

Gender-sensitive Parliaments

Area 1 – Women and men have equal opportunities to ENTER the parliament

Area 1 concerns both the elected members of parliament (MPs) and parliamentary employees. The rationale is that a gender-sensitive parliament is one that assures equal opportunities for both women and men to enter the institution. Area 1 focuses on descriptive representation and includes both inward-oriented (parliaments as working organisations) and outward-oriented (parliaments as legislative bodies) elements of gender-sensitivity.

Firstly, the impact of the legal framework on women and elections is assessed to determine the extent to which a country's constitution guarantees equal opportunities for women's political participation. Freedom from discrimination on the basis of gender is also considered, in view of the OESC-ODIHR assertion that 'if a country's constitution is silent, ambiguous, or less than forthcoming on the equal rights of women, this may provide insights regarding the general standing of women in society, and in the political arena' (OSCE: 2004).

To determine women's chances of descriptive representation, electoral systems are examined. These systems are not gender-neutral and experience has shown that special temporary measures – such as gender quotas – speed up progress towards achieving gender-sensitivity in parliaments (IPU: 2015).

Another crucial aspect of equal opportunity entry into parliament is women's participation and leadership in political parties, since it is these organisations that recruit and select candidates and determine a country's political agenda. As parliaments are also places of work for parliamentary employees, Area 1 establishes a domain for staff recruitment.

Area 1 has three domains:

- 1 The **first domain** assesses whether and how electoral rules and procedures assure gender equality.
- 2 The **second domain** maps out political parties' measures that actively support equal access to parliament of women and men candidates.
- 3 The **third domain** considers recruitment procedures to ensure equal opportunities for all parliamentary employees.