

Achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures



Council of Europe
Gender Equality Strategy

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” Promoting equality between women and men must be at the heart of everything we do

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Gender equality

Gender equality means equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. Achieving gender equality is central to the protection of human rights, the functioning of democracy, respect for the rule of law, and economic growth and competitiveness.

Gender discrimination

Although the legal status of women in Europe has undoubtedly improved during recent decades, effective equality is far from being a reality. Discrimination against women pervades all cultures and communities, as well as all levels and areas throughout life. It is thus important to address inequalities between women and men in a systematic and comprehensive way, in order to achieve real gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming

Born from the need for a new approach to policy-making that takes into account both women's and men's situations and concerns, gender mainstreaming first came up as a concept at the 1985 United Nations Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi. It was then introduced as a strategy in international gender equality policy by the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the 1995 Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. The Council of Europe consequently played a pioneering role in developing the gender mainstreaming strategy. Gender mainstreaming is based on the recognition that men and women have different needs and living conditions, including unequal access to and control over power, money, human rights, justice, resources and decision-making. Gender mainstreaming therefore implies looking at the human implications of any activity, highlighting the inequalities and differences between women and men and thus the potential differential impact of policies on both women and men. This leads to designing policies that benefit girls and boys, women and men equally.



■ For the Council of Europe, gender mainstreaming is defined as: *The re(organisation), improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels, and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making.*

■ Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself, but an instrument towards the ultimate goal of achieving equality between women and men. In this context, there is a wide consensus that a dual approach is necessary to effectively promote gender equality including:

- ▶ Specific policies and actions for the advancement of women, including positive action, and
- ▶ The promotion, monitoring, co-ordination and evaluation of a gender mainstreaming strategy in all policies and programmes.

Gender mainstreaming as an instrument for better policy-making

Very often, men are still being represented as being the norm, the “standard human being” in policy-making. New strategies are therefore needed to design policies and legislation that address the needs of both women and men and take relevant gender differences into account at all stages of the policy-making process. Gender mainstreaming should be understood as a shift of methods, which sometimes requires moving away from well-anchored practices. Gender mainstreaming has a wide range of positive effects on policy-making:

- ▶ Gender mainstreaming implies grounding policies on the concrete situation and needs of people. It will introduce among policy-makers and the public a learning process of paying attention to the broad effects of policies on citizens’ lives, aiming at the well-being of both women and men.
- ▶ Gender mainstreaming should lead to better informed policy-making and therefore better government. It challenges the assumption that policies are gender neutral – which they never are – and reveal the hidden assumptions on reality and values. It will lead to a fairer allocation of resources and greater transparency in the policy process.
- ▶ By making all policy-makers responsible for the inclusion of a gender equality perspective, gender mainstreaming makes full use of human resources.
- ▶ Gender mainstreaming brings gender equality into mainstream society. It makes it visible and is expected to change negative attitudes.

“Achieving Gender Mainstreaming in all policies and measures” is one of the five strategic objectives of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017. The Council of Europe is striving to achieve gender mainstreaming in its various policy and standard setting areas, in the development and implementation of co-operation programmes, projects and activities, as well as in the policy processes and functioning of its various bodies and institutions.

Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in policies and programmes according to Council of Europe standards means:

- ▶ Involving all actors associated with policy-making in the process of integration of gender equality concerns into the planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies, programmes and activities;
- ▶ Integrating gender expertise into policy processes by making it a requirement for policy-makers;
- ▶ Using and promoting gender-disaggregated data and statistics;
- ▶ Making sure that a gender equality perspective is envisaged in all policy areas and at all policy levels, taking into account that policy areas, which at first sight do not seem relevant, may contain (hidden) aspects of gender inequality;
- ▶ Ensuring the equal presence and contribution of women and men in all programmes and activities;
- ▶ Allocating necessary funds and human resources to the process.

The following standards can be used by member states as benchmarks for gender mainstreaming into policies and programmes:

■ **The Committee of Ministers Recommendation on gender mainstreaming (CM/Rec(98)14)** sets out the conceptual framework for gender mainstreaming and a methodology for its implementation, accompanied by examples of good practices.

■ **The Committee of Ministers Recommendation on gender equality standards and mechanisms (CM/Rec(2007)17)** recalls the importance of adopting methodologies for the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy, including gender budgeting, gender-based analysis and gender impact assessment.

■ **The Committee of Ministers Recommendations on gender mainstreaming in education (CM/Rec(2007)13)** puts forward a set of comprehensive measures which member states need to put in place to ensure effective gender mainstreaming in education, including legal frameworks, school organisation and school curricula. The recommendation also calls for regular monitoring of the implementation of the above measures.

■ **The Committee of Ministers Recommendations on the inclusion of gender differences in health policies (CM/Rec(2008)1)** recommends member states to “make gender one of the priority areas of action in health through policies and strategies which address specific health needs of men and women and incorporate gender mainstreaming”. The recommendation also suggests the establishment of a monitoring framework on gender mainstreaming in health policies.

■ **The Committee of Ministers Recommendation on gender equality and media (CM/Rec(2013)1)** addresses “the need to provide a gender equality perspective while implementing its established standards in the field of media” by providing specific guidelines and suggests action to ensure gender equality and combat stereotyping.

■ **The Committee of Ministers Recommendation on gender mainstreaming in sport (CM/Rec(2015)2)** calls on member states “to promote and encourage policies and practices aimed at introducing, implementing and ensuring gender mainstreaming in all fields and at all levels of sport and establish the existence of specific mechanisms to this end”.

Other gender mainstreaming activities

The Council of Europe is also actively promoting gender mainstreaming in other ways, including:

- ▶ The compilation and dissemination of good practices;
- ▶ The appointment and training of Gender Equality Rapporteurs in all its intergovernmental committees and some of the monitoring bodies;
- ▶ Awareness raising and training addressed to policy-makers and human resources;
- ▶ E-learning tools including websites and video clips illustrating good practices;
- ▶ Promoting the use of gender sensitive indicators and statistics;
- ▶ The review of the gender equality situation in different sectors through monitoring the implementation of standards.



www.coe.int/equality
gender.equality@coe.int

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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