

Gender-sensitive Parliaments

Domain 2 – Structure and organisation

This domain assesses the existence and implementation of formalised codes of conduct and policies against overt and covert discrimination with related grievance procedures.

Organisational transparency is a basic condition that supports gender mainstreaming, and it requires the formalisation, systemic implementation and monitoring of codes of conduct or similar instruments with the explicit purpose to regulate behaviours. Codes of conducts and formal anti-discrimination policies help formalising priorities, working conditions and procedures, and sanction unacceptable behaviours.

In Europe, three main groups of codes of conduct exist in parliaments: formal deontological rules for MPs; parliamentary rules of procedures; and rules deriving from general legislation. Formal anti-discrimination and/or anti-harassment policies contribute to making clear acceptable and inadmissible behaviours in the parliament. Codes of conduct and efficient grievance procedures promote the responsibility and accountability of parliaments, and are considered to have significant importance for every democratic institution that supports gender equality and human rights.

Formal rules and procedures are a key feature in a gender-sensitive parliament and strongly support gender equality. However, the implementation of formal rules is similarly important, as well as the informal procedures that generally underlie interactions and behaviours. Specific attention should be given to the topic of harassment; even if a complaints body exists in the parliament, it is likely that reported episodes account for an under-estimation of actual incidents.

Data sources: Publicly researchable data from parliaments' websites; internal rules and documentation.

The domain also assesses the availability of family-friendly measures to MPs, such as limitations to working hours and sitting schedules, family leave options and procedures for substitution/proxy voting. Like in any other work organisation, MPs in parliaments need to balance work and family

life. This can be particularly hard for women MPs, as they are most often the prime family carers and work in an organisation historically structured to meet the needs of men. Parliaments can be very challenging workplaces for women, especially those with young children, if no family friendly or reconciling measures are implemented. Gender-sensitive parliaments provide family-friendly working conditions to MPs, giving an opportunity to reconcile their work with their care responsibilities.

Data sources: Information from the parliamentary bureau and/or the human resources division of parliamentary administration; parliaments' websites; and internal rules and documents.