and, later, extensive in-person interviews were held over a two-day period.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDE

The guide presents the findings from the survey data and follow-up interviews and concludes with a discussion of practical recommendations, strategies and tools for future action. The quotations used throughout the guide are from the surveys or interviews unless otherwise indicated.

More specifically, Chapter Two describes the structural dimensions of the 42 IMs, while Chapter Three looks at the IMs critical role in policy success and empowerment via three pairs of contrasting case studies; Slovenia and Germany on **the implementation of gender equality goals**, Ukraine and Belgium on **the use of gender mainstreaming tools**, and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sweden on **international collaboration**.

Both the survey responses and the interviews are used in Chapter Four, which presents the different elements necessary for successful action and variations in the development and use of **innovative tools**. From these complex findings, Chapter Five proposes practical recommendations for capitalizing and building on these successes better to develop and fine-tune the role of IMs as **critical actors**.



MAPPING
INSTITUTIONAL
MECHANISMS

Understanding the structural capacity of IMs is essential for understanding their work as **critical actors** and their **catalysing role** for policy success and empowerment. This mapping is a **snapshot of the structural capacity of IMs** in OSCE participating States, provided by the IMs themselves through an online survey and follow-up interviews. Appendix A contains the list of the IMs, from 42 countries, that responded to the survey.

2.1 TYPE, DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT AND MANDATE

The structural snapshot begins with the **type of IMs** in the 42 countries. The full range of types identified in previous studies are in place in the OSCE region, including:

- Ministries
- Administrative agencies (independent or as part of ministries or chief executive offices)
- Commissions/councils (as part of ministries or chief executive offices)
- Institutes

In 32 of the 42 countries that participated in the survey, only one type of IM is present – either an agency, a council or a ministry. By far the **most common type of IM is the administrative agency**, found in 30 countries. In 23 of these 30 countries, the agencies are attached to a specific ministry, such as the Sector for Strategies and Policies for Gender Equality and Social Protection in the Ministry of Social Affairs in Albania, or to the Office of the Prime Minister, such as the Commissioner for Gender Equality in Cyprus. In the remaining seven countries, the administrative agencies are attached to a ministerial level IM, as in Malta, where the Department of Equal Opportunities is part of the Ministry for Equality, Research and Innovation, or in Ireland, where the Gender Equality Division lies in the Ministry for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth. In Sweden, there are two administrative agencies — the Division of Gender Equality attached to the Ministry of Employment and Gender Equality, and the autonomous Agency for Gender Equality.

In some cases, the national IM set up is more complex. While Germany has a Division for Gender Equality within the Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, a new structure was put in place in 2021 that has not been seen anywhere else in the OSCE region — the Federal Foundation for Gender Equality. This is an independent body with a strong advocacy, networking, civil society and research mandate. Both Belgium and Ukraine also have unusual structures. In Belgium, the Federal Institute for Equality between Men and Women is autonomous; one of only two fully autonomous IMs together with the Swedish Agency for Gender Equality among those surveyed. In Ukraine, the Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy is part of the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers and, unlike the Commissioner in Cyprus, they do not have a separate office.

In most of the post-Soviet countries, and in the case of eight OSCE participating States, there are **IMs in the form of commissions/councils**, all attached to an independent ministry or to the Office of the President or Prime Minister. For example, the Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy in Kazakhstan and the Council for Women's Affairs in Armenia are both attached to the Office of the President. In Armenia, the Council operates alongside an administrative agency — the Equal Opportunities Department — as part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Only two countries that participated in the research have neither an administrative agency nor a commission/council, but **IMs as fully-fledged ministries** in their own right. San Marino has the State Secretariat for Health and Social Security and Social Affairs, Political Affairs, Equal Opportunities and Technological Innovation. Luxembourg has a Ministry of Equality between Men and Women.

As the **titles** of the IMs show, there is quite significant divergence in terminology, with the majority of IMs having remit only on gender-specific policy, and some combining gender-specific policy with other policy areas, mostly related to social issues. Since the 2000s, IMs and their titles have evolved, **shifting away from women's status towards gender equality**. More recent developments in IM names include gender-neutral notions of equality, such as equal opportunities or diversity.

According to the survey data on **years of establishment**, 31 of the 52 IMs were established over a decade ago, with the IMs in Norway, Sweden and Portugal set up in the 1970s. The IMs in Belgium, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, San Marino, Slovenia and Sweden, even though set up quite early, have changed their names and titles over time.

In many countries, a change of government can often lead to the **reassignment and renaming of an IM**, as shown in the Czech Republic's survey response: "In 2012, the Department was relocated from the Office of the Government to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and then in 2015, it was transferred back. Similarly, the gender equality agenda has been under the control of various Cabinet Members depending on the Government in charge: the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs from 2012-2014, the Minister of Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Legislation from 2014-2017, the Minister of Justice from 2017-2018, the Prime Minister from 2018-2021."

In addition to the formal remit, IM activities are framed by their **founding documents** and whether they are guided by **formal national gender equality plans**. In 40 of the 42 countries in the study (except Malta and Kazakhstan) IMs were created in conjunction with equality plans. In Malta, there is no guiding framework. In Kazakhstan, the "concept of family and gender policies" is contained in a decree, thus neither in legislation nor in an equality plan.

In over half of the countries (59%), IMs were **established as a result of a government decision**; usually by formal decrees from the chief executive office or cabinet. In one third of the countries, IMs originated in legislation, usually legislation on gender equality or equal opportunities of women and men. For example, Sweden and Montenegro reported that IMs were set-up by gender equality laws and government decrees. Gender equality action plans and framework legislation can formally identify the major areas of action, goals and, potentially, specific steps to promote gender equality. Additionally, the UN's 1995 Beijing Platform for Action serves as a model framework document that remains a touchstone for gender equality policy across the OSCE region, working in tandem with UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Taking the example of Portugal and Lithuania to look closer at current national action plans, we can see that IMs follow **two different approaches to gender equality policy**. Some IMs apply a uniquely **gender-mainstreaming approach**, where the IM seeks to integrate gender equality goals systematically in all areas of policy. Others apply a **dual-track approach** that combines **gender mainstreaming with a targeted policy approach** that focuses on one or more crucial policy areas, such as violence against women, economic empowerment of women, or equal pay for women and men.

2.2 LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

Three-quarters of the **administrative leadership** of IMs in the surveyed countries are women and the rest are men. The gender composition of IM staff also reflects this trend. In seven countries, there are no male full-time staff, and only three countries — Luxembourg, the Czech Republic and Malta — have more men than women on the IM staff. In the remaining countries, there is anywhere from 10 to 40% men staff members.

According to existing research,¹⁷ both the **background of the IM leadership** and how they are appointed may make a difference to their approach. When IMs are headed by individuals connected to the women's movement, the IM is more likely to play an **'insider role'**, acting as a voice and advocate for the women's movement within government. There is clear opportunity for insider influence in the surveyed countries given that one third of all IM heads come from civil society or academia. Over half are from civil service backgrounds, suggesting the increasing institutionalization of IMs.

There is some debate over whether higher **budgets** produce better results. Over half of the IMs have budgets that are fully dependent on their parent ministries. Many countries, for example France, Norway, Portugal and Sweden, reported complex budget models that re-

17 Dorothy McBride and Amy G. Mazur, *The Politics of State Feminism: Innovation in Comparative Research*, (Pittsburgh, PA: Temple University Press, 2010).

flect their combination of gender mainstreaming and targeted approaches. In other OSCE participating States, portions of national operating budgets and project funding come from foreign donors such as the European Union or UN agencies, or even private organizations and national governments of wealthier countries with extensive international development programmes. IM budgets are notoriously difficult to measure, given they are often dispersed across different offices. This is especially challenging where countries apply a dual-track approach, combining gender mainstreaming alongside gender-targeted approaches. Foreign donor contributions are also difficult to track, as not all funding is directly managed by the IMs.

Over one third of IMs surveyed did not provide any budget data on the share of national budget, and half of IMs gave no information on the budget distribution across their activities. In responses from Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, North Macedonia, Norway and the United States, the budget could not be specified because funds are dispersed across different government units. In Ireland, for example, the IM survey response pointed out that it is impossible to distinguish between the budget of the department and that of the larger ministry which houses it. The budgets of IMs in Cyprus and Türkiye provide additional insight.

Box 3. Stand-alone budgets in Cyprus and Türkiye

Cyprus: The budget of the National Machinery for Women’s Rights (NMWR) covers the operational expenses of the Equality Unit and the budget for grants and subsidies to women’s organizations, which constitutes the biggest part of the annual budget. The grants for women’s organizations and NGOs cover two categories of sponsorship: a) an annual subsidy to cover the operational costs of all members of the Council and some members of the National Committee on specific conditions and b) subsidies for the implementation of particular projects and activities such as conferences, training workshops and information seminars, and research on gender-related issues. In recent years, the budget of the NMWR has been increasing considerably — from 270.000 euros in 2017 to 375.000 euros in 2021 and 520.000 euros in 2022 — in order to implement actions and programmes to promote gender equality at the national level.

Türkiye: The budget of the General Directorate on the Status of Women is split between a central and provincial organization. The provincial organization delivers services for victims of violence through shelters and Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centres. The largest share of the total budget goes to the provincial organization (95%). The budget of the central organization mainly covers the costs of personnel, research, projects and training.

Given the difficulty of getting accurate measurements of IM budgets, the presence of **full-time staff** in an IM is arguably a more accurate indicator of IM capacity. Of the 37 countries that supplied staffing information, only San Marino and Liechtenstein have only part-time staff and, in Albania, there are more part-time staff than full-time staff. The numbers of full-time staff in national level IMs indicate that there is a wide range of staff-size: Sweden (104), Azerbaijan (70), Portugal (68), Germany (67), Italy (62), Belgium (45), Romania (40), Switzerland (30), Norway (23), Czech Republic (10), Georgia (7), Slovenia (7), Bosnia and Herzegovina (6), and Ukraine (4).

The **organizational structure** of IMs has an impact on the effectiveness, extent and scope of its action. IMs can have:

1. Administrative divisions
2. Field/branch offices
3. Policy area-specific advisory/coordination bodies
4. Information/awareness-raising units

While separate administrative divisions within an IM allow for more systematic focus on certain policy sectors, field offices at the sub-national level may permit the IM to pursue policy implementation and programme delivery more effectively in a specific geographic area. Advisory councils and coordination bodies are the essential mechanisms for the vital collaborative work with other departments, civil society and international partners. Information centres are key to raising public awareness and changing attitudes about gender equality. The French gender equality machinery is an example of a complex internal structure.

Box 4. Internal organizational structure of the IM in France

The French national Department of Women's Rights and Equality applies a complex administrative system with the following elements:

- a. Separate administrative divisions on equal employment, civil rights, violence, culture and social affairs
- b. Territorial branch offices at the regional level
- c. A network of 25 gender equality focal points in each ministry
- d. Consultative councils on gender equality, equal employment and sexual violence
- e. The National Women's Rights and Equality Information Centre, with a network of 125 information centres at regional and departmental levels

Many IMs also have an additional mechanism, not accounted for in the survey, but just as important: **administrative focal points** in each ministry with whom they work. Focal points are currently active in all 18 countries that were part of the second phase of the study, although they are active to varying degrees in different ministries and typically operate without any extra funding. For an example of good practice on focal points, see the case study of Slovenia in the next section.

2.3 POLICYMAKING CAPACITY

While it is important to have the administrative resources and organizational structure to pursue gender equality, it is equally important to be able to **follow through on policy action** throughout the complex policy process, whether for legislation or executive-based decision-making. This is critical to enabling IMs to achieve one of their central goals: to take formal policy statements and put them into meaningful policy practice with results that actually improve gender equality and women's rights within a given setting.

Box 5. Turning words into action: stages of a policy cycle

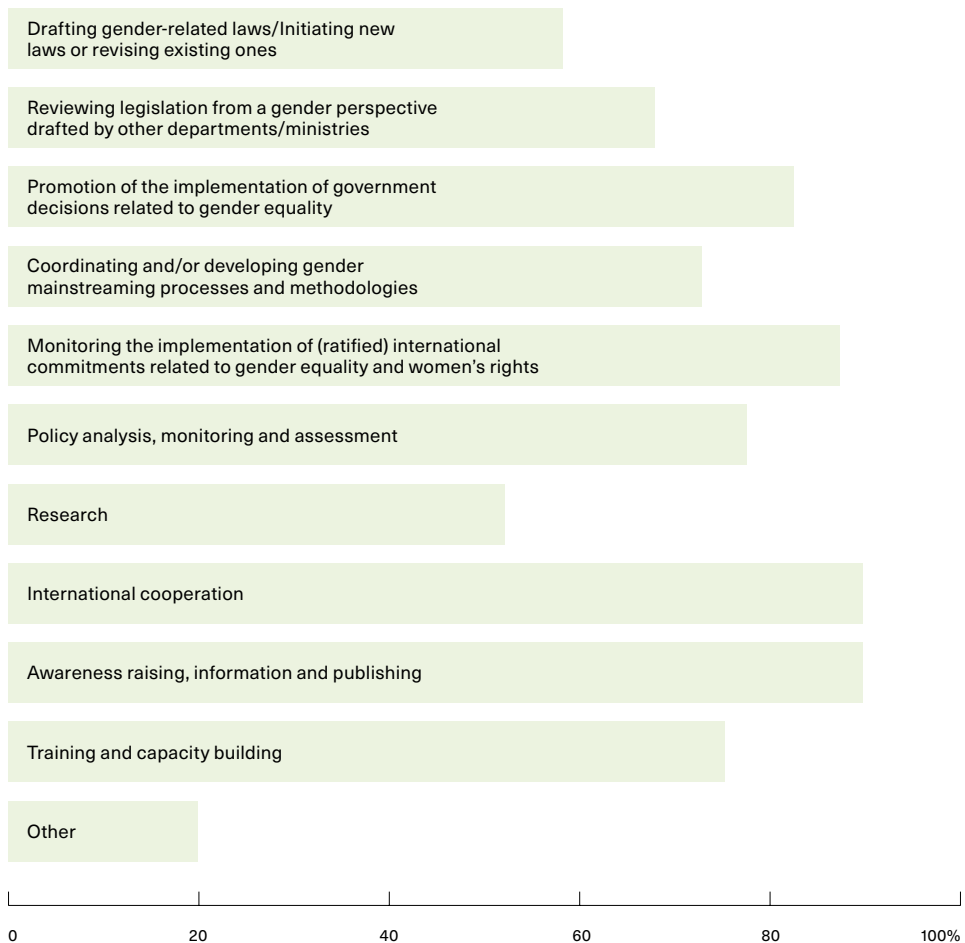
In the democratic process, policies go through three major stages of development:

1. Pre-adoption, where problems are identified, agendas are set, and proposals are made;
2. Adoption, where a policy proposal on the decision-making agenda formally comes into effect and a policy statement or output is generated; and
3. Post-adoption, where policies are implemented and administered then followed up, often with a formal evaluation, reporting and monitoring. This may or may not start the policy cycle all over again. As current research asserts, authoritative implementation and evaluation that empowers gender equality-policy actors is key to effective policies in practice that have the potential to transform gender relations and promote gender equality.¹⁸

¹⁸ Isabelle Engeli and Amy G. Mazur, Taking implementation seriously in assessing success: the politics of gender policy in practice, *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, Vol. 1(1-2), 2018, pp. 111-129.

Figure 1 presents the responses to the survey question, “**Which policy tasks have been performed more than three times a year over the past three years**”. Interestingly, IMs frequently perform all the tasks. Implementation, monitoring, international cooperation and raising awareness are at the top — 70 to 80 per cent of all IMs. The lowest, research, still comprises over 50 per cent of all IMs’ action. What is clear from this snapshot of IM tasks is that there is a high level of activity across all of the actions necessary to pursue meaningful policy development and **to turn words into deeds**.

Figure 1. Policy related tasks performed by IM in the past 3 years



In terms of **overall policy approach**, when asked, “**Which best describes the largest share of your IM’s work?**”, 59 per cent of all IMs chose formal gender mainstreaming, five per cent informal gender mainstreaming, which is not mandated, and 34 per cent targeted policy work. Many respondents stated that they actively pursued a **dual-track approach**, combining gender mainstreaming with a policy-targeted approach. Therefore, rather than choosing one over the other, there was balance between the two. As one ‘femocrat’ wrote, “Mainstreaming gender into public policies is by default an approach of democracy, equality and non-discrimination and social justice”.

In terms of **specific policy areas** on which IMs engage, the top three, each selected by over 80 per cent of IMs, are: violence against women and domestic violence; sex/gender-based discrimination and harassment; and economic empowerment and participation. Additionally, over half of IMs focus on family life and political participation and around 40 per cent on sexual and reproductive rights. Some of the additional policy areas listed in the survey responses include: for the United States of America, the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls; for France and Mongolia, gender-based stereotypes; for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Ukraine and United States of America, Women, Peace and Security; for Denmark, trafficking in human beings; for Liechtenstein, women with disabilities; for Cyprus, ICT empowerment; and for Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Iceland and Portugal: rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people.

2.4 GENDER MAINSTREAMING TOOLS

It is important to drill down into the specific tools for mainstreaming gender used by IMs, given that international bodies, IMs and national governments have all emphasized and made formal commitments to promote gender mainstreaming.

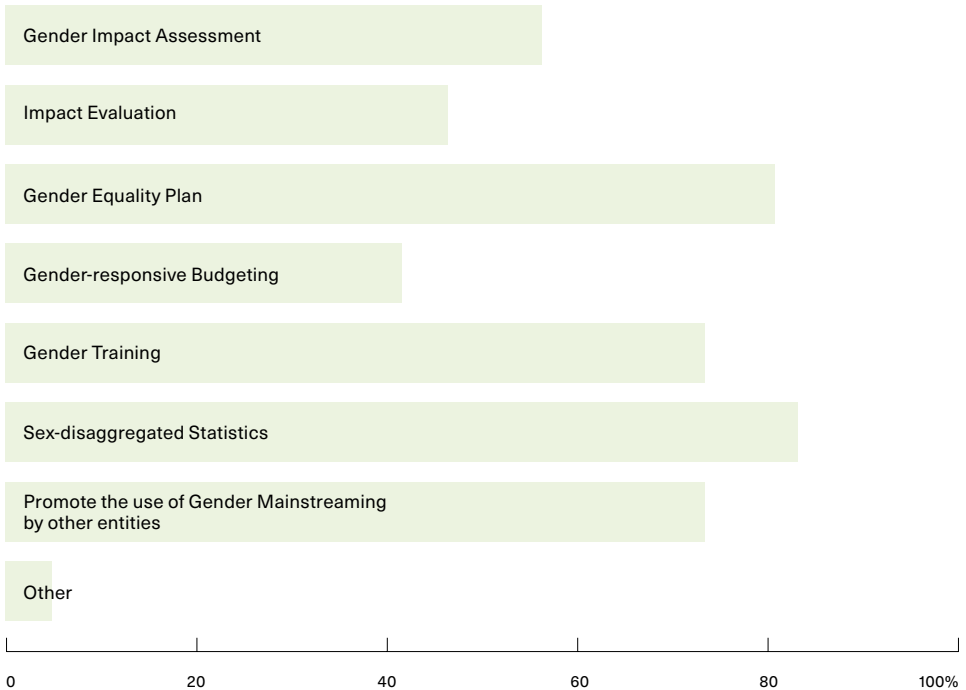
Box 6. List of gender mainstreaming tools for IMs to use

1. **Gender Impact Assessment** — evaluation or assessment of a proposal of a law, policy or programme before it is adopted to identify, with a preventive aim, the likelihood of a given decision having negative consequences for the state of gender equality;
2. **Gender Equality Plan** — a combined set of actions that articulate a strategic view of how to achieve gender equality contained in a single formal policy statement. These actions include impact assessments/audits of procedures and practices to identify gender biases and inequalities, to identify and implement innovative strategies to correct any biases or inequalities, and to set targets and monitor progress;
3. **Gender-responsive Budgeting** — preparation and execution, from a gender perspective, of budgets in departments/ministries and parliament not specifically focused on gender equality by investing in and contributing to gender equality;
4. **Gender Training** — programmes that are a part of wider strategies to promote gender equality through awareness-raising, empowering learning, knowledge building, and skills development;
5. **Sex-disaggregated Statistics** — data collected and tabulated separately for women and men to enable measurement of the differences between women and men on various social and economic dimensions. Ideally, this data is also disaggregated by other factors, such as age, disability, etc.; and
6. **Gender Impact Evaluation** — analysis or assessment of a law, policy or programme after it has been implemented/enforced to determine whether it has achieved its goals and/or advanced gender equality.

See more on definitions and concepts of gender mainstreaming tools at the website of the European Institute for Gender Equality.

The survey asked which of the six tools the IMs use on a regular basis, and asked them to explain how they are used in specific examples. As Figure 2 shows, all six tools are used on a regular basis, but leave space for additional work on the gender impact of national policy/legislation. Additionally, a significant number of countries need to do more to make national budgets more gender-responsive.

Figure 2. GM tools used on a regular basis



Given the role of IMs as central policy coordinating units in charge of supporting gender mainstreaming throughout government, IM's were asked whether and how they cooperate with other government departments to implement **gender mainstreaming**. Nearly 80 per cent of IMs indicated that they did. Three country examples are given below.

Box 7. IMs working with other government departments on gender mainstreaming

Mongolia: Work on the localization of the country's gender equality policy began in 2013 and currently 12 government sectors, 21 provinces, the capital city and eight of its nine districts, through a participatory process, have developed and are implementing their own gender sub-programmes.

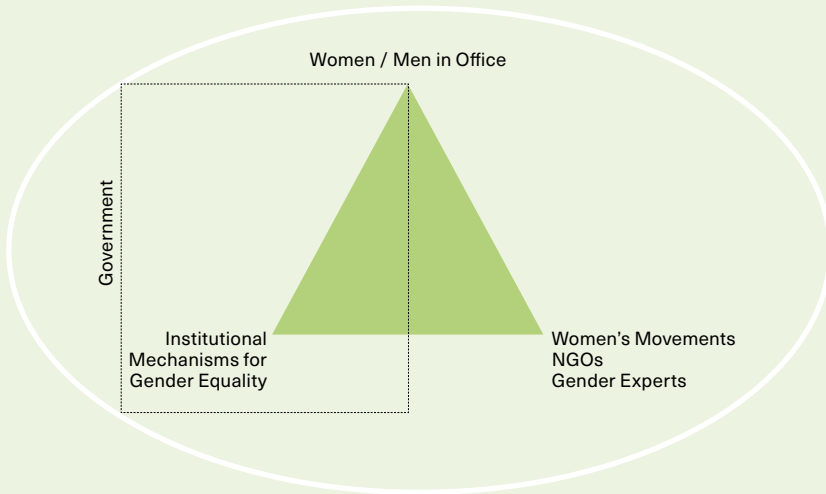
Moldova: In accordance with Law No. 5/2006 a gender equality group is established in each central authority, responsible for gender mainstreaming in the respective government sector.

Albania: [They] promote the use of gender mainstreaming by including gender equality components in sectorial strategies, by promoting the collection of sex-disaggregated statistics in sectorial strategies, by following up on the implementation of the National Strategy of Gender Equality and through the application of gender-responsive budgeting by the ministries, municipalities and other actors.

2.5 POLICY CONSULTATION

The next element of gender equality action is the ability of IMs to transform words into deeds. This requires cooperation with government and civil society. The questions here are: **To what degree and how do IMs work with their partners in government and in civil society through policy consultation?** Research on IMs has shown that consultations have a democratic potential to empower previously excluded groups and to pursue authoritative and meaningful action to promote gender equality, through a **Triangle of Empowerment**.

Box 8. The potential of IMs: The Triangle of Empowerment



Researchers from across the globe have drawn attention to the importance of ‘triangles of empowerment’, ‘strategic partnerships’ and ‘feminist coalitions’ of IMs, NGOs and social movements, and other actors in the government and parliament.¹⁹ It is through this triangle that a gender equality policy agenda is effectively advanced. Moreover, IMs are considered to be sites of women’s representation: both descriptively, through bringing actors who speak for women and gender equality into the affairs of government, and substantively, through bringing ideas of gender equality into policy debates, content and implementation. The complex interests and needs of women, men, boys and girls should be represented in all their intersectional complexity. For the triangle to have the maximum effect, the full range of intersectional needs and interests must be represented. Gender experts — usually independent researchers and academics who seek to help the gender equality agenda through their research — are key players in the process, together with women’s movement actors.²⁰ The third point of the triangle is equally important, as allies and partners (both men and women) in government and administration who support gender equality goals can have an empowering effect for IMs as gender equality feminist actors, particularly for women in public office.

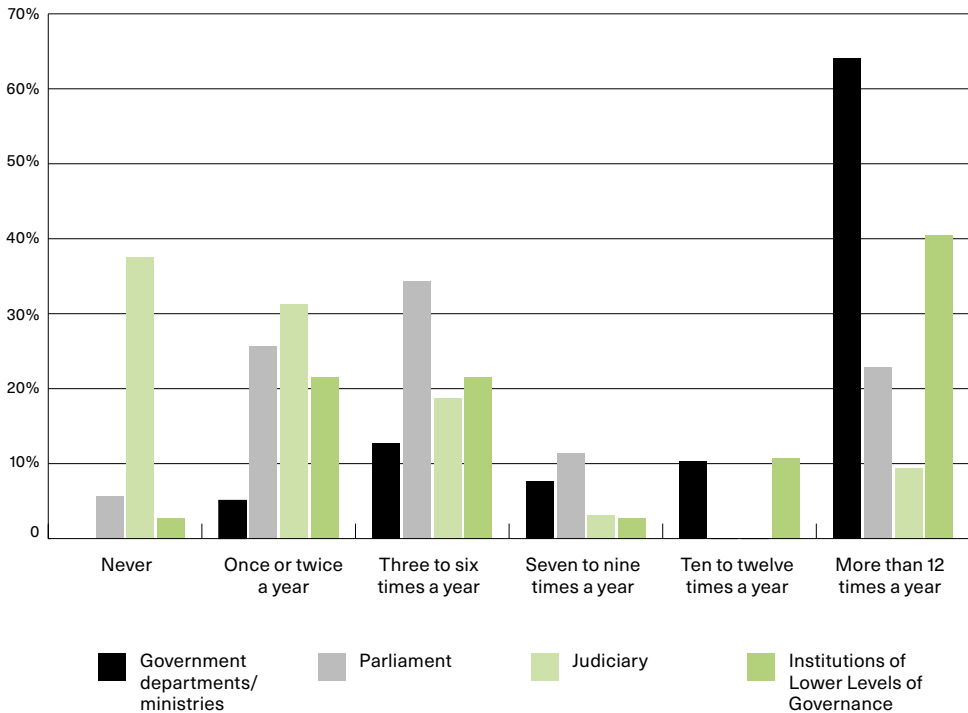
19 Anne Maria Holli, “Feminist Triangles: A conceptual analysis” *Journal of Representative Democracy*, Vol. 44 (2), 17 June 2008, pp. 169–185.

20 Season Hoard, *Gender Expertise in Public Policy: Towards a Theory of Policy Success*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2015).

The IMs' survey responses provide valuable information on how often they consult state bodies and civil society organizations.

The **state partners** for IMs are not limited to government departments and ministries or the Office of the President or Prime Minister. Other important state actors may reach out to the IMs for a variety of reasons. IMs are regularly consulted by their state partners, including parliaments, particularly given the trend in 'gender-sensitive parliaments'.²¹ IMs are also consulted by lower levels of administration, at the sub-national and even local levels, on matters of administration, implementation, evaluation and programme delivery. As Figure 3 shows, the highest frequency of consultations are with the partners with the closest proximity to the IMs — government departments and ministries.

Figure 3. IM consultations with state actors



²¹ Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region, OSCE/ODIHR, Warsaw, 6 December 2021.

Turning to **civil society partners**, IMs were asked what consultations they pursue with civil society organizations as well as with **gender policy experts**. Most CSO consultations (68 per cent) happen through representative commissions and councils with representatives from civil society — both gender-specific groups and other NGOs, such as trade unions or business associations.

Box 9. Examples of IM consultations with civil society actors

Kazakhstan: The Advisory Group on Equal Opportunities of the National Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan runs regular consultation meetings, round tables, conferences, and seminars.

Norway: Civil society participates in reference groups and public committees and is encouraged to participate in written public consultations on new government measures.

Latvia: Informal consultations are conducted with civil society organizations to monitor the implementation of gender equality policy and to carry out activities within the Plan on the Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men in Latvia.

2.6 INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

The UN's framework on gender equality is very important for all the countries that participated in the study, along with the frameworks of the Council of Europe, the European Union and the OSCE. The prominence of these frameworks means that international influence and cooperation can trigger a 'boomerang effect', meaning they act as a significant lever for successful action on the national level. The development of feminist foreign policy in certain countries further contributes to the importance of international collaboration and influence in national level action.

Box 10. The 'boomerang effect' and feminist foreign policy

Research has shown the importance of international influence on national level policy across the globe, although the exact process of transmitting international gender norms to the national level is quite complex. A 'boomerang effect' has been identified whereby national level feminist policy actors, both IMs and NGOs, lobby at the international level for proactive policy in order to compel their national level decision-makers to take action. Transnational advocacy networks of international and national NGOs are also part of this process.²²

As a result of growing awareness about gender issues in international politics, some individual governments (first initiated in Sweden) have started formally to pursue a feminist foreign policy, which includes a broad range of 'feminist' action, including most commonly funding gender equality efforts in other countries in need.²³

The survey asked whether, in the past two years, IMs have worked with any of the major international organizations that are global leaders in women's rights and gender equality. Unlike many other questions in the survey, all surveyed countries responded. The highest level of collaboration (80 to 90 per cent) is with UN Women, the EU and the Council of Europe, followed by the OECD (60 per cent) and other entities. The international collaboration includes a wide range of activities, all of which are key to IM success.

22 Margaret A. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

23 Claudia Zilla, *Feminist Foreign Policy: Concepts Core Components and Controversies, SWP Comment*, No. 48, August 2022.

Box 11. Examples of IM collaboration with international and regional organizations

Formal policy processes

- Implementation of the UN's CEDAW and Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (known as the Istanbul Convention): Andorra, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Norway, Romania and Ukraine
- Participation in the OSCE's Women, Peace and Security research and activities: Albania, Serbia, Sweden and USA
- Support to national legislation and policy adoption by the UN: Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Norway and Portugal

Direct financial assistance either as donors or as recipients

- EU funding on gender-related capacity building: Serbia and Türkiye
- Donor support via UN Women: Germany and Sweden
- Direct funding to countries for specific projects: Norway to the Czech Republic for IM operating costs and NGO project funding; Sweden to Ukraine for training

Information dissemination and research

- Information campaigns on gender equality supported by UN agencies/ OSCE/EU: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Switzerland and Türkiye
- Participation in international studies, among others by OSCE, EIGE, or OECD: Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Türkiye and Ukraine

Technical expertise and training

- EU Programme for Technical Assistance (TAIEX) and Council of Europe support: Albania, Azerbaijan, North Macedonia and Romania
- Expert support in legislative reform by the OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe: North Macedonia

The contrasting case study pairs in the next chapter show how these different types of international collaboration are carried out to pursue successful policy practices. As a result of successful collaboration, formally-adopted policies are able to stand the test of time, mitigating the risk that they disappear through “**policy evaporation**”.

Box 12. ‘Policy evaporation’ in action

The pursuit of successful policies in the context of international collaboration must work against what some policy analysts have identified as ‘policy evaporation’²⁴, where governments agree to adopting quickly a series of national level policies in order to codify international norms, such as gender mainstreaming, with little intention of putting them into action. Thus, the policy does not go from words to deeds. As an OECD study states, “the lack of effective leadership in supporting the implementation of mainstreaming policies can result in ‘policy evaporation’”.²⁵ For example, formal gender equality policies may ‘evaporate’ following a country’s membership process to join the EU, during which gender equality compliance is required.

24 Sarah Hlupelike Longwe, The evaporation of gender policies in the patriarchal cooking pot, *Development in Practice*, Vol. 7 (2), May 1997, pp. 149-156.

25 OECD, *Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues: 7 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews*, (Paris: OECD Publications, 2014).

The highly collaborative process of constructing the European Union’s Gender Equality Index, managed by the European Institute of Gender Equality, is an exemplar of international collaboration and policy empowerment, particularly given the importance placed on performance indicators, reporting and gender-based data in the evaluation and monitoring of gender equality policy at international and national levels.

Box 13. The EIGE Gender Equality Index process: an exemplar of international collaboration

The EU’s Gender Equality Index is designed “...to measure the progress of gender equality in the EU” and to give “more visibility to areas that need improvement and ultimately support policy makers to design more effective gender equality measures.”²⁶ The process for developing the index is highly collaborative and necessarily involves the active participation of partners within the EU Member States and candidate states. The staff of the national IMs work regularly in collaboration with researchers and statisticians at EIGE. As such, the development of both national and EU-wide indexes can be seen as a way to empower IMs by arming them with the science and instruments to assess gender equality performance in their country and to report it to the authorities and the public at large. Hence it gives IMs more validation of and direction to their work. In addition, consultation with national IMs and experts produces a more ‘robust’ and accurate index.

In the survey, IMs from eleven countries — Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Ukraine — mentioned their participation in the EIGE Gender Equality Index process and/or the use of their ranking in the index as an important part of their work.

²⁶ Gender Equality Index, 2021 Edition, European Institute for Gender Equality, last accessed 25 September 2023.



SUCCESS STORIES

OF GOOD PRACTICE:

THREE PAIRS OF

CONTRASTING CASES

The individual success stories told by the IMs in their survey responses demonstrate the determination to succeed in a diverse range of countries. At the same time, as the analysis in this chapter illustrates, there is no one-size-fits-all metric of success or best practice for all IMs. As one IM responded to the question on whether they had any general recommendations for the use of gender mainstreaming tools: “No, because it depends on the socio-political context of each IM. It is preferable that it is the other way around, IMs set their own benchmarks and select best practices that suit their demands.”

Given that it is impossible to present all survey responses here, this chapter focuses on three contrasting pairs of success stories in six countries²⁷. The six stories are illustrative of the work completed by many more IMs that have achieved similar results.

Pair 1: Achieving Gender Equality Goals

- Slovenia: Division of Equal Opportunities
- Germany: Division of Gender Equality

Pair 2: Gender Mainstreaming Tools in Action

- Ukraine: Commissioner for Gender Policy
- Belgium: Institute for the Equality of Women and Men

Pair 3: International Collaboration

- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Agency for Gender Equality
- Sweden: Gender Equality Division and Gender Equality Agency

The three pairs cover the economic, regional and cultural diversity of the OSCE participating States and the full range of IM characteristics in the study including type, remit, staff-size and date of establishment. They reveal a common process that leads to success within each context.

²⁷ As stated earlier, the publication is developed based on the self-assessments of success by the IMs themselves. Unless stated otherwise, the information is based on the survey and follow-up interviews.

PAIR ONE: ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY GOALS SLOVENIA AND GERMANY

This first case study examines the achievements of IMs' gender equality goals. While both IMs are administrative agencies attached to ministries, the German agency has a larger budget and more staff and administrative capacity than its Slovenian counterpart. This is partly due to differences in the political system, as well as the size of the countries, geographically and in terms of population.

Slovenia: Division of Equal Opportunities

Since 2012, the Slovenian IM, the Division of Equal Opportunities (DEO), has been located in the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity. Even under shifting coalition governments, which prioritized gender equality to varying degrees, the small, dedicated unit has continued to pursue its stated goals. The unit employs a chief and seven fulltime staff members, who all have the status of civil servants. The work of the Slovenian DEO is based on **an institutionalized dual-track approach**. **Gender mainstreaming tools are codified in legislation** and they pursue targeted policy programmes. The DEO is in charge of formulating the national gender equality strategy, which is then put to parliament. It performs an advisory role and supports civil society, together with direct policy development and targeted programme interventions aimed at shifting awareness and capacity.

Recognizing the importance of civil society, a key component of the DEO's programming is a permanent, **annual grant programme for NGOs** with an open call for gender equality-related service delivery and research. The five NGO projects funded by the DEO in 2022 represent an intersectional approach, with one of the major grants being given to Roma women.

The DEO coordinates an active **gender focal point network**, which includes representatives from all government ministries and which has been central to the long-term results of the unit. Consequently, the DEO acts as a strategic support unit, guiding ministerial focal points in their advocacy and policy work. An example of a concrete result of this activity was the mainstreaming of gender considerations into the core legislation of the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry adopted a gender equality plan, participated in the reporting to the CEDAW Committee, introduced awareness-raising on sexual harassment in the police, took measures to advance women in the police, and trained female and male police officers on the Istanbul Convention standards. The focal point in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently setting up a gender equality training programme for the diplomatic corps, in line also with the declared feminist foreign policy in Slovenia.

The DEO's direct work focuses on three priority areas: a) violence against women and domestic violence; b) equal distribution of care responsibilities; and c) reducing the pension

gap between women and men. As part of this work, the DEO has implemented European Commission co-financed programmes, including “My Work. My Pension” and “Action Dad”, consisting of diverse sets of awareness-raising activities. Additionally, it has contributed to changes in legislation in those areas, including in those related to increased paternity leave for fathers.

Germany: Department of Gender Equality

Germany’s IM, the Department of Gender Equality (DGE), has been located in the same ministry since 1986; the Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. With 67 full-time staff and significant financial resources, the DGE bases its work not on a law but on a constitutional codification of gender equality policy implementation. More specifically, the Department’s priority areas are mostly determined by the very detailed coalition agreements of the government in power. Currently, the Department’s priority areas are a) promoting an overall gender equality strategy; b) women’s economic independence and leadership; and c) equality in care.

The DGE has 12 separate units and a permanent advisory body with NGO and government representatives, as well as a **Gender Equality Commission**. This is a unique committee of experts that is constituted after every new election tasked to produce an official report on a specific issue in gender equality. The report is based on research they have conducted and makes recommendations to the federal government. So far three reports have been published and each has significantly shaped the further action of the government.

As in the case of Slovenia, the DGE performs an advisory and civil society support role, together with direct policy development and targeted programme interventions. Approximately 40 per cent of its annual budget is dedicated to **supporting CSOs** in policymaking and research efforts. The DGE opts for a strategic selection in granting money to stakeholders that can sustain support over time and that match the goals of the Department.

The DGE has pursued different gender equality goals, through a) formalizing gender mainstreaming in the government and specifically developing a new gender impact assessment tool, applied from 2022; b) working with IMs in the federal units (*Länder*) to track and publish sex-disaggregated statistics; and c) contributing to larger efforts to develop a more balanced division of labour between men and women on caring responsibilities.

The DGE’s work on care, following up on the recommendations of the 2nd Gender Equality Report, resulted in important reform to parental leave, adopted in 2019. Here, a national level ‘triangle of empowerment’, with limited international collaboration, has been developed between the DGE, national gender policy experts and the parliamentary committee in order to produce concrete policy in one of the DGE’s highest priority areas.

Formal space is provided for NGOs to participate on the DGE's advisory council and it has regular meetings and consultations with NGOs, including groups representing under-represented women. Despite this, however, there has been a rising call in recent years for an autonomous structure that works more closely with civil society. This broad based call, articulated in the 2nd Gender Equality Report²⁸, laid the groundwork for the creation, in 2021, of the **Federal Foundation for Equality**, with its own budget and staff. The setup of the Foundation has been fully led and managed by the DGE, so that the Foundation complements DGE's work as the central government body on gender equality advancement.

PAIR TWO: GENDER MAINSTREAMING TOOLS IN ACTION UKRAINE AND BELGIUM

These case studies show the importance of using gender mainstreaming tools. In both Ukraine and Belgium, very different IMs followed good practice in putting into action gender mainstreaming tools — a Government Commissioner with a small team in the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and an autonomous institute in Belgium — and in the context of divergent political and economic settings.

Ukraine: Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy

Ukraine's IM structures have been developing over recent decades, resulting in the appointment of the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy in 2017. With solid experience in gender equality issues as a civil society leader, the Commissioner has been able to effectively use her political clout and connections to convince the current government to place gender equality higher on its agenda and to help mostly male government decision-makers to develop an ever-increasing level of gender awareness. In light of the Russian military attack in Ukraine, the role of the Commissioner is even more important, as it ensures that gender considerations are taken into account for all conflict and post-conflict-related matters.

Adoption, implementation and evaluation of gender mainstreaming tools has been at the centre of the proactive Ukrainian institutionalized approach. The boomerang effect of international influence is also in play, given the extent to which the Commissioner emphasizes the various international engagements and frameworks they draw upon in the process of promoting the use of gender mainstreaming tools and in their inter-departmental coordination within the government. Some examples of how gender mainstreaming tools are applied in Ukraine are given here.

28 Second Gender Equality Report, German Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2017.

1. **Gender Impact Assessments:** reviewing draft legislation from a gender perspective before it is submitted to the national parliament;
2. **Gender Impact Evaluation:** monitoring and reporting on the impact of the national gender equality legislation, among others through inter-departmental government coordination;
3. **Gender Equality Plan:** supporting the development of a series of governmental action plans on diverse policy areas, including on the Women, Peace and Security agenda;
4. **Gender-responsive Budgeting:** gradually introducing gender-responsive budgeting practices by priority ministries, aiming at fully-fledged application by all government agencies;
5. **Sex-disaggregated Statistics:** facilitating data collection for reporting on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Since 2021, with support from OSCE/ODIHR, the Commissioner's team has been developing a Network of Gender Advisers across the country, bringing together appointed advisers from ministries, government agencies and regional and local administration. The already codified gender mainstreaming tools are being used by these Gender Advisers to further disseminate the gender mainstreaming approach down to regional and local government.

To conclude, the Commissioner's highly proactive agenda has had the full support of its government, a highly cooperative relationship with civil society and full collaboration with a broad range of international partners. This suggests that, to be successful, the triangle of empowerment should actually be expanded to a rectangle between IMs, international actors, civil society and government.

Belgium: Institute for the Equality of Women and Men

Established in 2002, the Institute has been pursuing a systematic gender mainstreaming approach in the federal government and administration. The Institute is autonomous and is therefore able to pursue legal action or freely provide advice even as it operates under the administrative control of the Government's State Secretary for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity. Another part of the gender mainstreaming approach has been holding broad consultations with civil society, including with gender experts, and leveraging national actions through international collaboration, for example, with a) the Council of Europe, on preventing violence against women; b) the UN, on the Women, Peace and Security agenda; and c) the EU, through mutual learning and training programmes, like "Parents@work". This project was initiated by the Institute, funded by the EU, and conducted in cooperation with the governments of Bulgaria, Estonia and Portugal. The Institute also has a close working relationship with regional governments and their IMs within Belgium's federal system.

Like Ukraine, a diverse set of gender mainstreaming tools have been deployed within the context of a dual-track approach of targeted actions and gender mainstreaming, pursued by the Interdepartmental Co-ordination Group, composed of representatives of the ministries. Examples of the application of gender mainstreaming tools by the Institute and the federal government include:

1. **Gender Impact Assessment:** introducing the ‘Gender test’ Assessment, conducted on all draft legislation and submitted to the Council of Ministers (see box below);
2. **Gender Equality Plan:** the latest federal gender mainstreaming plan has been in place since 2021 and is followed up by annual plans with targets, actions and score card, reported on by the Institute;
3. **Gender-responsive Budgeting:** mandated by law, an assessment on whether federal ministries and administrative agencies have a gender dimension is performed on annual basis;
4. **Gender Training:** regular training for members of the Interdepartmental Coordination Group and staff in the ministries and federal administrative agencies;
5. **Sex-disaggregated Statistics:** Since the 2007 Gender Mainstreaming Law came into effect, sex-disaggregated data is collected and disseminated to government agencies, sectoral stakeholders and the general public.

The existence and application of gender mainstreaming tools has been codified and used for nearly 15 years within the context of renewed national action plans on gender mainstreaming. Action plans are adopted by the parliament and not just by the chief executive. Additionally, there has been consistent support for the goals of gender equality through gender mainstreaming from all of the major political parties. A recent sign of this cross-party support was a significant increase in the budget and staff of the Institute in 2020.

Belgium's 'Gender test' for draft laws and policy²⁹

Taking a deeper dive into one of the gender mainstreaming tools, Belgium's version of ex-ante impact assessments of policy, the 'gender test' provides insight into good practice. The Belgian example has been used in the design of the German Gender Impact Assessment tool, mentioned earlier. The test was established by the 2007 Gender Mainstreaming Law and was recently reformed in 2013 to integrate several other areas of impact evaluations and to establish a special committee to 'grade' the test and give advice. The gender test obliges any state entity proposing a law to consider the gendered implications of the proposed policy.

For the 'gender test', a form must be completed in the first stage of proposal development before any formalization of draft regulation or law. The form is available on the Institute's website, with a detailed guide on how to fill it out. It contains the following questions:

- Question 1: What groups of people are affected by the proposed law and what is the sex breakdown of those groups?
- Question 2: What are the differences between men's and women's situations with regards to the target areas of the legislative proposal?
- Question 3: Do any of these differences significantly limit men's and women's access to resources and fundamental rights?
- Question 4: Given the responses to numbers 1-3, what are the positive and negative impacts of the proposal on gender equality?
- Question 5: What measures will be taken to lighten or compensate for the negative impacts of the new policy on gender equality?

There is no punitive action if the test is not taken. However, the integration of the tool into a more general policy impact assessment along with the updates and implementation of the test by successive governments indicates that it is taken into account seriously during the policymaking process.

Learn more about the [Gender Test](#).

²⁹ Gender Test, Belgian Institute for the equality of women and men, last accessed 25 September 2023.

PAIR 3: INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND SWEDEN

This final pair of success stories focuses on international collaboration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through its domestic-oriented Fund for the Implementation for the Gender Action Plan (FIGAP), and in Sweden, through one of its IMs, the Division for Gender Equality and its contributions to Sweden's feminist foreign policy.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Agency for Gender Equality

The Agency for Gender Equality was set up in 2004, following the adoption of the national-level Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its establishment closed a gap because IMs had been previously established at the level of the entities (federal units): the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. Its tiny team of six staff, run by the Agency Director, has a complicated role: supporting the central-level ministries and government bodies in mainstreaming their own work, while acting in parallel as the coordinating authority for the two entities and the Brčko District. Recognizing this limitation, the Agency was able to serve as model IM for the broader region of South-East Europe, demonstrating a rare example of how an IM can ensure that gender equality remains on the agenda. At this stage, under the leadership of the Agency, Bosnia and Herzegovina is implementing its fourth, consecutive national gender equality strategy — the Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In parallel, the Agency is leading the development, implementation and monitoring of multiple, consecutive action plans on the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda and is also taking a lead on implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The Agency acts as the country's voice for international collaboration; it not only leads representation at key international bodies (e.g., the UN Commission on the Status of Women) or reviews mechanisms (such as the CEDAW Committee), it has also been able, in collaboration with crucial individual actors in the national parliament, to help secure the immediate ratification of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention in 2014.

Like many other OSCE participating States, Bosnia and Herzegovina receives external donor funding for its gender equality efforts. Typically, these funds are administered through individual programmes negotiated between the IM, the donor and other government departments. In 2007, the Agency for Gender Equality developed and implemented an innovative approach to manage foreign donations — the Fund for the Implementation for the Gender Action Plan (FIGAP). FIGAP combines all of the contributions on a multi-year basis into a single 'budgetary basket', which is administered by the agency for gender equality programmes in consultation with the donors. Open calls are made to public institutions and NGOs for proposals and then decisions are made by the Agency-administered Coordination Board. From 2009 to 2014, FIGAP II distributed 5.4 million euros from four donors. The third FIGAP cycle is still in progress. Pooled foreign donor funding allows a more efficient and just distribution of foreign aid. If administered in a

fair and transparent way by all the stakeholders — foreign donors, civil society organizations and government offices — it can also be used for vital funding for key areas of the IMs work, as part of the long-term planning process, and concretely advance specific policy agendas in countries with limited financial resources. It is important to be clear about the goals of the basket fund as well as the criteria for distribution and reporting and any other follow-up obligations.

Sweden: Gender Equality Division

In 2016, the CEDAW Committee's report on Sweden was quite critical of the absence of any office that both oversaw the complex network of IMs across the government and mainstreamed policy efforts across the national government and at the sub-national level. Since this report, Swedish governments have addressed these gaps, with a clearer division of labour between the newly created, autonomous Agency of Gender Equality, with 103 staff, and the more established Division of Gender Equality in the Ministry for Employment and Gender Equality, with 14 permanent staff. While the Division's aim is to help the government carry out its gender equality agenda in regards to the adoption of policy, the Agency oversees the implementation of programmes and policies already adopted.

Sweden has been a global leader in the area of international collaboration. It exports its powerful gender mainstreaming approach through its **feminist foreign policy**, which shows that the **boomerang effect** can go the other way. For example, the leadership of the Division, representing Sweden, was able to convince the European Commission to include formally a gendered component in the instructions for proposals from member states for the Recovery and Resilience Facility funds³⁰. During Sweden's 2023 presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Division was also behind the formal request for EIGE to contract a study to evaluate the implementation of gender equality in the same EU Resilience and Recovery Facility. This allowed transparent and official accounting for how gender was included in the actual distribution of funds across the Member States.

Perhaps the most broadly beneficial part of Sweden's feminist foreign policy has been the ring-fencing of certain funds, mostly administered through UN Women. The IM survey response from Sweden provides an update on the most recent feminist funding initiatives:

³⁰ The Recovery and Resilience Facility, a temporary instrument of the European Union, is a response to the COVID-19 pandemic-related economic and social challenges. The aim of the Facility is to support investment and reforms essential to long-term economic recovery, enhancing the Member States' economies and social resilience, and supporting the green and digital transition. Through the Facility, the European Commission raises more than 700 billion euros, by borrowing on the capital markets (issuing bonds on behalf of the European Union). These funds are then available to its Member States, to implement ambitious reforms and investments.

“In November 2021, the Swedish government decided to enter into a new multi-year support agreement with UN Women for the period 2022-2025, for a total of SEK 600 million [approximately USD 70 million], i.e. approximately SEK 150 million [~ USD 18 million] per budget year. In 2020, after the European Commission’s temporary support through the [UN] Spotlight Initiative [to eliminate violence against women and girls], Sweden was UN Women’s largest donor, with core support through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and programme support from Sweden’s government agency for development cooperation (SIDA). Sweden’s international aid to UN Women has increased in recent years. In 2020, Sweden contributed with extra aid to draw attention to UN Women’s work to counter violence against women during the pandemic.”

The IMs in Sweden, among many other collaborative efforts, have also worked with Ukraine’s Ministry of Finance, with support from the Commissioner of Gender Policy. This cooperation focused on gender-responsive budgeting, sharing technical assistance and funding. While the IM structure still remains divided, the Division has brought a certain degree of purpose to the different policy efforts that have made Swedish gender equality policy quite successful.

4

THE DIFFERENT PATHS

TO GOOD PRACTICE

AND SUCCESS

4.1 CORE COMPONENTS FOR SUCCESS

The previous chapter presented six examples of IM success stories. In this chapter, the analysis seeks to identify whether there is a combination of components that leads to successful IM action resulting in transformative outcomes, in terms of good policy practice, empowerment and improved gender equality. **Five core components** are identified based on the research.

1. Leadership approach of the IM head

As would be expected from earlier organizational research, an IM's leadership is fundamental to its role as a critical actor. To a great extent the success of an IM stands or falls with the leader of the institution. IM heads come from all backgrounds. What is most important is their leadership approach, which must include the ability to collaborate with, and be open to a range of voices, from powerful political elites to grassroots feminist activists. The IM head must remain strategic about choosing which areas to concentrate activity on, as well as being successful at persuading reluctant but powerful actors. Perhaps most importantly, the head must support their vision for IM success with persistence/determination and must not be easily discouraged. The most important quality shown across all IM leaderships was continued resilience and adaptability in the face of internal, external and global challenges. Indeed, the ability of all IMs surveyed to find success during the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic is a clear indicator of their staying power. When IM heads and their staff have the status of civil servant, they are generally better able to pursue their work over the long term, regardless of changes of government. In many of the case studies of success, IM heads had been in their current positions or in other IMs for more than a decade. This effective and enduring leadership was also not necessarily only undertaken by women, since a good portion of IM heads are men.

2. Codification of international standards in national policy

International frameworks and guidelines provide a road map for IMs and other stakeholders to follow for the codification of goals related to gender equality in their own countries. The IM leadership must then pick the appropriate instruments and tools and adapt them to fit the specific contexts and challenges of their sphere of operations. IMs that were successful had at their disposal, or often developed, institutionalized policy instruments. These include gender equality plans, framework legislation and sometimes constitutional provisions that allowed for concrete progress even when the government elites were reluctant or opposed to principles of gender equality. Moreover, when these framing documents include the establishment and role of the IM and they are adopted by the legislature rather than by executive order or cabinet resolutions, the IM is more likely to pursue good practice and avoid policy evaporation.

3. Institutionalization of the dual-track approach to gender equality policy

Even in the face of challenging times, many countries have made great strides in integrating gender mainstreaming and its tools into the work of their governments and administration. Research done by the UN, other international bodies and IM leaders makes it clear that it is fundamental to combine gender mainstreaming with specific gender equality approaches, policies and actions in an institutionalized dual-track approach, as all six countries did in the case studies. In this dual-track approach, one strand of the process of institutionalization needs to occur from the top down. This can be achieved with the support of government leaders and formal policy statements, legislation, national action plans or decrees. The second strand must take place from the bottom-up, through training and working with policy actors at all levels of government on how to pursue gender mainstreaming and specific gender equality policy actions. This is a component that was emphasized in the survey, both in terms of the IM working with sub-national offices and actors at regional and local levels, and also having active and well-resourced gender focal points in the ministries. In Belgium, Germany, Slovenia and Ukraine, the IMs were proactive in working with sub-national IMs and stakeholders, even when they were not formally a part of their remit, particularly in the two federal countries. The examples of the new Gender Advisers Network in Ukraine, which helps to carry out the formalized dual-track approach, and the active ministerial gender focal points in Slovenia emphasize the importance of the cross-governmental dimension of IM activity.

4. Gender sensitivity of decision-makers and a high priority for gender equality policy

In the research and recommendations on IMs, the vague notion of political will is almost always identified as a necessary condition for successful action. In this study, the term political will has been empirically unpacked into two separate yet related ingredients for success. First, as the survey shows, it is of utmost importance that high-level decision-makers are sensitive to gender equality and engaged with its complexity. The survey data highlights that a major part of being able to have a gender-sensitive government is the IM taking a lead role in the education and training of the decision-making elite, including upper-level civil servants. The second part of political will is that political leaders place the achievement of gender equality high on their decision-making agendas. This is expressed, for example, in political party platforms, government agendas and in government coalition agreements, as in the case of Germany.

5. Systematic data collection and intersectional civil society participation

The fifth component is reliable and systematic national data collection on gender equality that uses international performance standards. This forms the basis of effective and valid monitoring and reporting at all levels of government, both inside and outside the country. The good practices of international collaboration on the EIGE's Gender Equality Index should be followed. Second, civil society organizations that represent all different groups of women — based on class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, language, age, disability, etc. — should be provided meaningful opportunities to provide input to all stages of policy development and administration through an intersectional approach. Additionally, effort needs to be made to hear all voices with the ultimate aim of agreeing shared goals to make concrete changes in policy outcomes.

Components that do not matter:

The three pairs of case studies and the survey responses from the IMs show that IMs did not observe that **cultural, economic, political or social context** had any effect on the record of success and empowerment; neither did the **political leanings of the party in power** matter significantly for successful results. Successes were achieved under governing majorities from the 'right' and the 'left', although in some countries, like Germany and Slovenia, the arrival of a gender-friendly left-wing government helped the IMs' cause. In Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina, given that many of the dominant parties are catch-all parties, the left-right political ideology of the parties in power matters less than whether political parties are gender-sensitive and make gender equality a top political priority.

Finally, with regards to **the features of IMs, there is no specific attribute that favours success** over others. As the case study pairs clearly show, successful action can occur in countries with different types of IMs, different staffing levels, different remits, at different positions in the hierarchy and with different degrees of autonomy and independence. Indeed, when IMs have a close relationship with their minister or the cabinet and chief executive, they seem able more effectively to persuade government gatekeepers to provide the crucial support than agencies that are further away from the centres of power. **What seems to matter most is the permanence of the staff and the agency head across government changes.** The broader survey responses echoed the findings of the case studies; namely that the position of the IM in the government hierarchy, budget and staff size are not fundamental components for success. Nevertheless, as shown by earlier studies, including the 2023 EIGE study, adequate budget (including budget security and autonomy) and sufficient staff are clearly supportive.

4.2 INNOVATIVE TOOLS FOR GOOD PRACTICE FROM THE FIELD

This chapter ends on a positive, optimistic and practical note by focusing on the **innovative tools** developed and implemented by IMs in Italy, Portugal and Switzerland. In addition to providing examples of good practice from which other IMs may draw ideas and adapt to their own settings, all of these innovations counter the conventional wisdom that IMs are out of touch with current developments due to their highly bureaucratic nature.

Getting business on board: The Gender Equality Certification Programme in Italy

Good Practice: Businesses are notoriously reluctant to promote gender equality unless it is financially advantageous. In 2022, the Italian Department of Equal Opportunities launched a four-year programme to incentivize businesses to introduce practices that promote gender equality. Equality labels are nothing new for businesses, but it is a novelty to have a long-term programme run by an IM with significant EU funding and financial incentives. Italy's business certification is financed by ten million euros earmarked from the EU Resilience and Recovery Facility budget for Italy. It provides fiscal exemptions and public tenders to each business that promotes women in leadership positions and has put into action work-life balance measures. Small and medium firms may apply. An open call has been made for applications to be reviewed by a working group of government and CSO actors administered by the Department.

Added Value: The equality labelling process is overseen by IMs rather than business associations and significant financial incentives are attached to specific goals and are allocated through a transparent and fair process. This allows an effective process that has strong potential to produce concrete results. In addition, given its long-term nature, the programme may also encourage other firms to pursue similar equality policies. Involving gender experts in the process of certification, evaluating and monitoring the certification is key to its long-term success.

Switching roles: Researchers partnering with the IM in Portugal

Good Practice: As one of the oldest continuous structures in the OSCE region, Portugal's Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality is an exemplar of the gender equality and empowerment chain reaction. With a diverse administrative structure — administrative divisions, offices in Porto and Lisbon, a 40 member advisory board, and 40 per cent of its budget going towards grants for research and projects — the Commission has pursued ambitious and successful policies. It has done so through an institutionalized dual-track approach, using gender mainstreaming tools and a comprehensive National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination. This policy takes an intersectional approach to equality, including an explicit focus on sexual orientation and gender identity. Outside research-

ers often invite staff from the Commission to be part of their own project proposals and funded research because of the Commission's gender expertise. This is also thanks to other attributes such as the fair and transparent administration of the grant system, with open calls displayed on its website, and the strong reputation the Commission has with CSO actors, particularly gender researchers at leading universities.

Added Value: Not only does this partnering reflect the strong reputation of a successful IM, but it also demonstrates that real benefits can be achieved if an IM takes collaboration with civil society stakeholders seriously. Research partnerships ensure that the goals of the IM are included in research projects and agendas, research funding and the use of data. The reversal of roles between researchers and IM staff, resulting from the long-term development and success of the IM, sets in motion a chain reaction that further strengthens the role of the IM as a catalyst for the successful pursuit of gender equality in the future.

**It's all in the app:
the Swiss IM designs an equal pay survey tool and makes it open-source.**

Good Practice: The Federal Office for Gender Equality, established in 1988, has separate administrative divisions, a staff of 30, nearly half of its budget funding CSO projects through an open-call process on its website, and an excellent working relationship with other federal-level government offices and the cantons. Most recently, the Office received a UN public service award for its equal pay survey application — LOGIB³¹ —. Designed for firms to use to track equal pay in their company, the app is intended for both large and small enterprises and is free and available to anyone to use.

Added Value: Developing such a practical and free app for management reflects the technical expertise and know-how of the IM. However, it also sends a message to activists and practitioners who have lamented the reluctance of firms to promote equal pay practices. It also communicates to the firms themselves that there is a constructive way to move forward and to address in-house issues better. The potential of the app to reduce wage gaps materially is enhanced by the fact that it is open-source and available for anyone to use. At the same time, the long-term impact on reducing pay gaps risks being minimal, unless the survey is made a compulsory part of a systematic equal pay policy that also allows the IM to monitor and track progress at company level.

³¹ Logib, Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality, last accessed 25 September 2023.

5

A TOOLKIT FOR SUCCESS

The concluding chapter converts the survey findings into a toolkit for IMs, governments and parliaments. The aim of the toolkit is to maximize the effectiveness of IMs and to ensure the realization of gender equality policy goals.

Tool 1. Helping IMs be effective catalysts and critical actors

Type, Establishment and Mandate

- Establish IMs through statute legislation linked to regularly updated gender equality policy and legal frameworks
- Have a single IM that oversees and coordinates all government action
- Give IMs direct access to ministerial and chief executive leadership
- If an IM is based in a ministry or parent ministries, it should include gender equality in the title

Leadership and Administrative Capacity

- Select the most experienced person for the job
- Ensure that all IM staff have civil servant status
- Give IMs the opportunity to apply diverse organizational structures at national and sub-national levels of government and the resources to administer them
- IM gender focal points should be established in all ministries and be fully funded (full-time and senior-level)

Policymaking Capacity: Tasks and Approach

- Give IMs the authority to lead public policy developments at all stages — pre-adoption, adoption and post-adoption
- Equip IMs to take a dual-track approach that combines focusing on specific gender equality actions with gender mainstreaming

Government Consultation

- Promote gender-sensitivity among all government decision-makers
- Make gender equality a top government priority
- Provide IMs with regular and direct access to decision-makers
- Put into place capacity building and awareness-raising programmes for upper-level civil servants and political leadership, including ministers

Civil Society Consultation

- Formally consult CSO's and give them open access to the IM
- Include NGOs that might have very critical views
- Include CSOs representing under-represented groups
- Identify shared goals

International Collaboration

- Ensure national compliance with relevant international conventions and treaties
- Make gender equality a foreign policy goal and promote it in international organizations
- Nurture meaningful partnerships with international actors
- Include a full range of CSO representatives

Tool 2. Organizational structure and coordination in government administration

Separate divisions or enough staff to have a clear division of labour	Advisory councils that include ministerial and CSO representatives	Significant budgets for CSO projects and programmes	Funded and full-time focal points in all ministries	Formal links with lower-level IMs and advisory councils
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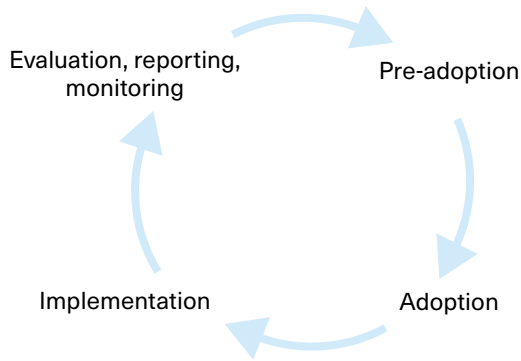
Tool 3. Checklist of gender mainstreaming tools to formalize and use

- Gender Impact Assessment
- Gender Equality Plan
- Gender-responsive Budgeting
- Gender Training
- Sex-disaggregated Statistics
- Gender Impact Evaluation

Tool 4. Tips for managing IM funding for civil society

Make the process open and transparent with open calls and clear criteria for selection that should be carefully and openly followed	Give feedback for funding proposals that were rejected	Develop criteria, a selection process and monitoring with the IM's advisory bodies that includes all stakeholders	Proposals cover project goals as they relate to the IM's goals and progress made in previous project grants from the IM	Delivery of essential services from NGOs needs to be given special attention	Consider pooling foreign donor funds into a basket fund, which will follow national priorities and be less donor driven
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Tool 5. How to achieve cycles of success in policy practice



Pre-adoption

Consult the widest range of government and CSO stakeholders, including gender experts and researchers

Ensure that policies follow international standards and framework documents on gender equality

Assess gender impacts with gender impact assessment tools

Sensitize decision-makers to gender equality issues in general and the specific proposals through training programmes and outreach

Set benchmarks and goals to measure impact

Formal Policy Adoption

Legislate formal policies to obtain parliament's backing

Collaborate with gender-friendly allies in parliament, both individuals and committees

Ensure that final policy content has authority and enforcement power

Implementation

Design practical and authoritative tools for policy implementation

Consult all stakeholders about the best implementation methods

Oversee and *coordinate* implementation on all administrative levels

Train administrative actors through formal programmes on how to implement complex and norm-challenging principles of gender equality

Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

Establish systems of monitoring and reporting for all target groups

Use performance indicators, including official international and national indicators, to assess and measure impact and progress

Consult experts, both national and international

Conduct independent evaluations on laws, policies and practices from a gender perspective

Ensure the results of evaluations are discussed at a high level and taken into account in the pre-adoption phase

APPENDIX A.

LIST OF INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS IN 42 OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES COVERED IN THE SURVEY

Agencies attached to a ministry or chief executive office

- Albania: Sector for Strategies and Policies for Gender Equality and Social Protection, 2008*
- Andorra: Equality Policies Department, 2016*
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Agency for Gender Equality, 2004*
- Bulgaria: Directorate of Equal Opportunities, Anti-Discrimination and Social Assistance, 2004*
- Croatia: Office for Gender Equality, 2004**
- Cyprus: Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, 2014**
- Czech Republic: Government Department of Gender Equality, 1998**
- Denmark: Department of Gender Equality, 2000*
- Finland: Gender Equality Unit, 2001*
- Greece: General Secretariat for Demography, Family Policy and Gender Equality, 1985*
- Hungary: Department of Adoption and Women's Policy, 2014**
- Iceland: Directorate of Equality, 2000**
- Latvia: Coordination of Equal Opportunities and Rights for Women and Men, 2002*
- Liechtenstein: Equal Opportunities Unit, 2016*
- Lithuania: Equal Opportunities, Equality Between Women and Men Unit, 1998*
- Moldova: Gender Equality Department, 2007*
- Montenegro: Division for Gender Equality of Montenegro, 2007*
- North Macedonia: Department for Gender Equality, 2007*
- Norway: Department for Equality, Non-Discrimination and International Affairs, 1977*
- Romania: National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, 2016*
- Serbia: Coordination Body for Gender Equality, 2014**
- Switzerland: Federal Office for Gender Equality, 1988*
- Türkiye: General Directorate on the Status of Women, 1990*

Commissions attached to a ministry or chief executive office

- Kazakhstan: Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy, 1998**
- Mongolia: Committee on Gender Equality, 1995**

- Russia: Coordinating Council for the National Action Plan on Women's Interests, 2017*
- USA: Gender Policy Council, 2020**
- Azerbaijan: State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, 2006**
- Armenia: Council for Women's Affairs and Equal Opportunities Department, 2019*
- Georgia: Interagency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, 2017**
- Portugal: Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, 1977*

Agencies as part of an IM ministry

- France: Ministry Delegate for Gender Equality, Diversity and Equal Opportunities/Women's Rights and Gender Equality Department, 1985
- Germany: Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth/Division of Gender Equality, 1986
- Italy: Minister for Family and Equal Opportunities (2020)/Department of Equal Opportunities, 2000
- Malta: Ministry for Equality, Research and Innovation/ Human Rights Directorate, Gender Unit, 2015
- Slovenia: Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities/Division of Equal Opportunities, 2012*
- Sweden: Minister of Employment and Gender Equality (2020)/Division of Gender Equality (1982) and Gender Equality Agency (2018)
- Ireland: Department for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth/Gender Equality Division, 2000

Ministerial level IMs

- San Marino: State Secretariat for Health and Social Security and Social Affairs, Political Affairs, Equal Opportunities and Technological Innovation, 2008
- Luxembourg: Ministry of Equality between Men and Women and General Coordination, Equality Policies, 1995

Other

- Belgium: State Secretary for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity, 2020, and Federal Institute for the Equality Between Men and Women, 2002
- Ukraine: Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, 2017**

* Attached to a ministry

** Attached to the head of government or head of state office
Year indicates when IM was established.

APPENDIX B.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

MANDATE AND GOALS FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

In this section, we would like to know more about the main tasks, gender equality focus and policy successes of your Institutional Mechanism (IM).

1. Please provide your country name.
2. Please verify your Institutional Mechanism's name:
3. Please indicate who is completing this survey.

Full Name:

Job Title:

Email:

Unit within the IM:

4. Is there a national gender equality action plan and/or framework legislation that guides your IM's work?
 Yes. *Please provide full title of the policy/legislation and the year when it was adopted:*
 No.
5. Over the past three years, please indicate which of the following tasks your IM has performed more than three times a year? *Please select all that apply.*
 Drafting gender related laws, initiating new laws or revising existing laws
 Reviewing legislation from a gender perspective drafted by other departments/ ministries
 Promotion of the implementation of government decisions related to gender equality
 Coordinating and/or developing gender mainstreaming tools and methodologies
 Monitoring the implementation of (ratified) international commitments related to gender equality and women's rights
 Policy analysis, monitoring and/or assessment
 Research
 International co-operation

- Awareness-raising, and publishing of informational material
 - Training and/or capacity building
 - Other. *Please specify:*
6. Which best describes the largest share of your IM's work. Please select all that apply.
- Formal gender mainstreaming: A broad gender equality focus across numerous policy areas and sectors that is mandated by national regulation/legislation or government decision.
 - Informal gender mainstreaming: A broad gender equality focus across numerous policy areas and sectors not mandated by national regulation/legislation or government decision.
 - Policy focused: A focus on one or a few select gender equality areas/sectors such as violence against women or women's economic participation.
7. Please indicate any specific areas of gender equality policy on which your IM focusses? Please select *all that apply*.
- Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence
 - Sex/Gender-based Discrimination and Harassment
 - Economic Empowerment and Participation
 - Family Life
 - Reproductive Health
 - Participation in Political and Public Life
 - Ethnic, religious and other minority groups
 - Other. *Please specify:*
8. Please list your IM's most important gender equality goals or other policy goals for the past three years?
9. Please indicate whether these goals are based on a national gender equality action plan and/or framework legislation, or goals set by the current government? *Please select only one response.*
- Most are based on national gender equality action plan and/or framework legislation
 - Most are goals set by the current government
 - A mix of both
 - Other. *Please specify:*
- 10a. How successful or unsuccessful has your IM been in achieving its gender equality goals? *Please select only one response.*

- Very successful
 - Somewhat successful
 - Neither successful or unsuccessful
 - Somewhat unsuccessful
 - Very unsuccessful
- 10b. What has contributed to your IM's success in achieving its gender equality goals? [If select Very/Somewhat Successful]
- 10b. What has contributed to your IM's lack of success in achieving its gender equality goals? [If select Very/Somewhat Unsuccessful]
11. Please share with us up to three specific examples of your IM's activities you consider successful? Feel free to share links to web pages or publications.
12. How does your IM define and/or determine when its activities are a success?
13. How does your office include women from economically challenged and/or underrepresented groups (e.g. women with disabilities; rural women; women from ethnic, linguistic and/or religious minorities; Roma and Sinti women; women economically not active) in its work and activities? *Please provide a concrete example.*
14. Does a change in government majorities and/or ruling parties influence your IMs work?
- Yes. *Please explain how:*
 - No.

LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES OF THE INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM

For the following questions, we would like to know more about how your Institutional Mechanism (IM) was established, its leadership, and administrative resources in terms of budget and personnel.

15. How was your IM established? Please select only one response.
- Law passed by parliament. *Please provide full title of the law and the year when it was adopted:*
 - Decision by government. *Please provide full title of the decision and the year when it was adopted:*
 - Other. *Please specify:*
16. What year was your IM established? [Drop down menu for years]

17. Who leads and administers the daily functioning of your IM? Please provide information on administrative and not on politically appointed leadership (in case you belong to a ministry).
- Full Name:
- Job Title:
18. Please tell us how this person was appointed. *Please select only one response.*
- Political appointment by government.
 - Appointed through the civil service independent from the government.
 - Appointed some other way. *Please specify:*
19. Which best describes the background of the person who leads and administers the daily functioning and tasks of your IM? *Please select only one response.*
- Political party
 - Civil society organization
 - Academia
 - Civil Service
 - Other. *Please specify:*
20. Which of the following best describes how the work of your IM is funded? *Please select only one response.*
- Directly funded by government as an autonomous budget receiver (Not part of the budget of another government body).
 - Directly funded by government, but part of the budget of another government body.
 - Other. *Please specify:*
21. What share of your government's budget did your IM's budget comprise in 2020? _____%
22. Please estimate the percentage of your IM's budget for 2020 that was used for the following:
- Research conducted by your IM: %
 - Research conducted externally but funded by your IM: %
 - Direct delivery of programmes (such as violence against women/domestic violence service delivery) by your IM: %
 - Funding for programmes delivered by civil society organizations: %
 - Training and capacity building delivered by your IM: %
 - Other. *Please specify:*

23. Please indicate the number of full-time and part-time staff in your IM as of 1 October 2021.
- _____ # Full-time staff, of which _____ # men and _____ # women
- _____ # Part time staff, of which _____ # men and _____ # women
24. Please indicate whether your IM has the following. *Please mark all that apply.*
- Separate administrative divisions. Please specify the # of divisions:
 - Field/branch offices which your IM is directly supervising. Please specify the # of staff:
 - Advisory/coordination bodies overseen by your IM, incl. separate bodies that oversee a policy area with representatives of other departments and/or civil society organizations, such as bodies on violence against women and/or domestic violence. Please specify the # of staff:
 - Information/awareness-raising units. Please specify the # of such units:
 - Our IM has none of these
- 24b. In general, how successful or unsuccessful are the advisory/coordination bodies overseen by your IM? *Please select only one response.* [If select Advisory/coordination bodies overseen by your IM]
- Very successful
 - Somewhat successful
 - Neither successful or unsuccessful
 - Somewhat unsuccessful
 - Very unsuccessful
- 24c. Please share with us up to three specific examples of the activities of the advisory/coordination bodies overseen by your IM which you consider successful? Feel free to share links to web pages or publications. [If select Very/Somewhat Successful]
- 24d. In your opinion, what contributed to this success? [If select Very/Somewhat Successful]

GENDER MAINSTREAMING TOOLS

In this section, we would like to know more about the gender mainstreaming tools your IM uses to achieve its policy goals and mandates. More specifically, we would like to know how successful these tools are in achieving your IM's gender equality goals and how your IM determines when these tools are a success.

25. Which tools does your IM use on a regular basis, either a tool used directly by your IM or in conjunction with other governmental departments/ministries, the judiciary or the national parliament? *Please mark all that apply and for those that your IM does use, briefly explain how it is used.*
- Gender Impact Assessment** – Ex ante evaluation, analysis or assessment of a law, policy or programme that makes it possible to identify, in a preventative way, the likelihood of a given decision having negative consequences for the state of gender equality. *Please explain briefly:*
 - Impact Evaluation** – Analysis or assessment of a law, policy or programme after it has been implemented/enforced to determine whether it achieved its goals and/or advanced gender equality. *Please explain briefly:*
 - Gender Equality Plan** – A combined set of actions that articulate a strategic view of how to achieve gender equality. These actions include impact assessment/audits of procedures and practices to identify gender bias; identify and implement innovative strategies to correct any bias and to set targets and monitor progress. *Please explain briefly:*
 - Gender-Responsive Budgeting** – The preparation and execution, from a gender perspective, of budgets in departments/ministries and parliament not specifically focused on gender equality. *Please explain briefly:*
 - Gender Training** – Programmes that are a part of wider set of strategies to effect individual and collective transformation towards gender equality through awareness-raising, empowering learning, knowledge building, and skill development. *Please explain briefly:*
 - Sex-disaggregated Statistics** – Data collected and tabulated separately for women and men to allow for the measurement of differences between women and men on various social and economic dimensions. *Please explain briefly:*
 - Promote the use of **Gender Mainstreaming** by other governmental departments/ministries, the judiciary or the national parliament. *Please explain briefly:*
 - Other. Please specify:
26. Please share with us up to three specific examples of success which are the result of using gender mainstreaming tools?
27. Why do you consider these examples of success?
28. Are there any recommendations you would make for other IMs using these tools to better ensure their success?
- Yes. *Please explain:*
 - No. *Please explain:*

CONSULTATION WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS/MINISTRIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

In this section, we ask questions about your IM's consultation with other departments/ministries, institutions of lower levels of governance (if applicable) and civil society organizations.

29a. Approximately how often has your IM been consulted by officials from other state bodies in the past two years?

	Never	Once or twice a year	Three to six times a year	Seven to nine times a year	Ten to twelve times a year	More than 12 times a year	N/A
Government departments/ministries							
Parliament							
Judiciary							
Institutions of lower levels of governance (if applicable)							

29b. Did your IM's consultation activities successfully influence the content of policy/legislation?

Yes. Please provide one example:

No. Please provide further information if desired and relevant:

29c. Did your IM's consultation activities result in any change of policy/legislation?

Yes. Please provide one example:

No

29d. In general, how successful or unsuccessful are your IM's consultation activities with department/ministries and/or other agencies?

	Very Successful	Successful	Neither	Unsuccessful	Very Unsuccessful	N/A
Government department/ministries						
Parliament						
Judiciary						
Institutions of lower levels of governance (if applicable)						

- 29e. What impacts the success of your IM's consultation activities with government department/ministries and/or other institutions?
- 29f. When do you consider your consultations with other government entities to be a success?
30. How does your IM typically consult civil society organizations/gender equality policy experts? *For each process used briefly explain how.*
- Formalized platform/body for consultation. *Please specify:*
 - Informal meetings. *Please specify:*
 - Other. *Please specify:*
 - We don't consult with civil society organizations and gender equality policy experts.
 - Please specify:*
- 30a. In general, how successful or unsuccessful are your IM's consultation activities with civil society organizations/ gender equality policy experts? [If select Formalized platform/Informal meetings]
- Very successful
 - Somewhat successful
 - Neither
 - Somewhat unsuccessful
 - Very unsuccessful
- 30b. What impacts the success of your IM's consultation activities with civil society organizations/gender equality policy experts?
- 30c. When do you consider your IM's consultations with civil society organizations/ gender equality policy experts to be a success?
- 30d. Please share with us up to three specific examples of successful instances of policy consultations with civil society actors.

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

In this section, we ask questions about your IM's collaboration with international organizations in the past two years.

31. Has your office collaborated with any of the international organizations below? Please mark all that apply and explain shortly with one concrete example.
- UN Women. *Please explain briefly how:*
 - Other UN agencies (for example ILO). *Please explain briefly how:*

- OSCE. *Please explain briefly how:*
 - EU *Please explain briefly how:*
 - OECD *Please explain briefly how:*
 - Council of Europe *Please explain briefly how:*
 - Other *Please specify which organizations and explain briefly how:*
 - None of the above
32. When do you consider your IM's collaboration with these international organizations to be a success?

CURRENT CHALLENGES

We are aware that IMs across the OSCE region have had many new and complex challenges over the past two years related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Here we seek to find out what these have been and how they have affected the work of your IM and whether despite these challenges there have been any positive developments.

33. Please indicate whether in the past 24 months any of the following have significantly affected the work of your IM. *Please mark all that apply.*
- Reduced attention of the government on gender equality issues
 - Reduction in IM's operating budgets
 - Reduction/elimination in IM programmes or activities, such as number of domestic violence shelters operating
 - Personnel loss
 - Elimination of key parts/units of IM
 - Increased attention of the government on gender equality issues
 - Increase in IM's operating budgets
 - Increase in personnel
 - Increase in IM programmes or activities
 - Other. *Please explain:*
 - None of the above
- 33a. How have these issues affected the work of your IM? Please explain briefly.

