

Gender Impact Assessment

General considerations

There are a few essential rules to keep in mind when considering the implementation of gender impact assessment.



Political commitment

The gender impact assessment is an instrument for the implementation of gender mainstreaming. Therefore, it is only a tool and as such it needs to respond to a clear objective. Therefore, to realise its full potential, it requires **unambiguous institutional support**, since it entails the investment of different resources: gender experts, time, gender training and capacity-building, tools, data collection and monitoring mechanisms.



Tasks and Responsibilities

Staff members have different roles and responsibilities within the process of introducing and implementing gender impact assessment. The specific tasks and responsibilities of different staff members are addressed within the individual steps of this guide.

However, with respect to gender mainstreaming as a top-down approach, the executive staff's responsibility is to create accountability and ensure that the necessary resources and conditions are readily available for the implementation of the gender impact assessment.



Gender expertise

It goes without saying that for a gender impact assessment to realise its transformative potential, the mobilisation of specific expertise is required. Expertise specific to the policy area and gender expertise are prerequisites for performing an accurate analysis and for developing adequate policy responses.

If required gender expertise is not available in-house, it should be found outside the organisation. In any case, the aim should be not only to perform gender impact assessment but also to use the potential of the gender impact assessment process for internal gender capacity-building.



Sex-disaggregated data

Gender impact assessment is an approach that is heavily dependent on **sex-disaggregated data, statistics and information**, which are too often missing. Data gaps may severely limit the possibility for effectively carrying out gender impact assessment. Completing the gender impact assessment process in the absence of such data may result in overdependence on perception and speculation.

In addition, it is very difficult to set targets and indicators in the absence of baseline information. Nevertheless, it is important to make such data and knowledge gaps explicit and visible, so that these shortcomings can be taken up and remedied.



Understanding gender inequalities

Assessing the gender impact requires also an **information about** gender differences, but also an understanding of which differences actually constitute or have impact on **inequality and discrimination**.

The mechanisms that lead to inequality and discrimination, if understood, can be altered and transformed into processes that promote gender equality. Legislation and policies have a tremendous potential in this respect. When developing gender impact assessment, any administration at national, regional and local level has the possibility to mobilise this potential and to turn it into an active driver for gender equality.

Performing a good analysis can be a complex process, which is often irreconcilable with some tendencies toward understanding gender impact assessment as a 'tick-the-box' exercise. An important balance has to be struck between making tools simple enough to be used by a wide range of officials and oversimplifying complex social and economic issues.



Stakeholders

Consulting stakeholders about their needs can contribute to and even deepen the analysis, by validating and adding insights to the study, suggesting policy solutions, and enriching and fine-tuning the policy and legislative plans. It can also be useful for the identification of appropriate indicators for monitoring and follow-up.

When involving stakeholders, it is paramount to establish good cooperation with civil society **organisations with gender expertise**. Feminist and women's organisations are a priority, as they can contribute to reinforcing the gender perspective needed during the process.



Looking to the future

A gender impact assessment goes beyond an analysis of the existing situation, as it also includes a **prospective dimension**. This means that the exercise implies an assessment of the status of gender equality after the planned legislative or policy measure has been enacted.

Admittedly, this is not an easy task – especially when data and knowledge is scarce. A focus on analysing the existing situation is therefore a valid approach when beginning to work with gender impact assessment. And since assessing the current situation is always the starting point of a gender impact assessment, this stage of the process will provide a substantial picture of how gender inequality is manifested in a range of policy areas.

All this information will help create a culture of gender awareness within the institutions and thus contribute to the broader project of gender mainstreaming.



Gender impact assessment as a learning process

The implementation of gender impact assessments should be understood as a learning process. The commitment to develop gender impact assessment allows for the identification of shortcomings, data gaps, mistaken assumptions, lack of gender training, and so on.

All this information will be useful to activate subsequent measures to strengthen and improve the approach from a gender perspective. That is why gender impact assessment should always be public and accessible, not only for policymakers and public servants, but also for citizens.



Impact of the gender impact assessment

The implementation of an effective gender impact assessment process will result in an honest appraisal of the inequalities in the lives that women and men lead, a recognition of the consequences of those inequalities and, subsequently, a **taylor-made response in the policies** and practises. Ultimately, the process will be judged on its outcomes. The opportunities presented must be accompanied by the resources and political will to make them materialise.