

Institutional Transformation

Step 1: Creating accountability and strengthening commitment

Rationale

Gender mainstreaming **requires all staff members** to integrate gender equality into their respective fields of responsibility. **Introducing gender mainstreaming** into an organisation **not only requires a change of working routines** but also demands staff to reflect on their own **perception of gender**. This is why particular attention should be paid to dealing with resistance. On the other hand, the implementation of gender mainstreaming should not only rely on staff's personal understanding, but also on strong institutional mechanisms of accountability.

Key aspects

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Accountability refers to the objectives and priorities of an organisation as well as to its rules and procedures. Gender mainstreaming is a top-down strategy, meaning that the “top” of an organisation is responsible for creating accountability for its implementation. With regard to public institutions, it takes both the political will and the leadership of the organisation's top management in order to ensure the long-lasting implementation of gender mainstreaming

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Creating accountability:

- by formal mechanisms: i.e. the organisation's mandate, procedural rules and job descriptions.
- by informal mechanisms: how managers address gender issues in meetings, how the objective of gender equality is kept on the agenda and how gender equality staff are involved in decision-making.

Three key elements of strengthening accountability for gender mainstreaming:



Explicit mandate

Official statement on gender mainstreaming defines the organisation's overall vision of gender equality and makes a clear commitment to gender mainstreaming. It serves as the organisation's general framework for activities such as setting concrete gender equality objectives and developing gender equality action plans.

Internal transparency regarding the process of gender mainstreaming is crucial for acceptance. A communication strategy helps to ensure that all staff members are aware of the mandate and statement on gender mainstreaming.

Key aspects

The EU Commission's Communication of 21 February 1996 on "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community Policies and Activities" was a starting point for introducing gender mainstreaming as the main policy approach for promoting gender equality within the European Union.

[View example](#) →

The "UN system-wide Action Plan for Implementation of the CEB United Nations system-wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women" (UN SWAP) is based on a policy statement of the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). In this statement, the CEB demands indicators, timetables, allocation of responsibilities, accountability mechanisms as well as resources. The SWAP acts as a framework for a gender mainstreaming working plan to be applied to many UN organisations.

[View example](#) →

The Swiss National Science Foundation has published a "Mission Statement on Equality between Women and Men" with respect to its research funding policy.

Dedicated leadership

The main responsibility of the executive staff across all management hierarchies is to adopt both the formal and informal mechanisms by which they usually create accountability and strengthen commitment:

- how leaders communicate their commitment to gender mainstreaming
- demonstrate their support
- encourage staff
- strengthen the position of the [gender mainstreaming support structure](#)
- set a good example by implementing gender mainstreaming in their daily work routines, decision-making processes and all other activities.

Example

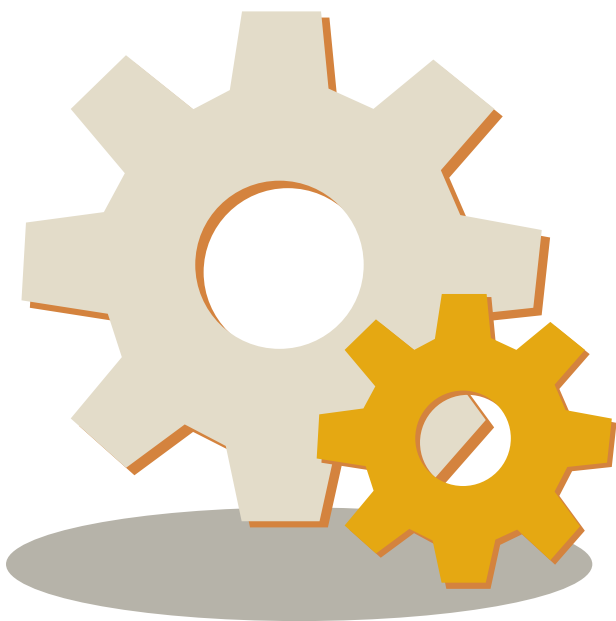
The Austrian 'Inter-ministerial Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming' was implemented by the Council of Ministers. As it is a support structure, it also serves as an example of how to create accountability. It is made up of high level executives from the federal ministries who are assigned responsibility for facilitating the implementation of gender mainstreaming within their respective ministries and departments.

[View example](#) →

Further elements



clear assignment of related tasks and responsibilities to staff members ([developing gender equality competence](#))



making [gender mainstreaming methods and tools](#) a mandatory part of an organisation's standard procedures - this may include approaches such as setting incentives and applying sanctions if necessary.

Top down or bottom up?

Although gender mainstreaming is meant to be a top-down strategy, in reality, the initiative often comes from the gender equality staff or from committed operative staff within an organisation. It is sometimes a challenge for them to gain the support of the executive staff. In this case it might be helpful to

- demonstrate how gender mainstreaming contributes to better achieving the organisation's mandate and goals (benefits of gender mainstreaming)
- have concrete suggestions on how to introduce and implement gender mainstreaming
- understand possible concerns and constraints and consider how to address these in advance
- find initial support from staff members in key positions
- approach managers who are thought most likely to support the initiative first