

European Union

European Commission

The coordination of gender mainstreaming across the European Commission's Directorates-General is currently under the central responsibility of the [Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers](#), led by Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli.

Inside the DG Justice and Consumers, there is a dedicated **Gender Equality Unit** (Unit D.2) to coordinate the Commission's work and, an Inter-Service Group for Gender Equality with members from all Commission DG's and services. It coordinates the implementation of actions for equality between women and men in their respective policies and the annual work programme for their respective policy area.

The unit deals both with:

- 1 | legal aspects (monitoring the gender equality acquis and the new legislation) and
- 2 | policy issues, such as exchange of good practices between the Member States, awareness-raising and funding.

It is also consulted, both formally and informally, when new legislation is proposed. In the context of the inter-service consultation, the Gender Unit can make suggestions so that gender equality issues are reflected in the proposals. The Unit has a contact person for each DG, to support a gender perspective in their activities and processes and it also supports civil society organisations (CSOs) as expert informants providing consultations and public dialogues. It gives the EU CSOs a particularly important role in decision-making processes, through both formal and informal procedures. In the context of the preparation of policies, the DG and the Gender Unit organise public consultations and seminars with social partners on specific topics to gather input from a broad range of stakeholders.

Structures with cross-sectorial, or horizontal, responsibility for gender

Inter-Service Group on Gender Equality

Established in 1995 to support the gender-mainstreaming approach of the Commission, it brings together representatives of all the Commission's Directorates-General. It is chaired by the structure with central responsibility for gender equality and coordinates the activities of the Commission departments regarding the planning and implementation of actions for equality between women and men in their respective policies, as well as the annual work programme for their respective policy areas. It is also the platform for the monitoring and reporting of the Commission's activities regarding gender equality and contributes to the policy follow-up. The group meets four times a year to monitor implementation on the specific actions. The Gender Equality Unit serves as its secretariat. The members of the group liaise with the Gender Equality Unit within the framework of the annual report on equality between women and men, published every year ahead of the International Women's Day on 8 March.

Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

It was created in 1991 and involves representatives of the European Union (EU) Member States, the European Women's Lobby and social partner organisations. It assists the Commission in formulating and implementing EU activities aimed at promoting equality between women and men by delivering opinions to the Commission on issues of relevance to the promotion of gender equality in the EU. EIGE attends the Committee sessions as observer organization and two representatives of the European Women's Lobby may attend meetings as observers. Representatives of other organisations may be given observer status upon duly substantiated requests. The Committee normally meets twice per year.

High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming

The High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming is an informal group created in 2001, composed of high-level civil servants from Member States' ministries responsible for gender mainstreaming at national level selected through procedures autonomously decided by each Member State. It is chaired by the European Commission presidency and meets twice a year, at the beginning of each new presidency of the Council of the European Union. The group is responsible for supporting the Trio Presidencies in identifying relevant policy areas and topics on gender equality to be addressed. The group is also the main forum for planning the strategic follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), including the development of indicators, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. Since 2003, it assists the Commission in the preparation of the annual report on equality between women and men.

European Network of Experts on Gender Equality (ENEGE)

In place since December 2011, it provides external expertise to the Commission in the field of gender-equality policy. This network has taken over from two pre-existing experts networks specialised respectively in employment, and social inclusion, health and long-term care. The network – composed of experts in statistics, econometrics, social protection and social inclusion as well as labour market economists, and covering all EU Member States, European Economic Area/European Free Trade Association (EEA-EFTA) countries, and acceding, candidate and pre-candidate countries – has responsibility for undertaking an annual programme of policy-oriented research and reports and preparing different types of products (thematic reports, research reviews, country fiches, etc.). Currently, the network is coordinated by the Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, in partnership with Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale, based in Italy. Overall coordination is provided by the Gender Equality Unit of the DG Justice and Consumers.

Network of legal experts

It has been in operation since 1984. In 2015 the network was merged with the Network of legal experts in the non-discrimination field forming one single European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination. This network is composed of independent experts (academics and practitioners) from the 28 EU countries, EEA-EFTA countries and candidate countries. The network of legal experts is responsible for the following: giving advice and relevant information to the Commission in the analysis and monitoring of national legislation and policies in the field of equality between women and men; contributing, where appropriate, to the development of new Union legislative instruments in this field; assisting the Commission in developing legal and policy initiatives by commenting on policy documents, making suggestions and providing the Commission with the legal data necessary for comparison; and assisting in the dissemination of information in relation to developments in this area at EU and national levels through its European Gender Equality Law Review (previously called bulletins) and other publications. The Commission can also use this network as a thinktank or as a sounding board for new strategies and ideas. The overall management of the network rests with Human European Consultancy, Utrecht University and the Migration Policy Group. It is coordinated by the Unit for Equality Legislation within the DG Justice and Consumers.

European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet)

The Commission supports Equinet, the permanent network for cooperation between the established national equality bodies (gender and other forms of discrimination). Equinet is located in Brussels (Belgium). It emerged from a two-year project – ‘Strengthening the cooperation between specialised bodies for the implementation of equal treatment legislation’ (2002–2004). It has currently a partnership agreement with the European Commission under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme. This network is composed of 41 organisations from 31 European countries, which are empowered to counteract discrimination as national equality bodies across various forms of discrimination which include age, disability, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

EIGE is a European autonomous agency established in 2006 after the European Parliament and the Council adopted [Regulation \(EC\) No 1922/2006](#). The Institute became operational in 2010. EIGE is located in Vilnius (Lithuania) and supports EU Member States and European institutions, in particular the European Commission, in their efforts to promote gender equality, fight discrimination based on sex and raise awareness of gender issues. EIGE is responsible for collecting and analysing comparative data on gender issues; for developing methodological tools, particularly to assist the integration of the gender dimension in all policy areas (gender mainstreaming); for facilitating the exchange of best practices and dialogue among interested parties; and for raising awareness among EU citizens. EIGE also has an Experts' Forum. The DG Justice and Consumers is the parent DG of EIGE.

Structures with policy-specific, or vertical, responsibility for gender

There are units with specific responsibility for gender issues in only two Directorates-General within the European Commission: DG Research & Innovation and DG for Development and Cooperation. Both these DGs have, within these units, a sector working on gender. In addition, these DGs have set up other structures – similar to the supportive structures that work horizontally and which are listed above – that support their gender-related policy work.

Directorate-General for Research & Innovation

The [Directorate-General for Research & Innovation](#)'s mission is 'to develop and implement the European research and innovation policy with a view to achieving the goals of Europe 2020 and the Innovation Union'. DG Research & Innovation consists of 12 Directorates. The Directorate B – European Research Area has a Unit B.6 dedicated to Ethics and Gender).

- **Unit Ethics and Gender** (RTD.DDG2.B.6.002): The unit is divided in two sectors: Ethics and Gender, respectively.
- The **Helsinki Group on Women and Science** was established in 1999. It consists of national representatives from all EU Member States and countries associated with the RTD Framework Programme. The group is convened twice a year by the European Commission. It supports the work of the Commission on women (and gender) in science (e.g. for the collection

of national data), and provides a forum for dialogue about national policies and for sharing and comparing experiences.

- The **Women & Science Group**, coordinated by the Ethics and Gender Unit, is an informal network of correspondents for gender issues in each of the relevant departments of the DG Research and Innovation (and other DGs involved in the framework programmes, FPs).

Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation

The [Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation](#), established on 3 January 2011, is the result of the merger of parts of the former Directorate-General for Development and Relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific States with the former EuropeAid Co-operation Office. The mission of DG Development and Cooperation is to design policies to reduce poverty in the world, ensure sustainable development, and promote democracy, peace and security. DG Development and Cooperation is also in charge of implementing the EU's external aid instruments, and coordinating the actions of EU institutions, EU Member States and other EU actors around the Union's core values, objectives and common priorities. DG for Development and Cooperation consists of nine Directorates. The Unit Governance, Democracy, Gender, Human Rights is part of Directorate B.

- **Unit Governance, Democracy, Gender, Human Rights (DEVCO.B.1):** This unit includes a 'Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination' sector.
- **Network of gender focal points:** This informal network of gender focal points is formed by representatives of the Commission's Directorates-General that deal with external relations and development cooperation, as well as representatives of Commission delegations.
- **Group of Experts on Gender Equality in Development Cooperation:** This informal group met for the first time in 1999, and is formed by Member States' gender experts. It is chaired by the Commission and meets annually. Its aim is to discuss policy developments in relation to gender and development in the context of major EU and international events.

Structures set up in support of other policy areas

- The **Advisory Group on Women in Rural Areas** was created in 1998 and consists of representatives of socioeconomic organisations (agricultural producers, trade,

consumers, the European Women's Lobby and workers). It meets once a year, and is coordinated by the DG Agriculture and Rural Development.

- The **European Network to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship** (WES) has members from 31 European countries (EU, Croatia, Iceland, Norway and Turkey). The delegates in the network represent central national governments and institutions and have responsibility for promoting female entrepreneurship. WES members provide advice, support, information and contacts regarding existing support measures for female entrepreneurs. They also help in the identification of good practices. The network is coordinated by the Commission's DG Enterprise and Industry.
- The **Experts Group on Trafficking in Human Beings** was set up in 2003. It is a consultative group that consists of 20 persons appointed as independent experts. Its aim is to provide the Commission with expertise in the shape of opinions or reports relating to the prevention of and fight against trafficking in human beings.

Informal coordination structures may also exist in other DGs. These have been reported for DG Agriculture and Rural Development and DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion. However, no further information about these structures has been obtained.

European Parliament

The European Parliament is committed to gender mainstreaming of its work and organisation which has been confirmed in several resolutions since 2003. In its [Resolution from 17 November 2011](#), the European Parliament 'commits itself to regularly adopting and implementing a policy plan for gender mainstreaming with the overall objective of promoting equality between women and men through the genuine and effective incorporation of the gender perspective into all policies and activities, so that the different impact of measures on women and on men is assessed, existing initiatives are coordinated, and objectives and priorities, as well as the means of achieving them, are specified'.

Structures with a gender mainstreaming mandate

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

The [Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality \(FEMM\)](#) is one of the 20 standing parliamentary committees of the European Parliament. FEMM plays a crucial role in advancing gender equality in the EU through legislating and influencing the European political agenda in the area of equality between women and men and women's rights. About 30 pieces of legislation on gender equality have been adopted in the European Union during the last 40 years. The FEMM committee's priorities on gender mainstreaming for the period 2011–2014 in the Resolution emphasise the dual approach of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, ensuring a gender balance in decision-making and also a gender perspective in the budgetary process. The committee also monitors the implementation of European equal treatment directives in the area of employment, the access to goods and services and in all other areas relevant for gender equality and women's rights. It provides feedback to the Commission's gender equality strategy and action programmes in this area and closely follows the European Commission's annual progress reports on equality between women and men, by adopting its own report.

Gender Mainstreaming Network

FEMM further promotes gender mainstreaming by coordinating the Parliament's Gender Mainstreaming Network, chaired by the Chair of FEMM. The network is made up of (Vice-) Chairs from each parliamentary committee who have been appointed to implement gender mainstreaming in the work of their committee. They are supported by a gender mainstreaming administrator in each parliamentary committee secretariat.

High Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity

One of the Parliament's Vice-Presidents heads the High Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity which adopts a multi-annual strategy enhancing equal treatment of men and women within the administration of the European Parliament.

Political groups

Several political groups in the Parliament have set up a particular working group initiating and coordinating their activities with regard to enhancing gender equality and women's rights.

Council of the European Union

Member States' ministers responsible for gender equality have the opportunity to meet within the framework of the [Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council \(EPSCO\)](#). Among the main outcomes of the EPSCO meetings are the Council Conclusions on different subjects related to gender equality and women's rights. They most usually focus on the areas of concern selected by the Presidency country from the BPfA, drawn up on the basis of reports on the implementation of the BPfA in the EU. Since 2011, EIGE has provided expertise in the preparation of such biannual reports for the follow-up of the BPfA in the EU.