

EU Member States

Governmental gender equality bodies

A **governmental gender equality body** is a governmental body whose purpose is to design, coordinate and implement government policies for gender equality and is normally located in the government hierarchy. The existence and permanence of such a structure is a major indicator of the governmental responsibility in promoting gender equality. The governmental gender equality body should be located at the highest possible level of government, and the responsibility for promoting gender equality policies should be vested at the highest possible level of government, such as the level of a cabinet minister.

Type of governmental body at the national/federal level

National bodies for gender equality have been set up in each Member State to coordinate, implement, monitor and evaluate the gender-equality policies defined at governmental and/or ministerial level. They may also be involved in policymaking; providing expertise, advice and recommendations regarding policies and legal initiatives; elaborating studies that support policymaking; promoting awareness-raising initiatives; cooperating with civil society, etc.

The gender equality central structure of a Member State may have the form of either a department/division/unit within the ministry in charge of gender equality, or an independent/semi-independent body/agency/service usually overseen by the ministry. The ministry in charge of the gender-equality policy area may vary across the Member States. Currently, only one country has a ministry specifically devoted to women’s rights (LU), while more often ministries combine this topic with other policies (AT, DK, DE, FR, SI, ES). In most other cases, the policy area of gender equality is under the oversight of ministries dedicated to social policies – such as labour, employment, social affairs, health, welfare, social inclusion and family affairs (BG, EE, FI, LT, LV, MT, RO, SK, SE). Exceptionally, gender equality is located within other policy areas like education (IE, NL, UK), justice (CY), interior affairs (EL), finance (BE) [\[1\]](#) and human resources (HU), or is immediately under the responsibility of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers or the Prime Minister (CZ, HR, IT, PL, PT).

Governmental bodies responsible for gender equality

Country	Governmental Body	
	Within the ministerial structure	Independent or semi-independent
AT	Department for Gender Equality policies and legal matters (Directorate for Women and Equality, within the Federal Minister for Education and Women’s Affairs)	
BE		Federal Institute for Equality between Women and Men ^[1]
BG	Equal Opportunities, Anti-Discrimination and Social Benefit Department (Policy for People with Disabilities, Equal Opportunities and Social Benefits Directorate, within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy)	
HR		Government Office for Gender Equality
CZ	Gender Equality Unit	
CY		National Machinery for Women’s Rights
DK	Department of Gender Equality	
EE	Gender Equality Department	

Country	Governmental Body	
	Within the ministerial structure	Independent or semi-independent
FI	Gender Equality Unit	
FR		Women's Rights and Gender Equality Service (General Directorate for Social Cohesion, within the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health and Women's Rights)
DE	Gender Equality Department	
EL		General Secretariat for Gender Equality
HU	Departmental Unit for Population, Family Affairs and Gender Equality	
IE	Gender Equality Division (Department of Justice and Equality)	
IT	Department for Equal Opportunities (Presidency of the Council of Ministers)	
LV	Department of Development and Planning of Social Policy	
LT	Equality between Women and Men Division	
LU	Ministry of Equal Opportunities	
MT		National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
NL	Directorate for Emancipation	
PL	Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment (Office of the Prime Minister)	
PT		Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (Presidency of the Council of Ministers)
RO	Directorate for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men	

Governmental Body		
Country	Within the ministerial structure	Independent or semi-independent
SK		Department for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunity
SI	Equal Opportunities and European Coordination Service	
ES		General Directorate of Equal Opportunities (Secretariat for Social Services and Equality, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality)
SE	Gender Equality Unit (Ministry of Family Affairs and Social Services)	
UK		Government Equalities Office (Department of Education)

[Read more about these countries](#)



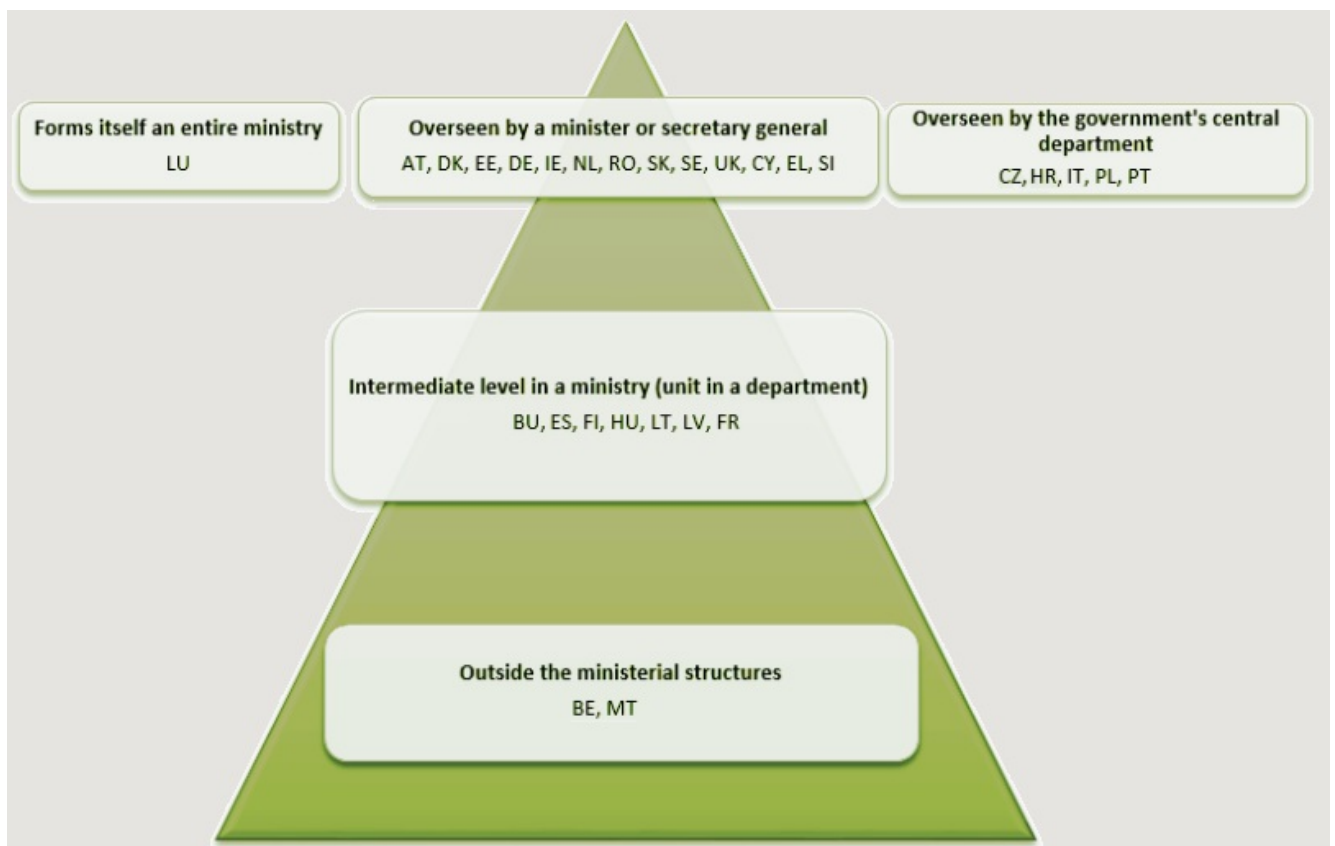
[1] The Federal Institute for Equality between Women and Men is a semi-independent body, falling under the control of the minister/secretary of state in charge of gender-equality policies when it comes to more administrative tasks, but autonomous when it comes to legal action or when it takes the initiative to advise the minister and other public authorities. Currently, the minister in charge of gender-equality policies is the Secretary of State in charge of Fight against Poverty, Equal Opportunities, Disabled Persons, Urban Policy, Scientific Policy, assistant to the Minister of Finance.

[*] The information provided in this page was last updated in 2015

Position of the body in the governmental hierarchy

The position of the structure in the governmental hierarchy varies. It may be located at the highest level – when it forms a ministry (LU) – or it may be overseen by the central department of the government – notably the Council of Ministers or the Prime Minister’s Office (CZ, HR, IT, PT, PL). Alternatively, it may be a department in a ministry, above which there is the minister or a secretary general (DK, EE, DE, IE, NL, RO, SK, SE, UK, CY, EL, SI). Often, the gender-equality body is a unit in a department and is thereby located at the intermediate level in a ministry (AT, BU, CZ, ES, FI, HU, LT, LV, FR). Lastly, in some countries it is an independent body outside the ministerial structures (BE, MT).

Hierarchical location of the gender equality central structures in 2015



Level of responsibility for promoting gender equality

The responsibility to promote and advance gender equality lies with governments of the Member States. According to the BPfA, the responsibility for promoting gender equality policies should be vested at the highest possible level of government, such as the level of a cabinet minister. However, approaches differ regarding where to place the mandate of this policy area. Besides the existence of ministries that make reference to the policy area of gender equality in their designation, most countries have a minister or state secretary responsible for promoting gender equality.

Ministers responsible for gender equality

Country	Minister responsible for gender equality
AT	Federal Minister for Education and Women's Affairs
BE	Secretary of State in charge of Fight against Poverty, Equal Opportunities, Disabled Persons, Urban Policy, Scientific Policy, assistant to the Minister of Finance
BG	Minister of Labour and Social Policy
HR	
CZ	Office of the Government
CY	Minister of Justice and Public Order
DK	Minister for Gender Equality
EE	Minister of Social Affairs
FI	Minister of Social Affairs and Health
FR	Minister for Social Affairs, Health and Women's Rights
DE	Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
EL	Minister of Interior
HU	Ministry of Human Resources
IE	Minister for Justice and Equality
IT	
LV	Minister of Welfare
LT	Minister of Social Security and Labour
LU	Minister for Equal Opportunities
MT	Minister for Justice, Dialogue and the Family
NL	Minister of Education, Culture and Science
PL	
PT	Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Equality, Presidency of the Council of Ministers
RO	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly Persons

Country	Minister responsible for gender equality
SK	Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family
SI	Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
ES	Secretary of State for Social Services and Equality
SE	Minister of Family Affairs and Social Services
UK	Minister for Women and Equalities

[*] The information provided in this page was last updated in 2015

Legal and policy framework for gender mainstreaming at the national level

A successful implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy requires well formulated gender mainstreaming objectives and targets embedded in a supportive legal and political framework, as well as a clear implementation Strategy/Plan.

Legal basis for gender mainstreaming

In many Member States the political commitment to gender mainstreaming is a legal obligation, either contextualised in the national gender equality legislation (DK, DE, EE, FR, HR, RO, SI, FI, SE, UK), or in a separate law on gender mainstreaming (BE, ES). In some countries (AT, DE, PT), the basis for implementing gender mainstreaming is provided by Resolutions of the Council of Ministers.

Gender mainstreaming contextualised in:

Country	National gender equality legislation	A separate law on gender mainstreaming	Other
AT			Five Resolutions of the Council of Ministers (2000–2010)
BE		Gender Mainstreaming Law (2007)	
DE	Federal Equality Act of 2001		Cabinet Resolution of 23 June 1999 Common Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries (2000)
DK	Gender Equality Act		
EE	Gender Equality Act		
ES		Law 3/2007 on the Effective Equality on Men and Women	
FI	Act on Equality between Women and Men		
FR	Act on Equality between Men and Women (2014)		
HR	Gender Equality Act		
IT	National Code for Equal Opportunities (2006)		
RO	Law No. 202/2002 Regarding the Equal Opportunities of Women and Men		
SE	Equality Policy Bill (2006)		
SI	Act on Equal Opportunities		
UK	Equality Act (2010)		

[*] The information provided in this page was last updated in 2015

Most countries (BG, CZ, DK, EE, IE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE, UK) include gender mainstreaming references in their national strategies and/or action plans for gender equality, while three Member States (BE, DK, SE) have national strategies and/or action plans specifically dedicated to gender mainstreaming.

Country	Gender equality Strategies/Plans with gender mainstreaming references	Specific Strategies/Plans for gender mainstreaming
BE		2012–2014 Federal Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming
BG	National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality	
CY	National Action Plan on Equality between Women and Men (2007–2013)	
CZ	National Strategy: Priorities and Policies of the Government in the Promotion of Equality for Women and Men National gender-equality plans	
DK	Gender-equality action plans	National Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (2013) National Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans
EE	Promotion of Gender Equality Programme (2008–2010), (2011–2013)	
EL	National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality (2010)	
ES	Plans for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women	
FI	Government Action Plan for Gender Equality (2012–2015)	
FR	Inter-ministerial action plans (serving as a national strategy) Gender-equality action plans in each ministry	
HR	National Policy for Gender Equality (2011–2015)	
HU	National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2010–2021) Action plans foreseen but not implemented	

Country	Gender equality Strategies/Plans with gender mainstreaming references	Specific Strategies/Plans for gender mainstreaming
IE	National Women's Strategy (2007–2016)	
LT	National programmes on equal opportunities for women and men Action plans for the implementation of national programmes	
LU	National Action Plan on Equality between Women and Men Action plans for the implementation of the national action plan	
LV	Action plans for implementation of gender equality	
NL	Policy letter to Parliament (National emancipation policy framework)	
PL	National Action Plan for Equal Treatment 2013-2016	
RO	National strategy for equal opportunities between women and men (2010–2012)	
SE	National Strategy 'The direction of gender-equality politics' (2011–2014)	Strategy for the work on gender mainstreaming in the government offices Action plans on gender mainstreaming in each ministry
SI	National programme for equal opportunities Periodical plans for the implementation of the national programme	
SK	National Strategy for Gender Equality (2009-2013) Action plan for the implementation of the national strategy	
UK	Government's Equality Strategy (2010)	

[*] The information provided in this page was last updated in 2015

Structures for gender mainstreaming at the ministerial level

Implementing gender mainstreaming requires structures of governmental bodies and officials responsible for gender mainstreaming. Such structures might be units/departments/working groups specifically dedicated to gender mainstreaming within each ministry, gender focal points in the ministries (contact persons for gender mainstreaming) and/or an inter-ministerial group (a coordinating body or a network of contact persons).

Specific structures for gender mainstreaming at the ministerial level

Nine countries have created structures (units, departments or working groups) specifically dedicated to gender mainstreaming at ministerial level (AT, FI, ES, LU, DE, DK, BE, EE, FR, PL). In Finland, each ministry has an operational gender-equality working group that coordinates, implements and monitors gender mainstreaming within its respective policy areas. Austria presents a similar approach with some ministries having constituted gender-mainstreaming working groups, such as the Federal Ministry for Women and Civil Service. In Germany, gender-equality structures are in place both at federal and local level: some ministries have units dedicated to gender-equality issues. Luxembourg and Spain have institutionalised by law the creation of units dedicated to mainstreaming gender equality in each ministry. In Luxembourg, since 2005, gender-competence cells have been put in place and are accountable for internally implementing gender-equality policies within the policy areas of each ministry. In 2007 Spain established gender units in each ministry, responsible for collecting sex-disaggregated statistics, conducting studies, providing advice on promoting gender equality, fostering gender knowledge and gender training, and monitoring the implementation of the equality law. In Denmark, a specific department dedicated to gender equality and gender mainstreaming has been instituted within the Ministry for Gender Equality; from 2001 to 2013, there was also a steering committee composed of high-level representatives from each ministry responsible for ensuring the implementation of the national gender-mainstreaming strategy and the integration of gender-equality concerns at policy level, while a group of contact persons (one or two civil servants per ministry) was in charge of implementing the gender-mainstreaming policy measures decided by the steering committee. Analogously, Belgium has created a specific unit within the Federal Institute for the Equality of Women and Men on gender mainstreaming: their role is to initiate, coordinate and coach the gender-mainstreaming process in all federal ministry departments. Estonia and France have assigned this responsibility to staff members. In Estonia, one of the staff members of the Gender Equality Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs is specifically responsible for gender mainstreaming. In France, each ministry has had appointed high-ranked public servants for gender equality since June 2012, under the coordination of the Ministry of Women's Rights. Their role is to implement a mainstreaming approach and to ensure that gender-equality legislation is fully implemented, as well as to design gender-equality plans for their respective policy areas. In Poland, some ministries have units dedicated specifically to gender-equality issues (i.e. Ministry of Labor and Social Policy).

[Read more about these countries](#)



Gender focal points and Inter-ministerial working groups

Gender focal points are generally in charge of ensuring the implementation of the ministries' gender equality and/or gender mainstreaming policy measures, and/or to monitor national gender-equality laws and policies. The number of representatives per ministry and/or public institution varies from country to country. This also applies to the amount of time they are required to dedicate to fulfilling their responsibilities, as the work related to this function is often combined with other responsibilities. Ten countries (BE, HR, CY, CZ, DK, FR, DE, PL, PT, SE, LT) have appointed gender focal points at ministerial level, designated as, for example, equal opportunity commissioners, counsellors for equality, ministerial representatives, ministry gender-mainstreaming coordinators, gender-equality focal points, and gender equality coordinators.

Both the BPfA and Indicator 3 of the Council of the European Union make explicit reference to the need for an inter-ministerial coordination structure to carry out the gender-mainstreaming mandate. Fourteen Member States (AT, BE, CY, DE, FI, LU, PT, SE, FR, EE, LT, ES, UK, DK) have a structure in compliance with such recommendations. In Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Luxemburg, Poland, Portugal and Sweden the ministerial gender representatives form an inter-ministerial group with the mandate to implement gender-equality and/or gender-mainstreaming measures within the ministry they represent. In France, the ministers themselves form the inter-ministerial group. In Estonia, Lithuania, Spain and the UK, the ministerial representatives are appointed to attend inter-ministerial meetings to design, coordinate, monitor and/or provide recommendations on governmental gender-equality and/or gender-mainstreaming policies. In Denmark, the inter-ministerial structure acts as a forum where the ministries' employees can gain knowledge and exchange experiences on gender mainstreaming; similarly, in Finland, the network of gender-equality working groups provides a forum for sharing experience and good practice and identifying and discussing problems. In Poland, a national advisory body on equal treatment consisting of high level representatives of all Ministries has been established, as foreseen in the National Programme for Equal Treatment 2013–2016.

Some countries have created legal or policy provisions for defining the role of gender focal points and/or the inter-ministerial groups, namely Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden.

[Read more about these countries](#)



Other structures

Addressing discrimination based on sex and promoting equal treatment between women and men in accordance with EU directives are tasks that have been assigned to specific bodies in all 28 EU Member States. The independent anti-discrimination bodies complement the work of the governmental gender equality bodies by virtue of their mandate to prevent the violation of rights and to give legal protection.

Equality bodies

Following the requirement of [EU Directives](#), countries have established equality structures for the promotion, analysis, monitoring and support of equal treatment of all persons without discrimination. Some of these bodies focus solely on discrimination on grounds of sex; others handle equal treatment of women and men in the same independent body that focuses on discrimination on other grounds as well. Recently, a tendency has been noted in Member States to merge all grounds of discrimination, including discrimination based on sex, into the tasks of one independent body for promotion of equal treatment. It was already noted in the [Swedish Presidency report](#) that '[re]placing the independent bodies for protection against discrimination on the ground of sex with bodies for protection against multiple discrimination seems to be a trend among the MS'.

Recent developments show that equal treatment of women and men or discrimination based on the ground of sex has been merged into the broad spectrum of different forms of discrimination. This trend can have both positive and negative consequences that need to be further investigated and monitored. [Learn more here](#) →

Equality bodies

Country	Structure	Ground of Discrimination	
		Sex	Several
AT	Equal Treatment Commission (private sector) Federal Equal Treatment Commission (public sector)		X
BE	Institute for the Equality of Women and Men	X	
BG	Commission for Protection against Discrimination		X

Country	Structure	Ground of Discrimination	
		Sex	Several
CZ	Public Defender of Rights (Ombudsperson)		X
DK	The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR)		X
DE	Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency		X
EE	Gender Equality and Equal Treatment Commissioner		X
IE	The Equality Authority		X
EL	The Greek Ombudsman		X
ES	Institute for Women	X	
FR	Defender of Rights		X
HR	Ombudsperson for Gender Equality	X	
IT	Italy has not designated an independent body for equal treatment in accordance with Directive 2002/73/EC. All tasks such as the promotion, analysis, monitoring and support of equal treatment of all persons without discrimination on grounds of sex are performed by the Department for Equal Opportunities.		
CY	Equality Authority under the office of the Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman)		X
LV	Office of Ombudsman		X
LT	Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson		X
LU	Centre for Equal Treatment		X
HU	Equal Treatment Authority		X
MT	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality		X
NL	The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights		X
PL	Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment <i>*The Human Rights Defender and the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment are both equality bodies within the definition set up by the EU directives</i>		X
PT	Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment		X

Country	Structure	Ground of Discrimination	
		Sex	Several
RO	National Council for Combating Discrimination		X
SI	Advocate of the Principle of Equality		X
SK	Slovak National Centre for Human Rights		X
FI	The Ombudsman for Equality	X	X
SE	Equality Ombudsman		X
UK	Equality and Human Rights Commission		X

source: [European network of equality bodies \(Equinet\)](#)

[*] The information provided in this page was last updated in 2015

All Member States have institutional mechanisms for gender equality, but to ensure their effective functioning and performance, it is important to involve in the consultation process relevant branches of civil society, such as centres for women’s studies and research, academic and educational institutions, non-governmental organisations (especially women’s organisations) and other actors.

Advisory and consultative structures

According to the BPfA, alongside governmental gender equality bodies and independent bodies for the promotion of equal treatment of women and men, the institutional structure for gender equality should provide possibilities to involve civil society.

Six countries have created structures to advise and support the design, implementation and assessment of gender equality policies: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Portugal and Slovakia. Their members are generally NGOs and ministerial representatives; other members may include gender experts, trade unions, representatives of employers, academia and public/state organisations.

Whereas stakeholder participation in gender equality/gender mainstreaming policies has been integrated or institutionalised in a majority of Member States, it still fails to be fully embedded at every stage of the policy process, where it rarely or only occasionally informs policymaking. [Learn more here](#) →

Advisory and consultative structures for gender equality policies

Country	Advisory and consultative structures	NGOs	Ministerial representatives	Gender experts	Others
BE	Council for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women	X	X		X
BG	National Council for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men	X	X		X
CZ	Council of the Government for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men	X	X	X	X
FR	High Gender Equality Council	X	X	X	X
PT	Consultative Council of the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality	X	X	X	
SK	Governmental Council for Human Rights, Minorities and Gender Equality (Committee for Gender Equality)	X	X		X

Some countries have established structures to deal with equality in labour and employment, generally overseen by the relevant ministry and involve other social partners in their organisational composition; they are responsible for promoting equality between women and men in labour, employment and vocational training. **Italy** has set up a **National Committee of Equality and Equal Opportunities in Employment**. **Portugal** has established a **Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment**. In **Luxemburg**, the **Female Labour Committee** serves as advisory body to the government on labour-related topics, comprising representatives of ministries, women’s NGOs, trade unions and employers. **Cyprus** has a **Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training**, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the relevant equal-treatment law. It can accept complaints of discrimination within the sphere of employment and vocational training. In France, the implementation of gender equality policy in the realm of labour and employment is covered by the Superior Council for Gender Equality in the Workplace.

Advisory structures for gender equality in labour and employment

Country	Advisory structure
CY	Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training
FR	Superior Council for Gender Equality in the Workplace
IT	National Committee of Equality and Equal Opportunities in Employment
LU	Female Labour Committee

[Read more about these countries](#)



[*] The information provided in this page was last updated in 2015

Observatories and research centres

Observatories and research centres that are specifically dedicated to investigating and monitoring gender equality topics can be found in Cyprus, Greece, Poland and Spain.

The Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory (CGEO) is an NGO with social, scientific and research activities combating all forms of discrimination.

The Greek Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI) is a private legal entity under the supervision of the governmental gender-equality body. It has a double focus: to conduct social research on gender-equality issues and to improve women's status in all areas of political, economic and social life.

The Polish Gender Equality Observatory is a non-governmental initiative that analyses, monitors and promotes gender equality in Poland since 2009. Based in Warsaw, the Observatory is a program in the renowned Institute of Public Affairs, a leading Polish think-tank, established in 1995. The Observatory's research projects are supported by expert knowledge of researchers from top Polish universities. The Observatory monitors national legislation influencing the issues of gender equality, especially connected to issues of reproductive rights, violence, family policy (parental leaves etc.), electoral system. Furthermore, an Observatory of gender (in)equality in media was established in Poland within the framework of the Congress of women. The Observatory monitors media in terms of discrimination against women as well as observing the role of media in promoting gender equality slogans especially in the context of election campaigns; another task of the Observatory is to response to the inequalities / discrimination in media.

The Spanish Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Observatory, overseen by the central Women's Institute, seeks on one hand to gather, analyse and disseminate information on a regular and systematic basis regarding the situation facing women and men in social and employment-related issues. On the other hand, it proposes policies that seek to improve the situation of women in various fields. The Women's Institute also includes an Observatory of Women's Image, which promotes a sound, non-stereotyped image of women.

[Read more about these countries](#)



[*] The information provided in this page was last updated in 2015

The regional structures

To some extent, the gender mainstreaming framework at the regional level tends to be organised similarly to the national level: existence of legal and political arrangements; existence of a governmental gender equality body; existence of units with a gender mainstreaming mandate in the regional ministries; and a regional coordination structure for the implementation of gender equality policies.

Regional Structures in six Member States

The regional gender equality structures in six countries are taken into consideration here, namely Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Spain and the UK. To some extent, the gender mainstreaming framework tends to be organised similarly to the national level: legal and political arrangements; existence of a governmental gender equality body; existence of units with a gender mainstreaming mandate in the regional ministries; and a regional coordination structure for the implementation of gender equality policies.

Either national/federal gender equality laws or gender equality laws issued by the regional authorities are in place in each of the six Member States. In Austria, all nine states – which have some legislative authority distinct from the federal government – have passed resolutions for implementing gender mainstreaming. In Belgium, anti-discrimination/equal opportunities legislation is in place in the three regions (i.e. Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia), and the regions of Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia have a legal framework for gender mainstreaming. In France, gender equality policy arrangements vary strongly across regions: in 2011, a governmental notice provided a comprehensive framework for the adoption of Regional Strategic Gender Equality Plans, as part of an initiative co-funded by the EU through PROGRESS. This institutional framing of regional plans also specifies the monitoring structure for their implementation, making regional prefects accountable and involving delegates at the departmental level. Additionally, evaluation procedures are also addressed, emphasising gender mainstreaming as a goal. In Germany, while all Länder have gender-equality laws in place, only some feature gender-equality strategies and have developed specific gender-mainstreaming plans. In Spain, gender mainstreaming has been extensively included in regional equality plans and laws. In the UK, Wales and Scotland are covered by the national Equality Act, while Northern Ireland has its own Gender Equality Act and Strategy.

Every region has a structure dealing specifically with women's rights and/or gender equality (e.g. departments or units within regional ministries, bodies or services); only in two regions in the UK gender equality is associated with other policy areas.

In Austria, for each of the nine states, a department for women's affairs and/or gender equality has been created. In Belgium, the Regions/Communities have an Equal Opportunity Unit within a ministry in their governments. In France, delegates to women's rights and gender equality (Délégations Régionales aux Droits des Femmes et à l'Égalité) were established in each of the 26 regions to implement national gender-equality policies. In Germany, a department or a unit for gender equality has been created within a ministry in almost all Länder, typically under the oversight of ministries that cover social affairs, labour and/or health policies, with the exception of two regions that have integrated these departments under the responsibility of ministries of justice. Almost all ministries include the terms 'gender equality', 'women' or 'emancipation' in their designation. In Spain, all 17 autonomous communities have established at least one central structure responsible for gender policies. Two types of structures have been set up at regional level: autonomous agencies and departments. Ten regions have autonomous agencies analogous to the Women's Institute at the national level. These are institutionalised by law, with their own budget and staff, and with similar goals and tasks. Seven regions have established specific departments in charge of gender-equality policies. In the UK, the gender equality structures at the regional level form part of the government departments of the devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Wales and Scotland are covered by the Equality Act, whereas Northern Ireland has its own structures and arrangements.

Germany and Spain have created specific structures for gender mainstreaming. In Spain, gender units covering the whole regional administration have been created for some regions, while seven regions have opted to create a gender unit for each of the regional ministries. In Germany, two regions have created specific units for gender mainstreaming within the ministerial departments, namely Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt.

Inter-ministerial groups, commissions or committees for each region have been set up in Belgium, Germany and Spain, where representatives from regional ministries participate in meetings in order to coordinate regional gender-equality policies.

The interface between both the national and the regional level has been ensured through steering meetings (Austria) and conferences (Germany and Spain). These structures put together representatives from the national gender-equality central structure and representatives from the regional structures. The coordination capacity of the national level towards the regional level does not seem to be robust in the six examined countries. Whereas Austria appears to have a 'top-down approach' in which the national inter-ministerial working group provides direction and support to the regions, in Germany and Spain there is a 'horizontal approach' in which policies are jointly discussed and there is space for exchange of information and practices. The latter do not have any capacity to impose or monitor any directives. On the other hand, in Belgium and the UK there is a disconnect between both levels because policies are developed independently (in Belgian's regions and Communities, and in Northern Ireland).

[Read more about these countries](#)



Disclaimer:

The present overview of the framework for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the 28 EU Member States is assessed on the basis of selected aspects of Indicators 1 and 3 of the Council of the European Union. These indicators measure the attainment of some of the key objectives of Beijing Platform for Action's critical area 'H - Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women'. [Learn more about the EU indicators for the Beijing Platform for Action area H](#)