

Gender-sensitive Parliaments

Domain 1 – Gender mainstreaming structures

This domain assesses the presence and functions of dedicated gender equality bodies, their resources and influence.

Gender equality committees, councils or groups, as well as technical supporting units, are dedicated structures aimed at placing gender equality and equal opportunities in the agenda of all parliaments. They may have different formal positioning in the parliamentary organisation and a range of functions, from advisory to decisional role. Gender equality committees may lobby and draw attention to equal opportunities; advise on gender equality; carry out gender analysis of draft legislation; monitor the implementation of enacted laws; request reports and briefings from ministers or government departments about gender issues; and create and develop external partnerships.

Women's caucuses are cross-party fora, generally initiated by women MPs in order to promote solidarity among women politicians, enhance their parliamentary capacity and bring women's interests on the agenda. They can assist women MPs in both knowing the parliament's functioning and developing a common platform for lobby and legislative action. Women's caucuses may differ in structure – more or less formal – and in organisational positioning. Further issues related to women's caucuses are men's and civil society involvement. In some countries men can take part in women's caucuses, in a clear attempt to assure that gender equality does not remain a "female" issue. Women's caucuses can initiate outreach activities by involving civil society and by bringing different organisations around a common table. Women's caucuses have been recognised effective in advancing gender equality issues, fostering a gender perspective in the political agenda and facilitating cross-party cooperation on relevant legislative issues. Furthermore, gender caucuses often sponsor programmes and activities to support women in parliament, and to bring about change in male political cultures and practices.

Data sources: The Inter-Parliamentary Union provides the [PARLINE database](#) on specialised parliamentary bodies, including gender equality committees. Information can also be collected from parliaments' websites, through the parliamentary bureau and the gender equality body.