

Slovenia

About

The Slovenian Constitution guarantees equal human rights and fundamental freedoms, prohibits discrimination based on any personal circumstances, including sex (Article 14), and guarantees the right to equal employment opportunities (Article 49).

One of the first steps towards gender mainstreaming in Slovenia was taken as early as 1990, with the establishment of the Parliamentary Commission for Women's Policy. The Commission was responsible for monitoring the position of women in Slovenia and submitting proposals for improvement. At that point it was recognised that the issues of gender equality and gender mainstreaming required their own government body, with the Women's Policy Office then established in 1992. It was renamed the Office for Equal Opportunities in 2001 and later abolished in 2011. Slovenia was thus the first transition country to establish an office for promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming. In 1997, a pilot project on gender mainstreaming was carried out by the Office for Equal Opportunities. The project encompassed different ministries and focused on capacity-building for policy makers and decision makers, together with the development of guidelines for mainstreaming gender in different policies.

Notwithstanding these steps, the role of the European Union (EU) in the process of gender mainstreaming cannot be overlooked. Slovenia's EU strategy had an important influence on the establishment of structures and policies during its EU accession candidacy (1996–2004).

Gender mainstreaming was introduced into Slovenian national legislation through the Equal Opportunities between Women and Men Act in 2002. The Act also introduced the obligation to nominate coordinators for equal opportunities at each ministry, a role tasked with coordinating gender equality and gender mainstreaming in all policy areas. Local administrations were also provided with the (non-binding) option to nominate coordinators with similar responsibilities. The first national programme on gender equality was adopted in 2005, since which time gender mainstreaming has been recognised as a horizontal strategy to be implemented throughout all policy areas.

Legislative and policy framework

Gender mainstreaming is legislated through the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act (2002). The government and all ministries are obliged to take gender equality into consideration when planning, designing and implementing policy measures. All ministers must appoint Coordinators for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, who are then responsible for the implementation of duties within the competence of the ministry. Additionally, the Equal Treatment Act was succeeded with the Protection Against Discrimination Act in May 2016 [1].

Following the 2008-2013 Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, a [new national programme for the period 2015–2020](#) was set up to introduce the dual approach of special measures and gender mainstreaming. This approach is to be applied in all policies and programmes to achieve the goal of gender equality in practice. The National Programme 2015-2020 focuses on eight priority areas:

- 1 | Economic independence;
- 2 | Reconciliation of professional and private or family life;
- 3 | Knowledge society without gender stereotypes;
- 4 | Social inclusion;
- 5 | Health;
- 6 | Balanced representation of women and men;
- 7 | Violence against women;
- 8 | Gender equality in foreign policy and international development cooperation.

National programmes are implemented through two-year action plans, with the government reporting on their implementation to the National Assembly every two years. The national programme and action plans include commitments on gender mainstreaming in all policy areas, as well as commitments to tackle gender discrimination, address intersectionality, and support the gender mainstreaming strategy and even gender impact assessments. However, no reference is made to training on gender impact assessment or gender budgeting.

In 2015, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MDDSZEM) adopted a set of Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in the Work of Ministries 2016-2020. The Guidelines acknowledge the need to strengthen gender equality policy, including the gender mainstreaming work of ministries and coordinators. They support the Coordinators for Equal Opportunities in performing their core tasks, such as promotion of equal opportunities, monitoring consideration of gender equality aspects in drafting regulations and measures, and cooperation in preparing and implementing the national programme, as well as international commitments.

In 2015, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in its report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and on gender mainstreaming in Slovenia, highlighted a number of concerns. It recommended to 'Strengthen the authority and visibility of the national machinery for the advancement of women in the institutional structure' and to 'Consolidate gender mainstreaming activities by ensuring the effective implementation of the national programme for equal opportunities for women and men (2015-2020)' [2].

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Structures

Government responsibilities

In Slovenia, responsibility for promoting gender equality is set at ministerial level. The MDDSZEM is responsible for the promotion of gender equality, and the Minister is vested with the same power and authority as other ministries in autonomous policy-making initiatives. Ministerial responsibility is established by law and encompasses gender equality, along with labour relations, labour rights, social and family policy or disability issues. t

The Equal Opportunities Division of the MDDSZEM is responsible for gender equality. It was established in 2012 to replace the Office for Equal Opportunities that had been in place since 1992. The Division is established as a unit and thus exists at intermediate level within the Ministry. It coordinates gender equality policy and proposes, recommends, implements and encourages programmes and measures for strengthening equality between women and men. It provides expert support to ministries and municipalities in implementing gender mainstreaming. The Ministry prepares the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, as well as analysing, producing reports and carrying out awareness-raising campaigns. It cooperates with the EU, international organisations and civil society in the field of empowerment of women and achievements of gender equality. Moreover, the Sector for Equal Opportunity was set up, with the Head of the Sector directly responsible to the Minister.

The Expert Council for Gender Equality is established as a consultative expert body of the Minister, with a four-year mandate. The Council is composed of various professionals working in a variety of fields, from academia to trade unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in the area of gender equality, alongside the Advocate of the Principle of Equality (an independent body for the promotion of equal treatment of women and men, see below).

Independent gender equality body

In 2012, Slovenia dissolved its independent body for gender equality and equal opportunities and re-established it under the MDDSZEM. A new independent body for the promotion of equal treatment of women and men - the Advocate of the Principle of Equality (Advocate) - is operational since October 2016, under the Protection Against Discrimination Act (PADA). It was established on foot of a formal notice by the European Commission concerning the implementation of Directives 2000/43/EC, 2004/113/EC and 2006/54/EC. This new body is vested with stronger autonomy than its predecessor.

While the Advocate, established by law in 2016, is a relatively new body, the second independent equality body in Slovenia is the Human Rights Ombudsperson of the Republic of Slovenia (Ombudsperson), which was created in 1993 and officially started its activities in 1995. The legal basis for the establishment of the Ombudsperson is Article 159 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia and the Law on the [Human Rights Ombuds Act](#).

The mandate of the Advocate is the promotion of equality and prevention of discrimination on several grounds, including gender, ethnicity, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation and other questions relating to discrimination against persons based on a personal circumstance. The Ombudsperson is the public body for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and is independent of state authorities, local government and public authorities.

While the Advocate is a relatively new body – being established in 2016 and with only two [annual reports published](#) to date, for 2017 and 2018 – the Ombudsperson has existed since 1993 and officially started its activity in 1995. Its activities are widely reported by the media, and the opinion of the Ombudsperson is often communicated to the general public. However, both of these institutions receive more attention for other issues in their fields of competence than for their activities on gender equality.

Parliamentary bodies

The Commission for Petitions, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities within the body of the National Assembly (Republika Slovenija: Državni zbor) covers gender equality as a specific part of its brief. The role of the Commission is legally based on the Ordinance on the establishment and tasks of working bodies in the National Assembly (2014). Its tasks encompass the broader scope of petitioning as a democratic and public mechanism for exposing various potential inequalities and discrimination in the actions of the National Assembly, as well as monitoring, analysing and promoting human rights and liberties, including equal opportunities policies (specifically mentioning gender equality).

Regional structures

Local administrations are obliged to promote and create equal opportunities according to their jurisdiction and to take a gender perspective into account when planning and implementing their actions and activities (Article 30, paragraph 1 of the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act). They can establish a local Coordinator for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, who cooperates in the planning and implementation of gender equality policy at local level.

The Ministry encourages local administrations to appoint such a coordinator at the start of new local mandates. Some 20 % of municipalities have done so and there is a trend of strengthening local engagement and local gender equality policy and practice. Around 5 % of municipalities have also adopted specific gender equality action plans. The Ministry has developed [guidelines for the preparation of these plans](#), alongside guidelines for the elimination of stereotypes and strengthening of gender equality (2016). These guidelines present case studies of gender blind local policy, together with advice on how to better incorporate a gender perspective into the work of local institutions.

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Methods and tools

Note: the methods and tools listed under this section were the focus of EIGE's 2018-2019 assessment. If certain methods and tools are not mentioned in this section, this does not necessarily mean that they are not used at all by Slovenia.

The ministerial body responsible for gender equality has adopted several methods and tools for gender mainstreaming, such as gender awareness-raising, gender budgeting, gender impact assessment, gender indicators, gender planning, gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data. However, according to the Guidelines, gender budgeting is not in practice, while gender impact assessment remains in its infancy and is currently systematically used in only three ministries.

Since 2012, the MDDSZEM has organised 21 gender stakeholder consultations, i.e. thematic consultations in the form of expert panels, conferences. These consultations covered topics such as gender stereotypes, an intersectional approach to women living in rural areas, women in science, a gender perspective in migration, gender-based violence, gender and the media, gender and politics, etc. Consultations were opened to various population sub-groups, including professionals, primary school teachers, women from rural areas, and women in science.

Training and awareness-raising

The Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act sets out the duties and responsibilities of the MDDSZEM with respect to gender equality but establishes no legal basis for training those responsible for the promotion of gender equality. A legal reference to training is mentioned in the Guidelines, which recommend inclusion of the topic of gender equality in relevant training programmes [3].

According to the MDDSZEM, the Coordinators for Equal Opportunities within the ministries and municipalities have participated in awareness-raising. Government employees and employees of the government body for gender equality participate in gender equality training on an ad hoc basis. This training is not compulsory, however, and primarily addresses general sensitivity to gender issues.

Gender statistics

There is no specific unit within the National Statistical Office (Statistični urad Republike Slovenije – SURS) charged with promoting the production of sex-disaggregated data, nor is there an established network of focal points responsible for promoting the production of sex-disaggregated statistics. There is, however, an operational unit that produces sex-disaggregated statistics within SURS. The unit, which is active in data-analysis activities, works exclusively in the areas of demography, standard of living, labour market and education. It is established as an inter-departmental cooperation group within SURS' Demography and Social Statistics Division.

The general legal basis of SURS is established by a body of national statistics-related legislation, such as the Medium-term Programme of Statistical Surveys 2018-2022 (2017) and the Annual Programme of Statistical Surveys for 2019 (2018). In both documents, demography is proposed as an important research field, although without specific reference to gender or the gathering/analysis of sex-disaggregated data. Nevertheless, the 2017 Annual Statistical Report shows that gender was acknowledged as an important demographic characteristic and sex-disaggregated data were indeed put into practice [4]. SURS thus publishes and disseminates sex-disaggregated data and successfully manages to disaggregate data for more than 75 % of variables.

The legal basis for national level data gathering and analysis, disaggregated by sex, is similarly set out in the Equal Opportunities of Women and Men Act (2002) in reference to the National Resolution Programme (Article 15, paragraph 2). These data are then used to plan further national programmes and periodic plans, meaning that they feed into policy-making and prioritisation. The need for data gathering and analysis is emphasised in the Guidelines: 'statistics are a necessary basis for the ministries to assess their planned policies, measures, laws and programmes in terms of their impact on women and men'.

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Good practices

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Endnotes

[1] Protection Against Discrimination Act (2016). [Zakon o varstvu pred diskriminacijo \(ZVarD\)](#).

[2] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2015). [Concluding observations. CEDAW/C/SVN/CO/5-6](#), p.6.

[3] Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (n.d.). [Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in the Work of Ministries 2016-2020](#), p.6.

[4] [Statistični urad Republike Slovenije](#); Banka Slovenije; Nacionalni inštitut za javno zdravje (2018). Statistični urad Republike Slovenije. Accessed via: Državna statistika v letu 2017: Poročilo o izvajanju Letnega programa statističnih raziskovanj za 2017.
