

Gender-sensitive Parliaments

Domain 2 – Gender mainstreaming tools in parliamentary work

This domain assesses the existence of gender mainstreaming tools and procedures, such as gender equality training, gender equality plans and gender budgeting, that ensure the inclusion of gender issues in parliamentary work.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to achieve gender equality and ensure that inequalities are not perpetuated. Gender mainstreaming implies actively supporting the inclusion of a gender perspective and the promotion of equal opportunities in all parliamentary activities and procedures. This means that gender issues should be regularly included in the parliamentary agenda, plenary sessions and the work of committees and sub-groups.

Gender-sensitive parliaments show institutional commitment to mainstreaming gender equality by creating opportunities to incorporate a gender dimension into all areas of their work. They also provide adequate information and support to increase MPs' competence on gender issues.

Read more about gender mainstreaming tools in parliamentary work

Gender mainstreaming tools require adequate resources to be planned, implemented and monitored. In parliaments, gender mainstreaming implies including a gender perspective in all parliamentary activities, through a set of instruments that support the promotion of equal opportunities in parliamentary procedures. Examples of gender mainstreaming tools include:

Regular inclusion of gender issues in debate and work procedures: gender-sensitive parliaments foster debate on gender issues, allocate sufficient time to discuss gender-related topics, define gender-specific questions to ministers and the government, ensure that specialised structures on gender equality have sufficient time and resources to work, report back to the plenary and follow recommendations, and mandate all committees to tackle gender issues in their work.

Involving men in gender mainstreaming: as a strategy, gender mainstreaming requires women and men to work together towards equality, because gender equality benefits everyone in society (IPU: 2011). A study by the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) (2012) found that men's involvement in gender equality strategies is more frequent in countries with a longer tradition of gender equality and where institutional mechanisms for gender equality are well structured and advanced. Actively involving men changes social values and heightens gender awareness among men (IPU: 2012).

Gender equality training (GET): UN Women defines GET as a 'tool, strategy, and means to effect individual and collective transformation towards gender equality through consciousness raising, empowering learning, knowledge building, and skill development' (UN Women: n.d). GET in parliaments provides MPs with the relevant knowledge, information, skills and values to promote a gender-oriented perspective in their work. GET should be a continuous and long-term process, with both women and men MPs participating. Induction training for newly elected members should include specific modules on gender equality, so that these new parliamentarians can work in a gender-sensitive manner from the outset. A 2016 FEMM Report on gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament calls for 'gender mainstreaming training to be made available for MPs, parliamentary assistants and political group staff'.

Gender equality plan (GEP) and gender monitoring: gender-sensitive parliaments should develop, implement and monitor GEPs. A parliament that develops and adopts a GEP constitutes a positive role model for other institutions. A GEP is a formal plan in which the organisation states clear gender equality objectives and how to reach them within a certain timeframe by describing expected results, activities, methods, direct and indirect beneficiaries, and financial resources. Monitoring procedures should also be included in the plan, to allow for systematic and objective assessment of the design, implementation and results of the plan. The OSCE (2017) recommends that parliaments introduce and implement comprehensive, evidence-based and inclusive GEPs as a manifestation of good governance.

Gender budgeting is the incorporation of a gender perspective in the entire budgetary process. It includes restructuring the budget to promote gender equality and reflect the different needs of women and men more appropriately. Gender budgeting not only implies the analysis of the budget from a gender perspective with reference to recipients, but also deals with the budget-setting process itself. It is conducted in three stages:

- 1 Analysing the budget from a gender perspective;
- 2 Restructuring the budget on the basis of gender analysis;

3 Mainstreaming gender as a category of analysis in the budgetary process. Gender budgeting is dependent on resources and political will, and is most likely to work where it is institutionalised (IPU: 2011). It is a political tool that calls for accountability on issues of gender equality and seeks to remove long-standing, in-built biases that disadvantage women and girls (IPU: 2004).