

Gender-sensitive Parliaments

Domain 3 – Staff organisation and procedures

This domain assesses the organisation of parliamentary employees, in terms of the share and position of women and men among staff, and the work-life balance measures available to them.

Regulations on the working conditions for parliamentary employees are usually similar to those of governments' and other public authorities' employees, although they may at times resemble the working conditions of elected members (i.e. irregular, long working hours) (IPU: 2016). Services that support the care responsibilities of parliamentary employees are therefore indicators of a parliament's gender-sensitivity.

A gender-sensitive administration allows both women and men to develop their capacities and potential. It implements specific measures to allow women staff members to pursue professional development and career progression, includes flexible working arrangements and financial provisions for care services, assures equal value for women's and men's work in similar positions, and has formal equal pay policies.

Read more about implementing measures for women's equal career progression

Measures in this area include, for instance, analyses of parliamentary employees' training needs, delivery of professional training to support career progression and foster vertical/horizontal desegregation, and a review of human resources' management systems (e.g. staff evaluation, role assignment, competence profiles, incentive plans) from a gender perspective.

Analyses of parliamentary staff composition alongside organisational policies can highlight a possible glass ceiling, and other issues of gender inequality and/or discrimination (e.g. gender pay gap). A contractual level analysis (i.e. number and gender of general directors, managers, officers) allows for the identification of vertical segregation, while a professional area analysis (i.e. number and gender of staff in departments – administration, operations, human resources) could highlight horizontal segregation. Similarly to women parliamentarians, there are usually fewer women parliamentary employees, often positioned in certain units or departments and concentrated in lower positions.

Currently, most of the EU national parliaments do not report having specific programmes to promote equality between women and men in senior management positions (European Parliament FEMM Committee: 2012). The [European Parliament report on Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament](#) (December 2018) recommends that a survey should collect data on women in middle management, capturing their motivation, professional obstacles and opportunities, with a view to better understanding the barriers to applying for senior management posts (European Parliament: 2018b). Gender-sensitive parliaments assure equal measures for women's career progression and the development of capacities has positive effects on the administration's functioning, because it includes different perspectives and skills in the organisation's work. It is crucial to make sure that the adopted services and provisions are formalised.

Work-life balance is linked to better performance and higher productivity at work. Employees who benefit from flexible arrangements and supporting services are better able to cope with family responsibilities without interfering with their work tasks. This benefits employed people (and their families) and the functioning of public administrations.