

# Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Gender Equality



# Why gender equality?

The OSCE recognizes that equal rights of women and men and the protection of their human rights are essential to democracy, economic development, and to security and stability in the OSCE region. The OSCE aims to achieve gender equality by ensuring that women exercise their full and equal human rights and by mainstreaming gender into policies and practices, both within the Organization and in participating States.

In co-operation with partners in its participating States, the OSCE implements projects across the OSCE region to empower women and strengthen local capacities and expertise on gender issues. It works together with government authorities in reviewing legislation and assists in strengthening national mechanisms to ensure equality between women and men.

While the OSCE's gender equality work is rooted in international legal frameworks, the OSCE's 57 participating States have also adopted specific policies and measures to support gender equality. The OSCE 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality provides the basis for the Organization's activities on gender equality and assigns responsibilities and tasks to the OSCE's Secretariat, Institutions and field operations, as well as to the participating States.

Responsibilities and tasks include:

- Ensuring that all OSCE policies, programmes and activities are gender mainstreamed;
- Providing staff members with tools and training on gender mainstreaming;
- Developing a professional, gender-sensitive organizational culture and working environment;
- Increasing the share of female managers in senior positions;
- Supporting the efforts of participating States in achieving gender equality;
- Promoting the role of women in conflict prevention, crisis management and peace reconstruction processes.

The Secretary General presents a progress report on the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality to the Permanent Council on an annual basis.



# Key OSCE commitments

Participating States have adopted a number of key OSCE documents and commitments, in line with international standards and norms, which set the goals for achieving gender equality within the Organization, as well as promoting gender equality in the participating States.

## **2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality**

The Plan highlights the importance of gender equality in achieving comprehensive security and identifies what gender mainstreaming is.

## **2005 Ministerial Council Decision on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-conflict Rehabilitation**

This decision emphasizes the importance of women's full and equal participation in all phases and at all levels of conflict prevention, resolution and peace-

building. It urges states to include gender concerns and women's contribution in OSCE security policies and activities and to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

## **2005, 2014 and 2018 Ministerial Council Decisions on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women**

Recognizing that violence against women is persistent throughout the OSCE region and undermines human security, these decisions build on each other as they urge states to take measures to prevent gender-based violence in all circumstances, including during and after armed conflict and emergencies. They call on participating States to develop legal frameworks and partnerships, prevent and prosecute violence against women, protect victims and collect and analyse data. The 2018 decision adds value by specifically referring to the root causes of violence and the necessity of tackling sexual harassment and online violence as well as the role of men and boys in combating violence against women

## **2009 Ministerial Council Decision on Women's Participation in Political and Public life**

This decision was adopted in response to the continued under-representation of women in the OSCE region in

decision-making structures within the legislative, executive and judicial branches, including the security services. It calls on participating States to consider legislative measures that could lead to the more balanced participation of women and men in political and public life, and encourages all political actors to promote the equal participation of women and men in political parties.

## **2011 Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere**

This decision formally recognizes that women's equal participation in the economic sphere contributes significantly towards economic recovery, sustainable growth and the creation of cohesive societies, all of which are essential to the security and stability of the OSCE region. It calls on states to take concrete measures to address barriers and to facilitate equal opportunity for women in labour markets.

In addition to these Ministerial Council decisions on gender equality, several other decisions in key areas of work across the three dimensions of security - the politico-military, the economic and environmental and the human dimensions - include references to the OSCE Action Plan on Promotion of Gender Equality, gender mainstreaming and the importance of women's equal participation.

## **What is gender mainstreaming?**

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. (...) The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

# How we work

The OSCE's executive structures and field operations are mandated to support participating States in implementing their commitments on gender equality.

The **Gender Section**, in the Office of the OSCE Secretary General, assists with integrating a gender perspective into the Organization's policies and programmes in all three dimensions. The Section develops operational tools, guidelines, capacity- building, and training materials to assist staff members in mainstreaming gender in their work. It also implements thematic programmes to support participating States and OSCE executive structures in addressing cross-cutting issues of

gender equality. Key thematic areas include women's equal participation in decision-making; women, peace and security; women's economic empowerment; and combating gender-based violence.

The OSCE has appointed gender focal points in each **field operation and Institution**, as well as in all departments of the Organization's Secretariat. They are tasked with assisting and supporting in the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan. A network of these focal

points meets on an annual basis and consists of around 90 staff members. Several field operations have full-time staff members who work as gender officers and advisers.

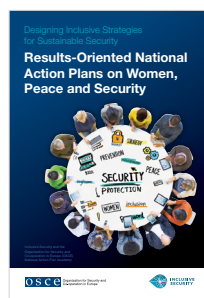
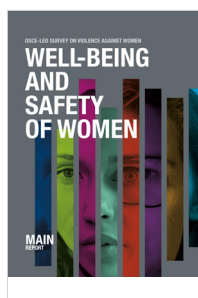
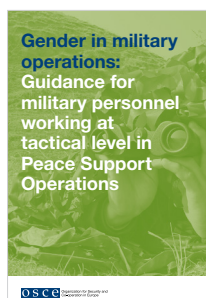
## The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

supports participating States in achieving gender equality and ensuring women's full enjoyment of their human rights. ODIHR works to promote women's participation in politics and elections, integrate gender perspectives in the security sector, and prevent and address sexual and gender-based violence, discrimination and hate crimes through an intersectional lens. ODIHR engages state institutions and civil society through capacity- building, expert advice, legislative support, and awareness-raising.

Special emphasis is placed on enhancing women's leadership and networking, and on the rights of women from under-represented groups, including Roma and Sinti communities, young women, and women with disabilities.

**The Parliamentary Assembly (PA)** Special Representative on Gender Issues promotes discussions on gender within the OSCE, in particular the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and develops a more active gender profile of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly through the publication of the annual gender balance report.

The OSCE Chairperson in-Office also appoints a **Special Representative on Gender Issues**, who provides high-level support to the Chair on gender-related issues.



## Follow OSCE



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