

# What is gender mainstreaming?



This publication was prepared under the gender mainstreaming programme of the European Institute for Gender Equality. It constitutes the integral part of EIGE's Gender Mainstreaming Platform. The work published on the Platform represents a joint effort of EIGE Gender Mainstreaming Team and various experts and contractors who contributed in varying degrees to different sections of the Platform: Catarina Arnaut, Davide Barbieri, Daria Broglio, Irene Dankelman, Marianne Dauvellier, Jane Dennehy, Aleksandra Duda, Lucy Ferguson, Elena Ferrari, Maxime Forest, Katia Frangoudes, Regina Frey, Pat Irving, Manuela Samek Lodovici, Daniela Loi, Lin McDevitt-Pugh, Katerina Mantouvalou, Lut Mergaert, Siobán O'Brien Green, Nicola Orlando, Thera van Osch, Flavia Pesce, Irene Pimminger, Sheila Quinn, Cristina Radoj, Alide Roerink, Lenka Simerska, Cristina Vasilescu, Nathalie Wuiame and Margherita Sofia Zambelli.

EIGE would also like to thank its Experts' Forum Members, Members from the Gender Mainstreaming Thematic Network and the European Commission who have contributed to a large extent with their expertise, ideas and feedback.

This publication is available online through EIGE's Gender Mainstreaming Platform: <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming>

The European Institute for Gender Equality created the online Platform on Gender Mainstreaming to support the EU institutions and governmental bodies with the integration of a gender perspective in their work. The Platform provides insights on the relevance of gender in a variety of policy areas and offers online tools for gender mainstreaming.

The Platform helps to improve individual and institutional competences to mainstream gender into the different sectorial areas and throughout the different stages of the development of any policy/programme/project. Understanding how to design, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate policies from a gender perspective will strengthen EU policies, increasing their societal relevance and responsiveness.

## European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policy makers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

European Institute for Gender Equality  
Gedimino pr. 16  
LT-01103 Vilnius  
LITHUANIA  
Tel. +370 5 215 7444  
E-mail: [eige.sec@eige.europa.eu](mailto:eige.sec@eige.europa.eu)

 <http://www.eige.europa.eu>  [www.twitter.com/eurogender](http://www.twitter.com/eurogender)  [www.facebook.com/eige.europa.eu](http://www.facebook.com/eige.europa.eu)

 [www.youtube.com/eurogender](http://www.youtube.com/eurogender)  <http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu>

**Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers  
to your questions about the European Union.**

**Freephone number (\*): 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11**

(\* ) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

More information on the European Union is available on the internet (<http://europa.eu>).

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016

Print ISBN 978-92-9493-578-6 doi:10.2839/48892 MH-02-16-878-EN-C  
PDF ISBN 978-92-9493-577-9 doi:10.2839/76981 MH-02-16-878-EN-N

© European Institute for Gender Equality, 2016  
Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

*Printed in Belgium*

PRINTED ON ELEMENTAL CHLORINE-FREE BLEACHED PAPER (ECF)

# What is gender mainstreaming?





# Contents

<b>1. What is gender mainstreaming?</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Key concepts</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Why is it important?.....	5
Who is responsible for gender mainstreaming? .....	5
How does it work?.....	5
<b>3. Dimensions of gender mainstreaming</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Gender representation in a policy area .....	6
Gender-responsive content of the policies.....	6
<b>4. Enabling conditions for gender mainstreaming</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>5. Gender mainstreaming cycle</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Define.....	8
Plan .....	9
Act.....	9
Check.....	10
<b>6. The EU approach to gender mainstreaming</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>7. Want to know more?</b> .....	<b>14</b>

# 1. What is gender mainstreaming?

*Gender mainstreaming has been embraced internationally as a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination.*

## 2. Key concepts

### Why is it important?

Gender mainstreaming ensures that policymaking and legislative work is of higher quality and has a greater relevance for society, because it makes policies respond more effectively to the needs of all citizens — women and men, girls and boys. Gender mainstreaming makes public interventions more effective and ensures that inequalities are not perpetuated.

Gender mainstreaming does not only aim to avoid the creation or reinforcement of inequalities, which can have adverse effects on both women and men. It also implies analysing the existing situation, with the purpose of identifying inequalities, and developing policies which aim to redress these inequalities and undo the mechanisms that caused them.

### Who is responsible for gender mainstreaming?

At European level, the EU institutions are in charge of implementing gender mainstreaming, whereas at national level, it is up to the governments of Member States. However, it is not only the responsibility of specific individuals working in certain areas or units. While specific structures should be established and persons responsible appointed, the responsibility for implementing gender mainstreaming should be with the entire staff of public institutions, under the leadership of the management.

### How does it work?

A political commitment for gender equality and a compatible legal framework are the basic conditions for the development of a successful gender mainstreaming strategy. In addition to concrete objectives and targets in the strategy, gender mainstreaming requires a clear action plan. Such a plan should take into account the context, satisfy the necessary conditions, cover all the relevant dimensions, foresee the use of concrete methods and tools, set out the responsibilities and make sure that the necessary competences exist to achieve the anticipated results within a planned time frame.



## 3. Dimensions of gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming requires both the integration of a gender perspective within the content of the different policies and addressing of the issue of representation of women and men in the given policy area.

Both dimensions — gender representation and gender-responsive content — need to be taken into consideration in all phases of the policymaking process.

### Gender representation in a policy area

Addressing the issue of representation means looking at the representation of women and men as policy beneficiaries, as well as their representation in the labour force and in the decision-making processes.

Women are beneficiaries of EU policies to the same extent as men. Yet, compared to men, they are significantly under-represented in decision-making positions. By collecting information on the representation of both sexes as users/beneficiaries, the policy measures can be better targeted and their effects on different groups better estimated.

The representation of women and men working in different policy areas varies across policy sectors and according to the type of work or functions. For instance, women are under-represented in the renewable energy sector (22.1 % of the workforce). They are generally employed in lower-skilled jobs (primarily in administration and communication), while more skilled and better paid jobs are primarily held by men. In the field of education, women are over-represented as teachers at the levels of primary and lower secondary education, but their representation within decision-making positions is rather low, especially in tertiary education.

When there is an unbalanced participation of women and men in the planning and decision-making processes on policy actions, this may affect the outcomes that impact both women and men. Policies benefit from diverse perspectives: a more balanced representation of both sexes would bring in different experiences that might improve the decision-making process and overall results.

Gender mainstreaming is as much about addressing gender inequalities in society through policies as it is about the organisations' own ways of working. Addressing the issue of representation within institutions also involves addressing the gender dimension of the organisational structures and the working procedures.

### Gender-responsive content of the policies

Although numbers are important, it is pertinent to also consider how gender relates to the content of policy measures, to gain a better understanding of how women and men would benefit from them. A gender-responsive policy ensures that the needs of all citizens, women and men, are equally addressed.

Traditionally, government policy and legislation have been viewed as gender-neutral instruments, on the assumption that a public policy benefits all members of the public equally.

However, structural gender inequalities are still embedded in our society. Even if the laws treat women and men as equals, women still do not have equal access to and control over resources and assets.

Policies focused on the general public often impact women and men differently. If these different gender impacts are not taken into account, the policy will be gender blind. To avoid this, it is necessary to take into account the different needs and interests of women and men, to identify gender inequalities in access to and control of resources, to consider the impact of gender-based stereotypes and traditional gender roles, to anticipate different effects on women and men and to ensure gender equality.

A gender impact assessment is the first step towards avoiding policies that fail to take into account a gender perspective. Such an assessment analyses the impact of a new regulation, policy or programme on the advancement of gender equality and in turn foresees implications it might have on women's and men's lives.

## 4. Enabling conditions for gender mainstreaming

An effective implementation of gender mainstreaming requires preparation and organisation. People in decision-making positions can make a particular difference here, as they have more power to introduce changes.

Key elements to consider are as follows:

- Preparation: set up a plan for the implementation of gender mainstreaming, define steps and milestones, assign tasks and responsibilities and formalise and communicate the plan.
- Resources: sufficient resources need to be made available; effective gender mainstreaming requires a budget and time. Think about resources for awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives. The use of special (external) expertise might also be considered.
- Stakeholder involvement: close liaison with all policy stakeholders is essential throughout the policy cycle to take on board the concerns, expectations and views of the target groups. It is recommended that opportunities and structures for stakeholder involvement and consultations be cemented into the policy process.
- Monitoring and evaluation: set in place accountability mechanisms to ensure an adequate follow-up of implementation and progress. Foresee regular reporting and share results.
- Knowledge generation: building up knowledge on gender equality and good practices in gender mainstreaming contributes to making the approach more effective. You can contribute to the institutional learning by collecting data and information on indicators, reporting on progress and facilitating experience exchange.
- Gender expertise: this expertise should be internal, but the use of special external expertise might be considered as well.

## 5. Gender mainstreaming cycle

### A practical guide to integrating the gender perspective into a policy/programming cycle

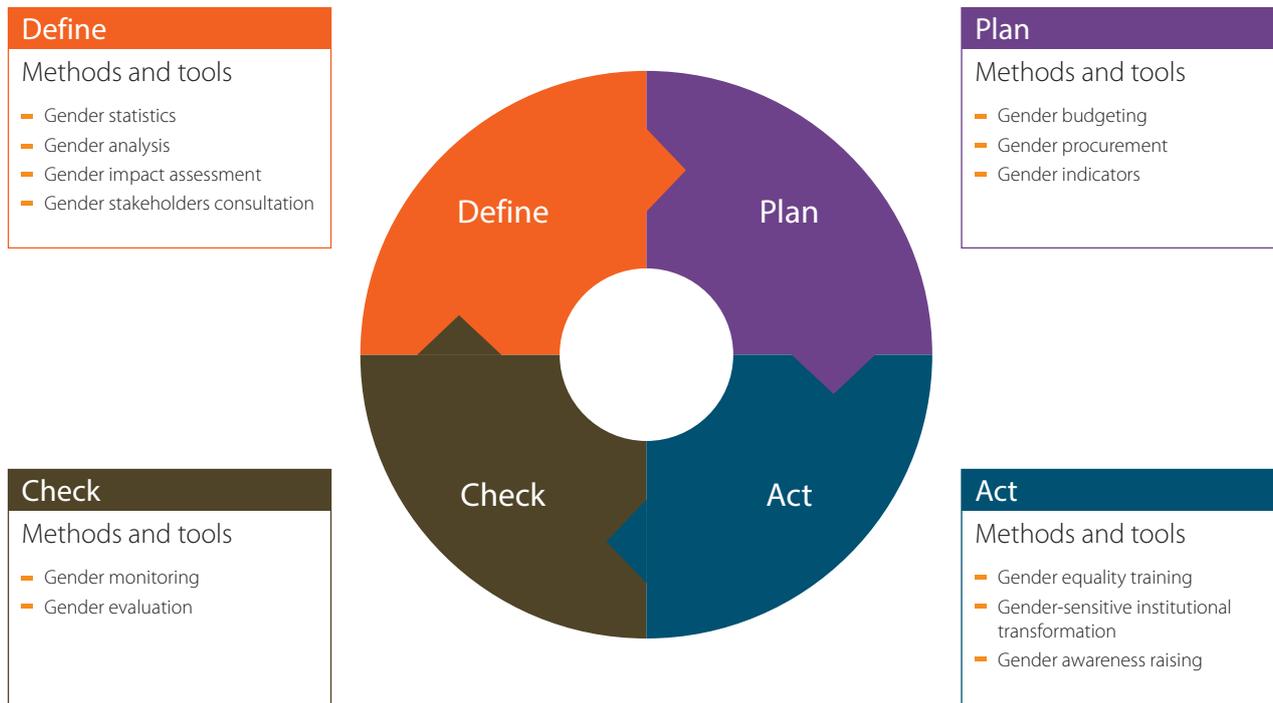
Integrating the gender perspective in a policy means that equality between women and men, as the overarching principle, should be taken into consideration in all decisions, in each phase of the policymaking process, by all the actors involved.

The policy process is understood as a multi-stage cycle, including defining, planning, implementing and checking (monitoring and evaluating). In many cases, these stages are turned into a cycle, with each step being repeated as changes occur. For example, when a policy is evaluated, it may reveal new problems that need to be addressed for reprogramming.

The gender mainstreaming cycle presented here can be adjusted to different public policy/programming processes.

The chart below refers to the specific stages of the cycle and the necessary elements that need to be given attention within each stage. Specific gender mainstreaming methods and tools that should be used within each of the cycle stages are also included. Some methods and tools, such as consulting with stakeholders or providing gender equality training to the actors involved, can be useful in more than one stage. Moreover, it is important to remember that when dealing with data they should be sex disaggregated. EIGE's Gender Statistics Database is a useful tool that can be used to find reliable, comparable and up-to-date information on equality between women and men.

EIGE's collection of good practices should also be consulted as it contains examples of proven approaches, policies and practices that have been effective in the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies in the EU Member States.



**Define**      DEFINE   PLAN   ACT   CHECK

This is the starting point when you define the precise policy needs to be addressed by the public intervention in a specific policy field. You have to assess in which way and to what extent the policy is gender relevant and needs specific interventions to address gender gaps and differences. The first step is to gather any sex-disaggregated data and information that are useful to analyse the situation of women and men in the respective policy domain. Then, try to answer the following questions:

- In which ways does the policy affect the everyday lives of women and men in general or specific groups of women and men?
- Are there any gender differences and/or gaps in the policy sector (with regard to rights, participation/representation, access to and use of resources, values and norms that affect gender-specific behaviour)?

Specific methods that can be used in this phase are **gender analysis** and **gender impact assessment**. It might be pertinent to provide training to the staff who will conduct the analysis.

Do not forget to check whether knowledge has already been generated in this area (e.g. studies, programme or project reports, evaluations from previous policies). Data and information will contribute to a robust understanding about the reality, help to design a better policy or

programme, avoid negative effects on women or men and address existing gender inequalities.

Consider consulting stakeholders (e.g. gender experts, women’s organisations, other civil society organisations) on the topic at hand to share and validate your findings and improve your policy or programme proposal. This will enhance the learning process on the subject for all those involved and will improve the quality of the work done at the EU and Member States levels.

When defining your policy or programme:

- take into account the findings from your analysis;
- Define gender-sensitive and gender-specific policy goals based on these findings;
- define gender equality objectives.

Here are a few tips that can be used for your gender analysis when assessing the representation of women in different policy sectors:

- identify gender gaps among professionals (wages, access to hierarchical positions) in the main institutions in the sector;
- identify the role of women in decision-making at the local and national levels in the sector;

- consider the governance of an institution through a gender lens, to assess whether selection, appraisal, promotion and evaluation practices may reflect gender stereotypes that disadvantage both women employees and women managers.
- the application of user-centred and/or participatory methodologies which take into account a gender dimension by directly involving a fair share of women in the process and by looking at how gender inequalities/differences are structuring the domains and the contexts of a particular policy area.

## Plan

DEFINE PLAN ACT CHECK

A gender plan refers to the process of planning the implementation phase of policies or programmes from a gender perspective. It involves identifying gender policy objectives and appropriate approaches and interventions to achieve them.

Plan specific actions to be conducted in order to achieve the goals and measures established in your policy or programme.

In this phase, it is relevant to analyse budgets from a gender perspective. Gender budgeting is used to identify how budget allocations contribute to the promotion of gender equality. Gender budgeting shows how much public money is spent for women and men. It is a technique that can be used in the planning stage, but also to monitor ongoing programmes and to review past expenditures. Gender budgeting ensures that public funds are fairly distributed between women and men. It also contributes to accountability and transparency about how public funds are being spent. Check here to know how to conduct gender budgeting.

When planning, do not forget to establish indicators that will allow for monitoring of equality objectives — measure and compare the effect of the policy or programme on women and men over the timeframe of its implementation.

Remember that it is also important to define the appropriate moments to monitor and evaluate your policy.

When preparing calls for proposals in the framework of funding programmes, or terms of reference in the context of public procurement procedures (notably for contractors to be hired for policy support services), do not forget to formalise gender-related requirements. In practical terms, the following requirements may be included:

- a gender-balanced composition of the project team;
- a specific section about gender-related concerns in the grant application: mapping of the situation of women and men in the concerned area; elaboration of gender-specific objectives in line with the latest findings and with the objectives of the call; and an explanation of how these objectives would be achieved;

These aspects are to be included in the evaluation criteria of the proposals or tenders and checked during the implementation of the project.

Ensure the participation of gender experts in teams or groups where decisions are taken, especially regarding the definition of work programmes and the attribution of budgets. Make sure that all those who are expected to take the gender dimension into consideration are properly **briefed**. Think about members of committees and panels, expert groups, juries and — very importantly — expert evaluators of proposals.

Strive to bring transparency into the whole process. Make your plan, monitoring and evaluation reports publicly available. This will build confidence between your institution and the target group(s) of your policy or programme.

## Act

DEFINE PLAN ACT CHECK

In the implementation phase of a policy or programme, ensure that all who are involved are sufficiently aware about the relevant gender objectives and plans. If this is not the case, set up briefings and capacity-building initiatives according to the staff's needs. **Gender equality training** — as part of capacity-building initiatives — to raise capacity on how to integrate a gender equality dimension in the sector will usually be needed for all actors who are expected to contribute: researchers, proposal evaluators, monitoring and evaluation experts, scientific officers, programme committee members, etc. It is also important that support measures are put in place, so that during implementation, difficulties can be overcome and further guidance is available. Support can take various forms, such as:

- coaching by a gender expert;
- the existence of an appointed gender focal point in the department who can assist staff integrate a gender perspective in their work;
- sharing experiences, lessons and good practices about gender in a certain policy area with colleagues; you may want to consider setting up an informal working/support group on the issue of gender equality in the policy sector;
- offering the possibility to consult gender (mainstreaming) experts, for example through a helpdesk;



- referring to EIGE for advice.

The promotion of gender competence will greatly contribute to a smooth implementation of your policy or programme.

Publications, communications or press releases might be issued during the implementation of your policy or programme. Do not forget to give visibility to gender issues and avoid the use of sexist language and stereotypical or discriminatory images. Click here to know more on how to communicate in a gender-sensitive way. Furthermore, when organising events and conferences, think carefully about the list of speakers: Is there a good balance between women and men speakers? Are women experts given sufficient attention?

Bear in mind that gender mainstreaming is as much about addressing gender inequalities in society through policies as it is about the organisation in question. Existing working cultures, practices, processes and procedures need to be critically (re)considered. Internal obstacles for effective gender mainstreaming should be removed, and daily routines adapted to accommodate a gender mainstreaming approach.

## Check

DEFINE PLAN ACT CHECK

To follow up progress and remedy possible unforeseen difficulties, it is necessary to monitor ongoing work. This is needed at the programme level, but also at the project level. Indicators therefore have to be set and specific monitoring activities planned and implemented. You will need to collect data and information based on the indicators you have defined, in order to verify whether your goals and measures are being achieved.

**Gender-sensitive monitoring** allows gaps and difficulties to be identified and redressed as soon as possible, while changes that are necessary to accomplish what has been planned can still be introduced. Consider conducting gender-specific monitoring, i.e. monitoring that has an approach towards realising gender equality as its main focus.

According to the monitoring timeline you defined in the planning stage, follow up to ensure everything is taking place as planned. This exercise should take into account the indicators defined in the planning phase. Consider corrective actions in case obstacles, that can be immediately redressed, are identified in the process.

Ensure that the implementation of activities related to gender is followed up **and** reported upon. **Reporting** on monitoring results contributes to the learning on what works best, which is of paramount importance.

Monitoring of course also promotes accountability: hold those responsible for the implementation of actions accountable. Consider **sanctions** if needed.

In addition to monitoring, an evaluation — either ongoing or *ex post* — should take place. It should take into account information and data collected and collated in the course of the policy or programme, as well as other knowledge and sources. Gender-sensitive evaluation should rely on evaluators with gender expertise, who are able to identify and apply evaluation questions and methods which integrate a gender equality perspective. Do not forget to formalise these requirements in the evaluation's terms of reference.

Consider conducting a gender-specific evaluation, focusing on the approach towards realising gender equality that has been followed. Such evaluation will significantly contribute to understanding what works well and where the difficulties are, allowing for the gender mainstreaming approach to be fine-tuned in future actions.

Make your evaluation publicly accessible and strategically disseminate its results to promote its learning potential. Keep in mind that this is a learning process. Your findings, the lessons learnt and recommendations from the evaluation will be very useful when redesigning the next framework of your policy or programme, and may even feed into the work of other policy areas.



# 6. The EU approach to gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is not a policy goal in itself, but a means to achieve gender equality. Equality between women and men is recognised by the EU as a fundamental right, a common value of the EU and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion.

*Since 1996, the Commission committed itself to a 'dual approach' towards realising gender equality. This approach involves mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies, while also implementing specific measures to eliminate, prevent or remedy gender inequalities. Both approaches go hand in hand, and one cannot replace the other.*

**Treaty of Rome.** The Treaty incorporates the principle of equal pay for equal work (Article 119).

**European Commission communication on incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all community policies and activities.** The Commission committed itself to gender mainstreaming as a strategy for the promotion of gender equality in all its policies and activities, alongside the implementation of specific measures. It thus committed itself to a 'dual approach' towards realising gender equality that '... involves not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality'.

**Treaty of Amsterdam.** The Treaty substantially strengthened the legal basis for Community action in favour of equality between women and men. Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty formalise the Community commitment to gender mainstreaming by establishing equality between women and men as a specific task of the Community as well as a horizontal objective affecting all Community policies and programmes.

1957

1996

1999

Strategy for equality between women and men for 2010-2015: The strategy identifies the following priority areas for action:

- equal economic independence;
- equal pay for equal work and work of equal value;
- equality in decision-making;
- dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence;
- gender equality in external actions (including the EU plan of action);
- horizontal issues.

In this strategy, the Commission has specified gender equality goals for each priority field. Furthermore, all directorates-general are invited to set gender equality objectives in the Commission's yearly programming cycle and work programme. Monitoring of the strategy is ensured through the publication of annual reports, as well as through a mid-term review and final evaluation. In addition, all directorates-general have to assess the impact of gender equality: (1) as part of the social impact of the impact assessment exercise; (2) in evaluation; and (3) in the budget, where relevant.

For the implementation of the strategy, a Commission staff working document was approved on actions to be implemented by the different directorates-general as their contribution to the strategy. The actions demonstrate the commitment of these directorates-general concerning gender equality in their policy field.

2010-2015

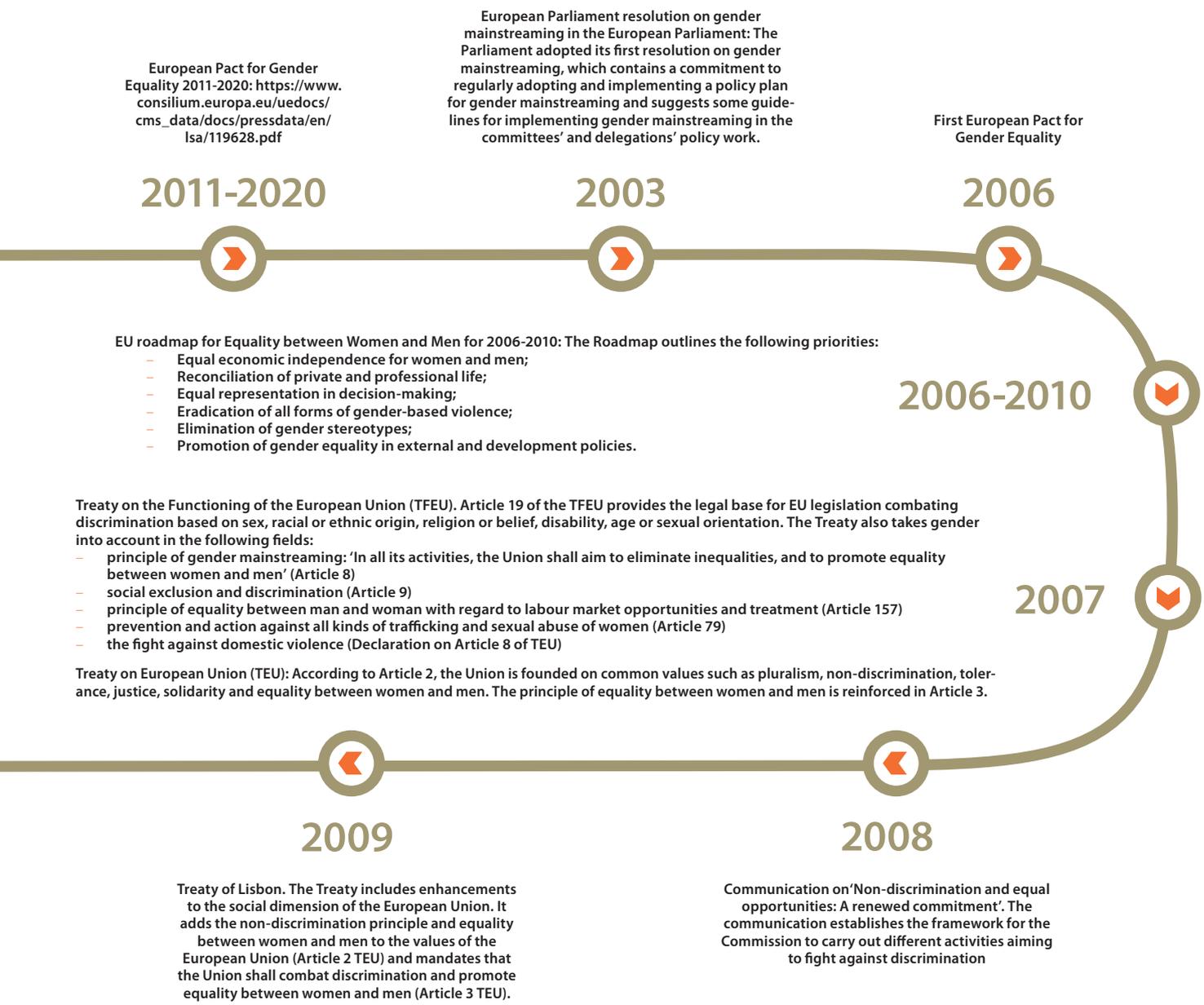
2016-2019

2010

Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019. The strategy identified five priority areas for actions:

- equal economic independence for women and men;
- equal pay for work of equal value;
- equality in decision-making;
- dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence
- promoting gender equality beyond the EU.

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Article 21 affirms the principle of non-discrimination based on any ground, including sex. Article 23 relates to women's rights and gender equality, affirming that 'equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay'.





## 7. Want to know more?

### European Commission policy documents

European Commission (2010), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 'Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015' (SEC(2010) 1079/ SEC(2010) 1080).

European Commission (2010), 'Actions to implement the strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015', Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Region (SEC(2010) 1079/2).

European Commission (2011), 'Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

European Commission (2015), 'Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

### Gender mainstreaming resources from the European Commission

European Commission, DG Human Resources and Security (n.d.), Gender mainstreaming.

European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (2008), *Manual for gender mainstreaming — employment, social inclusion and social protection policies*.

European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs (2005), *EQUAL guide on gender mainstreaming*.

European Commission (1998), *A guide to gender impact assessment*.

European Commission, DG Development and Cooperation (2004), *Toolkit on mainstreaming gender equality in European Commission development cooperation*.

### Gender mainstreaming resources from other institutions/ governments

United Nations Development Programme (2007), *Gender mainstreaming in practice: a toolkit*, edited by Nadja Dolata and prepared by Astrida Niemanis, Dono Abdurazakova, Shannon Brooker, Anneli Gustafsson, Mamura Nasirova, Jafar Javan and Louise Sperl.

Council of Europe (2009), *Gender budgeting: practical implementation handbook*, prepared by Sheila Quinn.

Council of Europe (2004), *Gender mainstreaming: Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices. Final report of activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming (EG-S-MS)*.

Gender mainstreaming tools, films and other resources available at: [Includegender.org](http://Includegender.org)

Swedish government official reports (2007), *Gender mainstreaming manual — A book of practical methods from the Swedish Gender Mainstreaming Support Committee (JämStöd)*.

National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (2012), *Gender mainstreaming in practice — step-by-step guide for gender impact assessment*.

Belgian Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (2007), *Equal opportunities for men and women in public procurement contracts — A few recommendations*.

### Other resources

European Commission (1998), *100 words for equality*.

European Commission, DG Employment (2008), EU Gender Equality Law. Prepared by Susanne Burri and Sacha Prechal.

European Commission, DG Justice (2011), *Compendium of practice on non-discrimination/equality mainstreaming*.



MH-02-16-878-EN-N

<http://eige.europa.eu>



Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-9493-577-9