



GENDER-RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE TOOLKIT

TOOL 3:

Parliamentary bodies
for gender equality —
Overview and
recommendations



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Acknowledgements

For over two decades, ODIHR has worked with national parliaments in the OSCE region, producing fundamental research and practical guides on women's political participation and gender-sensitive parliaments among others. This tool builds upon this important work. We are very grateful to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, our partner in data collection, tool promotion and dissemination. Additionally, ODIHR commends the staff and MPs of the 48 national parliaments who contributed to this publication by providing data, and for their willingness to be interviewed. ODIHR is also indebted to the following reviewers for their contributions to this publication: Hana Đogović and Andreas Baker (OSCE Parliamentary Assembly), Elena Anchevska (European Institute of Gender Equality), Mariana Duarte Mutzenberg (Inter-Parliamentary Union), Cherry Miller (University of Helsinki) and Petra Ahrens (Tampere University). Finally, ODIHR would like to thank Elodie Phillips, an ODIHR international consultant, who researched and drafted this publication.

Gender-responsive Governance Toolkit

*Tool 3: Parliamentary bodies for gender equality —
Overview and recommendations*

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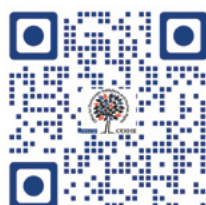
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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 6 |
| 1.1 Research and methodology | 8 |
| 1.2 Types of bodies for gender equality | 9 |
| 1.3 Benefits of bodies for gender equality | 13 |
| 2. Formal parliamentary bodies for gender equality | 16 |
| 2.1 Classification | 16 |
| 2.2 Outcomes | 21 |
| 2.3 Challenges | 26 |
| 3. Informal bodies for gender equality | 31 |
| 3.1 Classification | 31 |
| 3.2 Outcomes | 35 |
| 3.3 Challenges | 39 |
| 4. Recommendations | 44 |
| Annexes | 48 |
| ANNEXE 1: Survey on specialized parliamentary bodies for gender equality | 48 |
| ANNEXE 2: List of parliamentary bodies for gender equality in national parliaments of the OSCE region | 57 |
| Endnotes | 64 |

- Click on a chapter above to go to its page.
- From any page in the document, click on the page header to come back to the contents page.
- Click on a footnote number in the text to go to the end note.
- From any endnote, click on its footnote number to return to the same place in the text.

Gender-responsive Governance Toolkit

Advancing gender equality and promoting women's participation in all spheres of political and public life is at the centre of the OSCE's commitments. The 1991 OSCE Moscow Document, states:

“The participating States recognize that full and true equality between men and women is a fundamental aspect of a just and democratic society based on the rule of law. They recognize that the full development of society and the welfare of all its members require equal opportunity for full and equal participation of men and women.”¹

Since 1991, the OSCE's commitments in the area of women's rights, gender equality and non-discrimination have been further strengthened in several Ministerial Council decisions.² Specifically, Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/04 on the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and the 2009 Ministerial Council Decision No. 7/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life call for a comprehensive approach to politics and democratic governance in the OSCE participating States. This approach includes ensuring:

- a) **Non-discriminatory legal policy frameworks**, so that participating States comply “with international instruments for the promotion of gender equality and women's rights, ...”;³
- b) **Full and equal participation of women and men**, including in ‘political parties’, aiming for “gender balance in all legislative, judicial and executive bodies” and overall “gender-balanced representation in elected public offices”;⁴
- c) **Gender mainstreaming in decision- and policymaking and implementation**, by “assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels”⁵ and “open and participatory processes in all phases of developing legislation, programmes and policies”;⁶
- d) **National mechanisms**, including “democratic institutions for advancing gender equality”.⁷

The OSCE's comprehensive approach to gender equality in politics aims not only to ensure the equal and meaningful participation of women and men but also to guarantee that institutional and policy outcomes meet the different needs of women and men in all their diversity.

The **Gender-responsive Governance Toolkit** is a series of targeted tools, each with a distinct practical and thematic focus. They introduce or advance institutional and policy solutions and practices for gender-responsive governance. The toolkit is aimed at participating States' political parties, other democratic institutions and civil society organizations, and complements ODIHR's existing gender-equality publications.



Introduction

Parliamentary bodies for gender equality are specific mechanisms that, through their emphasis on gender equality and gender mainstreaming within the work of a national parliament, assist in **enhancing the gender sensitivity of parliaments**. They work not only on increasing the number of women in parliaments, but also on their substantive representation. This includes in formal bodies such as standing committees and parliamentary councils as well as more informal bodies such as women’s caucuses.

OSCE participating States are committed under the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality to “take all necessary measures to encourage gender awareness raising and to promote equality in rights and full equal participation of women and men in society, the aim being to promote the practice of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the OSCE area”.⁸ The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly also has numerous resolutions related to gender equality, highlighting the role parliaments can play in advancing gender equality in political and public life.⁹

International standards on gender equality require national legislatures to play a prominent role in gender mainstreaming and promoting gender equality. For example, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action states that members of legislative bodies are tasked with “promoting a gender perspective in all legislation and policies”.¹⁰ Additionally, in recent years, emphasis has been placed within international organizations, such

1. INTRODUCTION

as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) on the concept of “gender-sensitive parliaments”, further highlighting the central role of legislatures in gender equality work.¹¹ ODIHR has also worked extensively on the topic of gender-sensitive parliaments, including publishing *Realizing Gender Equality in Parliaments: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE region*¹² in 2021. This is a practical guide that supports parliamentary actors with implementing institutional transformation towards more gender-sensitive parliaments. ODIHR also provides technical assistance to national parliaments, which includes conducting gender audits.

ODIHR’s approach follows the idea that a gender-sensitive parliament “values and prioritizes gender equality as a social, economic, and political objective and reorients and transforms a parliament’s institutional culture, processes and practices, and outputs towards these objectives”.¹³ The goal is to stimulate a **comprehensive institutional transformation within parliaments** to ensure that gender equality is an integral part of all parliamentary processes and outputs.

Moreover, the concept of a gender-sensitive parliament rests on mainstreaming gender equality right across the work of a parliament, including in its **representative, legislative and oversight functions**. In order to improve the gender-sensitivity of parliaments in the OSCE region, there is still a need to map the parliamentary bodies for gender equality, i.e., the formal and informal structures in place within parliaments that have an explicit, specialist function to promote gender equality within legislatures and society more broadly.

This tool shows how parliamentary bodies for gender equality are one of the key gender mainstreaming mechanisms available to national parliaments and assesses their role and function within parliaments. In 2013, ODIHR conducted a study within the OSCE region that has been complemented by further research from other international organizations and the academic community.¹⁴ This tool aims to consolidate all this research into a comprehensive new study of parliamentary bodies working for gender equality in the OSCE region, with the latest information and insights into how they operate.

This tool has four chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the research and data that underpin the findings presented in this practical guide. It also provides working definitions of formal and informal parliamentary bodies for gender

1. INTRODUCTION

equality and explains how they act as key mechanisms for enhancing gender mainstreaming and the substantive representation of women. Chapters 2 and 3 look in more detail at the research on formal and informal bodies in turn, looking at how to classify them, at how they can contribute to the gender sensitivity of parliaments, and at the barriers they may face. Chapter 4 provides some practical recommendations for parliamentary bodies working for gender equality. Given the diversity of parliamentary systems within the OSCE, there is no one-size-fits-all way to develop and improve the effectiveness of parliamentary bodies for gender equality. Rather, these recommendations set out practical guidelines that can be adapted to particular parliamentary contexts.

1.1 Research and methodology

The research for this tool was conducted by ODIHR, in partnership with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, between June 2023 and February 2024. The main basis was a **survey** (“the survey”) distributed to the parliamentary chambers of all OSCE participating States (except the Holy See) at the end of August 2023, with responses gathered until February 2024. The **survey had two sections**: the first on **formal bodies for gender equality** and the second on **informal bodies**. Respondents were asked only about bodies working specifically on gender equality and not on broader topics that have historically been considered relevant to women’s rights. The survey was available, in line with OSCE practice, in English and Russian. Before launching the survey, **desk research** and a **pre-mapping exercise** were conducted using: IPU data on gender equality bodies and women’s caucuses;¹⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) data on gender mainstreaming mechanisms, including ‘parliamentary bodies’;¹⁶ parliamentary websites; and official parliamentary documents, such as Rules of Procedure and official bulletins. Where a parliamentary chamber did not respond to the survey, further desk research was done to complete the dataset for this tool. Where a survey response was different to the information from other sources, the survey response was given primacy.

Participating States sent responses from **59 parliamentary chambers, representing 48 national parliaments**, with good representation from across the OSCE region. Only six of the bicameral parliaments returned a response from just one house,¹⁷ often due to the institutional dynamics of the parliament where one house does not have any parliamentary bodies of the kind covered by the survey. Seven chambers completed the first section

1. INTRODUCTION

about formal bodies¹⁸ but not the section on informal bodies, while 52 chambers completed both sections. Four participating States were selected to be **case studies** — Andorra, Belgium, Montenegro and Kyrgyzstan — based on their survey responses and to present different types of bodies: one multi-portfolio formal body (Andorra), one dedicated formal body (Belgium), one informal women’s caucus (Montenegro) and one informal, cross-party, gender-focused body (Kyrgyzstan). Attention was also given to ensuring geographical diversity across the OSCE region.

1.2 Types of bodies for gender equality

Formal and informal bodies on gender equality often differ in terms of their mandate, purpose, organization and membership. Due to these differences, ODIHR looked separately at the two types of body in order properly to map and understand their diverse functions and roles in parliamentary gender equality work. The typical distinction between formal and informal bodies appears to be between standing committees and informal groups of legislators, such as women’s caucuses and issue-based parliamentary groups.¹⁹ For example, IPU classifies these bodies either as ‘gender equality bodies’ (formal, single or multi-portfolio standing committees) or ‘women’s caucuses (informal bodies).²⁰

Parliamentary bodies for gender equality have also been the subject of a growing body of academic literature, although, at times, conceptualized slightly differently. For example, some experts focus in their definitions on the role of such bodies in terms of women’s representation and community building by calling them ‘women’s parliamentary spaces’²¹ or ‘bodies that bring women together.’²² Other experts group these bodies according to their more holistic role in gender equality work as ‘gender-focused parliamentary institutions (GFPIs)’²³ or ‘gender-mandated bodies’.²⁴ The Gender-Focused Parliamentary Institutions Research Network (Gen+ParlNet)²⁵ is a research network dedicated to the study of such bodies, alongside other gender-sensitive dimensions of parliaments.

The choice of title — **‘parliamentary bodies for gender equality’** — focuses on the particular function of these groups within the parliamentary structure; they play a specific role in the functioning of a parliament and operate within the legislature and, therefore, within legislative and oversight processes. This tool only examines bodies that have to include members of parliament (MPs) as members, and not purely parliamentary staff or members of government.

1. INTRODUCTION

It also only looks at cross-party bodies. While it would be interesting to look at bodies operating at party level (such as party-specific parliamentary women's caucuses), this tool is restricted to the parliamentary level. The title also includes the purpose of these bodies. For example, when considering informal bodies, this tool examines all bodies working towards the goal of gender equality, (including those that actively include male parliamentarians in their work), rather than looking only at bodies focused solely on women MPs. The tool also considers formal bodies that cover multiple subject areas but that have an explicit gender equality remit in their mandate.

This tool **differentiates between formal and informal bodies** chiefly on how institutionalized they are.

- **Formal bodies** have an official role to work on gender equality and/or apply a gender lens to legislative procedures. They are usually constituted through procedural documents such as standing orders/rules of procedure. In most cases they receive the same level of funding and resources as other formal bodies in a parliament. They are institutionalized groups with a parliamentary mandate to perform legislative functions (such as drafting or amending legislation and analysing draft legislation) and oversight functions (such as monitoring and holding the government to account).
- **Informal bodies** do not have a formalized role in the legislative procedure, although they may be recognized by parliament in procedural documents in some form. They may function differently to formal bodies and other comparable informal bodies and have different resources. They do not have an institutionalized mandate to perform legislative and/or oversight functions and their function is mainly to support advocacy, via mentoring or capacity building.

Table 1 represents an overview of important general distinctions between formal and informal bodies.

Table 1. Differences between formal and informal parliamentary bodies for gender equality

| Type of body | Formal bodies | Informal bodies |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Mandate | Bodies have an official mandate within parliamentary legislative and/or oversight processes, outlined in procedural documents and/or formal rules. | Bodies do not have a mandate within the legislative and/or oversight processes. |
| Function | Bodies act as an institutionalized legislative and/or oversight body. | Bodies advocate for gender equality in parliament's work and provide support to members, e.g., mentoring, capacity building and discussions. |
| Formation | Bodies are formed through a formal parliamentary procedure. | Bodies are formed on an ad hoc basis at the instigation of MPs. |
| Recognition by parliament | Bodies are recognized in procedural documents as a legislative and/or oversight body. Bodies typically have the same resources and function as other, comparable formal bodies. | Bodies may need to register with the parliamentary administration, or may even be included in procedural documents but not as a legislative or oversight body. Their resourcing and function may differ from that of other informal bodies. |
| Membership | Bodies have membership procedures that are standardized within procedural documents and decided upon at parliamentary administrative level. | Bodies have ad hoc membership procedures that are often determined by the body's own members. |
| Term | Bodies are a permanent part of the parliamentary infrastructure that continues across changes of convocation. | Bodies must be renewed with each new convocation. |

1. INTRODUCTION

The desk research and survey show a strong preference for formal bodies; the great majority — 45 OSCE participating States — have at least one formal body for gender equality, and 23 participating States have at least one informal body.* Many parliaments have both formal and informal bodies for gender equality, but formal bodies are more common in OSCE parliaments, given that they are present in the vast majority of participating States. Thirty-three parliamentary chambers have only a formal body, while just nine have only an informal body.

Six OSCE participating States (thirteen parliamentary chambers) have no form of parliamentary body for gender equality. The chambers in bicameral parliaments often differ in terms of which types of bodies they have. Of the 21 bicameral parliaments in the OSCE region, ten have different types of parliamentary body for gender equality in each chamber. For example, in the Parliament of Canada, the House of Commons has a formal body solely dedicated to gender equality and an informal body, while the Senate only has an informal body. In Uzbekistan, the Legislative Chamber does not have any parliamentary body for gender equality, but the Senate has a formal body, the Committee on Women and Gender Equality.

Of the 78 parliamentary chambers in the OSCE region, there are **58 formal bodies and 53 informal bodies**, and some chambers have several of each. For example, the unicameral parliaments of Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine each have two formal bodies with a gender equality mandate.

Some chambers have numerous informal bodies, which explains why only 23 participating States have so many informal bodies. In the United Kingdom, the House of Commons and House of Lords have 19 cross-chamber informal bodies working on gender equality issues while the US House of Representatives has ten.** Finland, Kyrgyzstan and Switzerland also have two informal bodies.

* See Annexe 1 for a more detailed breakdown of all parliamentary bodies in OSCE participating States.

** These informal bodies were considered to be gender equality bodies if they mentioned women or gender equality in their official titles or descriptions in the official registries of informal bodies in both parliamentary systems.

1.3 Benefits of bodies for gender equality

Benefit 1: Strengthening the gender sensitivity of parliaments

Parliamentary bodies for gender equality act as key pillars of the parliamentary gender mainstreaming infrastructure. They are uniquely mandated (especially formal bodies) to apply a gender lens to a parliament's activities, including its legislative, budgeting and oversight activities, and thus ensure that gender is mainstreamed. Having dedicated bodies (in particular formal bodies) shows that resources and staff expertise are committed to gender equality work and indicates gender mainstreaming processes are embedded. Parliamentary bodies for gender equality also promote positive change towards gender-equal working environments for women MPs and staff, in particular the work of informal bodies, through their advocacy and community building.

Good Practice

The Gender Equality Committee is a formal body in the Parliament of Montenegro, mandated, among other tasks, to oversee the implementation of gender equality policies and international gender equality documents, and to monitor the impact of laws on women's rights. The Committee has recently had several notable successes in mainstreaming gender into the work of the Parliament of Montenegro, including securing the adoption of the Action Plan for a Gender-Sensitive Parliament 2022-2024. It has actively worked to improve the use of gender-sensitive language in the work of parliament and to implement gender-sensitive budgeting practices. The Committee has also conducted ex-post analysis of several key pieces of legislation from a gender perspective, including the Law on Tourism and Hospitality and the Law on Salaries of Public Sector Employees.

Benefit 2: Providing a platform for gender equality work

Formal bodies for gender equality are more institutionalized than informal ones, creating a more permanent framework for gender equality work. This helps to create institutional memory around gender equality and to ensure that such work is sustainable, over successive parliamentary terms.²⁶ Some informal bodies have also been given a more institutionalized role in parliaments. In addition, these bodies create a joint platform for raising issues about gender equality in parliament, reducing the burden on individual MPs. They give legitimacy to gender equality issues and a recognized, respected platform from which to institute reforms.

Good Practice

Since its establishment in 1995 by Speaker Birgitta Dahl, the Working Group on Gender Equality of the Parliament of Sweden (*Riksdag*) has evolved from a loose, informal network of women MPs, dealing only with matters related to women parliamentarians, to a permanent and gender-balanced body in the *Riksdag*, with a much broader gender equality remit. The position of the Working Group has been consolidated and today receives a budget and administrative support from the parliamentary administration. Since 2005, the Working Group has been tasked, during each parliamentary term, with drawing up and implementing a programme for promoting gender equality in parliament. The Working Group is also an important forum for discussing gender equality in parliament. The progressive institutionalization of the body has made gender equality work in the *Riksdag* much more sustainable, ensuring that it continues and strengthens over successive parliaments. It also gives the group significant legitimacy within parliament.²⁷

Benefit 3: Creating a channel for civil society to participate in the work of the parliament

Both formal and informal parliamentary bodies for gender equality can work closely with civil society organizations (CSOs). Formal bodies, such as standing committees, can invite CSOs to attend or present evidence at hearings. Informal bodies can also foster strong partnerships with CSOs, such as the All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) in the UK and Switzerland, where CSOs are members of the informal body and can be chosen to run the secretariat. This serves to increase the substantive representation of women in parliament, as parliament is able to represent and be responsive to the diverse needs and interests of all women and men. Strengthening the engagement of civil society with parliament should help it to be more responsive and representative.²⁸

Good Practice

In the UK Parliament, All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) are informal groups of parliamentarians, officially registered in Parliament, but formed on an ad hoc basis based on the individual initiative of MPs.²⁹ APPGs must be open to members of both Houses of Parliament, and they often have secretariats run by a CSO. For example, the secretariat of the APPG on Women in Parliament, one of the active APPGs currently working on women's rights and gender equality, is run by the Fawcett Society, one of the UK's leading women's rights CSOs. The secretariat of the APPG on Domestic Violence and Abuse is managed by the Women's Aid Federation of England, and the secretariat of the APPG on Muslim Women is run by Muslim Women's Network UK.³⁰

2

Formal parliamentary bodies for gender equality

2.1 Classification

This tool classifies formal parliamentary bodies for gender equality in two ways: by their **institutional setup** or by their **scope**. Survey respondents were asked to classify their formal body in both ways.

According to their institutional setup, formal parliamentary bodies are one of: **standing committees or sub-committees, parliamentary councils, or 'other'**. 'Other' formal parliamentary bodies include ad hoc committees, inquiry committees and advisory committees. Of the 58 formal bodies reported, two are sub-committees,³¹ three are parliamentary councils,³² and five are classified as 'other' (two advisory committees,³³ two inquiry committees³⁴ and one ad hoc committee³⁵). The remaining 49 bodies are standing committees. There are important differences between formal bodies that affect how they carry out gender equality work.

2. FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Table 2. Comparison of the mandate of different types of formal bodies – examples*

| Standing Committee | Parliamentary Council | Other |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the Parliament of Türkiye</p> | <p>Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council, the Parliament of Georgia</p> | <p>Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Femicide and all Forms of Gender-based Violence, the Parliament of Italy</p> |
| <p>According to Law No. 5480 on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2009)³⁶ the duties of the Commission are:</p> <p><i>To debate the works referred to it by the Grand National Assembly;</i></p> <p><i>To submit opinions on the compliance of law proposals submitted to the President of the Grand National Assembly with international obligations on equality between men and women (upon request);</i></p> <p><i>To prepare and submit a report to the Grand National Assembly at the end of each year on recent developments towards achieving gender equality in Türkiye;</i></p> | <p>The Council has a mandate under the Rules of Procedure to “facilitate the development and coordination of the continuous, systematic and sustainable policies of the Parliament in certain areas”.</p> <p>The Council has a different mandate to standing committees, especially in that it cannot exercise the right of legislative initiative.</p> <p>According to Article 76 of the Rules of Procedure, the Council is specifically mandated to “ensure systematic and coordinated work on gender issues”. In the same article, it is specified the Parliament will determine the main direction of the state policy on gender.</p> | <p>This inquiry commission is bicameral and was founded by Law No.12 on the Institution of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Femicide and all Forms of Gender-based Violence (2023).</p> <p>According to the law, the duties of the inquiry commission are, among others:</p> <p><i>To monitor the application of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (also known as the Istanbul Convention) and Italy’s other international obligations, and obligations under national law on femicide and gender-based violence;</i></p> |

* This analysis is based on the document from which a body gets its mandate (such as Rules of Procedure, a Law on Gender Equality, a founding Law), and when applicable, the Rules of Procedure of the parliament and its official webpage.

2. FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

To inform the Grand National Assembly of developments in the field of gender equality;

To determine the amendments and regulations that need to be made in order to harmonize Türkiye's Constitution and national legislation with its international agreements on the equality of women and men;

To examine allegations regarding the violation of equality between men and women and gender-based discrimination referred to them by the President of the Grand National Assembly and to forward when to the relevant authorities if deemed necessary; and

To organize activities to inform the public about equality between women and men.

The mandate of this Commission does not differ from the other Commissions of the Parliament, according to the Rules of Procedure.³⁷

The Council is specifically mandated in the Rules of Procedure:

To analyse legislation and develop proposals to eliminate any existing gender inequalities in the legislation;

To ensure the expert examination of draft legislation;

To develop proposals and individual measures to ensure gender equality and advocate for them in relevant institutions;

To develop and introduce monitoring measures for ensuring gender equality;

To consider issues of violations of gender equality and report on them; and

To invite expert representatives to consider issues related to gender equality.³⁸

To analyse incidents of femicide, which have occurred since 2016, in order to ascertain whether there are recurring conditions and behaviours which can be statistically evaluated and then used to guide prevention activities; and

To propose legislative and administrative solutions in order to achieve the most appropriate prevention and most effective fight against femicide and, more generally, all forms of male violence against women, as well as to protect the victims of violence and any minors involved.

The Inquiry Committee has 13 specific duties related to femicide and gender-based violence, including monitoring activities, evaluating proposals by international organizations, and adopting initiatives.³⁹

2. FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The above examples show the **different mandates** of formal bodies, determined by their parliamentary setup, history and tradition. In Türkiye and Georgia, the bodies have a much wider remit related to gender equality. In contrast, in Italy, the body works on a large-scale but only on a narrower mandate related to femicide and gender-based violence. In all three cases the formal body is mainly focused on gender equality domestically, although in Italy and Türkiye the body is also responsible for implementing international gender equality agreements.

These bodies also differ in other important ways related to their institutional setup. For example, the bodies in Türkiye and Georgia are both permanent, but the Italian body will only be established for as long as the parliamentary inquiry lasts. In another regard, in Türkiye, the membership of the body changes twice in a parliamentary term, with membership priority for female deputies and MPs with experience in human rights.⁴⁰ In Italy and Georgia, membership is determined by the Speaker of the Parliament once during a parliamentary term (or in the Italian case, once per inquiry). In Italy, members are chosen according to the ratio of party representation that exists in the Parliament, but no such considerations are specified in the Georgian case.⁴¹

The formal bodies for gender equality also **vary in their scope**. Formal bodies working on gender equality can either be **dedicated bodies**, working solely on gender equality, such as the Committee on Gender Equality (House of Representatives, Bosnia and Herzegovina) or the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (House of Commons, Canada). However, they can also be **multi-portfolio bodies**, which have gender equality in their mandate alongside other topics. Examples include: the Committee on Social Issues, Health, Science, Culture, Women and Youth (*Majlisi Milli*, Tajikistan) and the Committee of Home Affairs and Gender Equality (Luxembourg). In the OSCE region, there are 16 dedicated bodies representing 13 participating States⁴² and 42 multi-portfolio bodies in 33 participating States;⁴³ the trend is clearly towards multi-portfolio bodies.

The survey data shows the range of other topics most commonly covered by formal parliamentary bodies working on gender equality: equality, family, children, youth and social affairs.*

* These topics were largely provided in survey responses. Where there was no response, the topics were gleaned from parliamentary documents or the body's name.

2. FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

In summary, formal parliamentary bodies for gender equality can be categorized according to their institutional setup (standing committees, parliamentary councils, other) and their scope (dedicated or multi-portfolio). It is clear that **multi-portfolio standing committees are the most common formal bodies for gender equality in the OSCE region.**

Why have some parliamentary chambers decided not to set up formal bodies?

Fifty-five parliamentary chambers of the OSCE participating States have formal parliamentary bodies for gender equality (58 formal bodies in total). The survey also looked at why the remaining 23 parliamentary chambers of the OSCE region had not set up such bodies.

Forty per cent of respondents said there was no perceived need for a formal body, because gender equality and gender mainstreaming are included in the mandate of all bodies.⁴⁴ Twenty-seven per cent said there was a lack of cross-party support for an initiative to set up a formal body. The remaining respondents (33 per cent) said either that gender equality issues were covered by an institutional mechanism (e.g., the House of Representatives of Malta, which stated that the parliament works with the National Commission for the Promotion of Gender Equality), or that other standing committees have equal responsibility for gender equality (e.g., the Grand and General Council of San Marino, which has four standing committees responsible for gender equality issues). Moreover, both chambers of the States General of the Netherlands reported that standing committees in parliament correspond directly to government ministries, and that no formal body exists because there is no ministry for gender equality.

The survey also asked about which structures addressed gender equality issues in the absence of a formal body. Thirty-four per cent of chambers responded that these issues are addressed by another parliamentary body and another 34 per cent said they are addressed by all parliamentary bodies. The Senate of Canada, for example, reported that gender equality issues are commonly referred to the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. Furthermore, 20 per cent responded that gender equality is only addressed by certain government bodies. The Senate of Kazakhstan said that the National Commission on Women's Affairs, Family, and Demographic Policy under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan addresses gender equality issues in the absence of a formal parliamentary body.

2.2 Outcomes

The survey responses revealed that formal parliamentary bodies for gender equality produce several major outcomes, which contribute positively to furthering gender equality in national parliaments and societies. These outcomes have been grouped into three main areas where formal parliamentary bodies have a significant impact: advancing gender equality legislation, applying a gender lens to parliamentary processes and outputs, and making parliaments more gender-sensitive.

Outcome 1: Advancing gender equality legislation

As they have formal roles within national legislatures, bodies such as standing committees⁴⁵ can introduce draft legislation on topics related to gender equality. It is important to note, however, that not all formal bodies have a mandate to introduce legislation. This is especially true in the case of advisory committees. However, the bodies themselves may also propose amendments to draft legislation or to existing legislation from the perspective of gender equality. In this way, they play a key role in ensuring that legislation is passed on topics related to gender equality and that gender equality considerations are included in legislation. The table below presents some examples of concrete achievements by France, Cyprus and Monaco.

2. FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Table 3. Examples of legislative achievements of formal parliamentary bodies

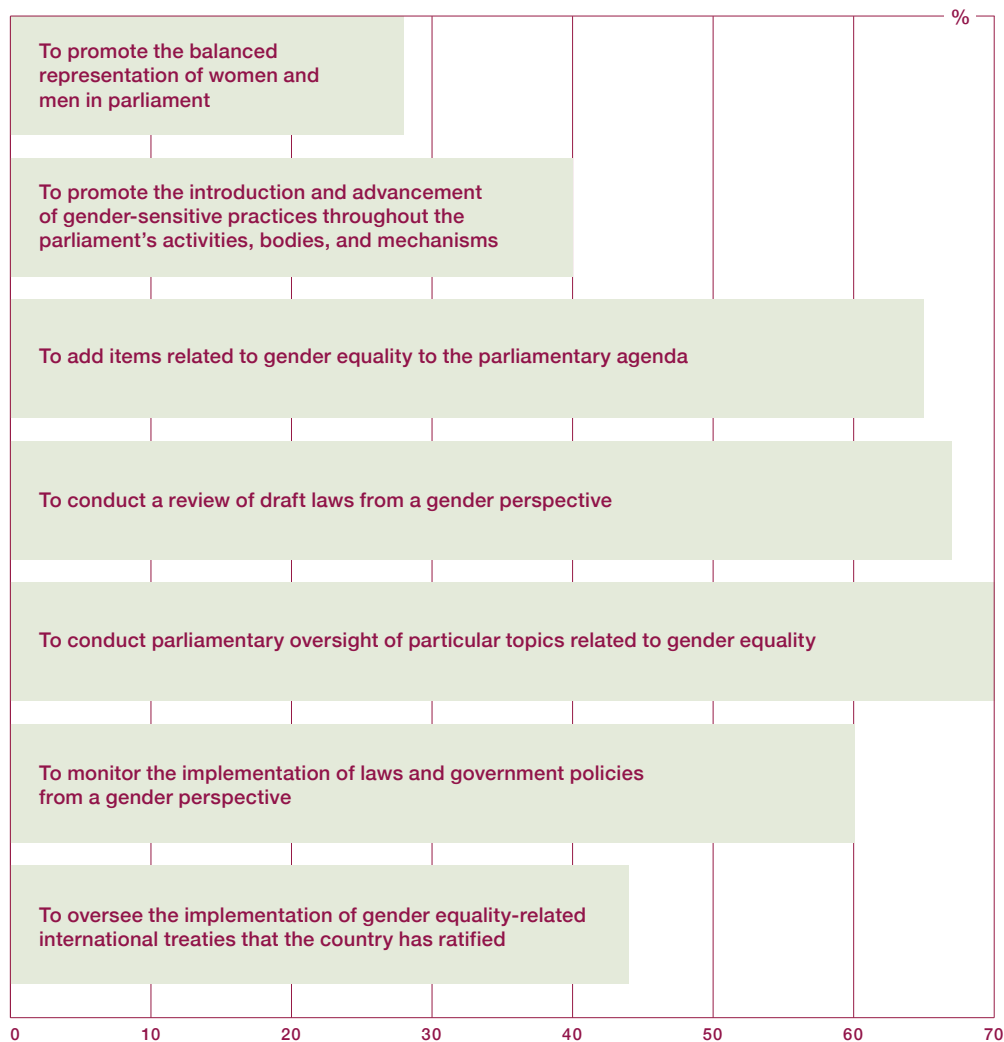
| Body | Legislation |
|---|---|
| <p>Delegation for Women’s Rights and Equal Opportunities (France, National Assembly)</p> | <p>Law No. 2021-1774 (December 2021). The Law aims at accelerating economic and professional equality between men and women. The Law creates an obligation to have balance between women and men among the senior management and members of governing bodies of large companies (with over 1000 employees). Companies are also required to be transparent about their leadership.</p> |
| <p>Standing Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities between Men and Women (Cyprus, House of Representatives)</p> | <p>Law 115(1) (2021) on the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Related Matters. The Law implements the provisions of the Istanbul Convention in Cyprus. The Law criminalizes different forms of violence against women.</p> |
| <p>Committee on Family Rights and Equality (Monaco, the National Council)</p> | <p>Law No. 1.523 (May 2022) on the Promotion and Protection of Women’s Rights through the Amendment and Repeal of Obsolete and Unequal Provisions. The Law amends a range of provisions in Monegasque legislation to make them more gender-sensitive, such as the Civil Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the French Commercial Code.</p> |

2. FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Outcome 2: Applying a gender lens to parliamentary processes and outputs

Formal parliamentary bodies for gender equality often have a mandate for specific tasks related to gender mainstreaming and applying a gender perspective to parliamentary activity. It is through these specific mandates related to gender equality that formal bodies are able to contribute to furthering gender equality in the work of parliament. These mandates ensure that gender is included in key stages of a parliament's work.

Q: What are the gender equality-related mandates of the formal specialized body?



2. FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The graph above shows the wide range of mandates.⁴⁶ Formal bodies most often have a mandate to conduct **parliamentary oversight** related to gender equality (70 per cent), followed by a mandate to **review draft laws** from a gender perspective (67 per cent) and **to add items related to gender equality to the parliamentary agenda** (65 per cent). Only 28 per cent of respondents had a mandate to promote the balanced representation of men and women in parliament.

Formal bodies are uniquely placed to ensure that key gender mainstreaming tools are used in the legislative process. Several bodies reported having introduced and using key gender mainstreaming tools in their work, e.g., gender impact assessments used by the Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council in Georgia, and ex-post legislative scrutiny from a gender perspective used by the Gender Equality Committee in Montenegro.⁴⁷

Outcome 3: Making parliaments more gender-sensitive

By applying a gender lens to legislative work, parliamentary bodies working for gender equality help make parliaments more gender-sensitive. Survey respondents mention working explicitly on the topic, including by holding **public events** on topics related to gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments. For example, the Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth in the Parliament of Ireland held an event in 2024 entitled “Challenges facing women accessing education, leadership and political roles.” Likewise, the Committee on Equal Opportunity for Women and Men in the Parliament of North Macedonia held an event on creating a gender-sensitive parliament. Formal bodies also engage in **in-depth studies** into the gender-sensitivity of parliaments. The Committee on Social Policy and the Committee on Constitutional Lawmaking in the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan listed as a key achievement their involvement in ODIHR’s 2022-2023 gender audit of the Parliament. Similarly, in the UK in 2022, the Women and Equalities Select Committee conducted an inquiry into the gender sensitivity of the Parliament. This Committee was established in 2015, following a report, published in 2015 by an informal body, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women in Parliament, on enhancing the gender sensitivity of parliament.⁴⁸

CASE STUDY — ANDORRA

Advancing gender sensitivity through parliamentary committees

The Committee for Social Affairs and Equality in the General Council of Andorra received its mandate from the 2015 Agreement to Promote Gender Equality in the General Council.⁴⁹ As the primary goal of the Agreement, the Committee was mandated to compile a White Paper on Equality, which was released in 2018. The White Paper is an extensive document focusing on the state of equality in Andorra and presenting a strategy to promote equality in all Andorran public institutions, including in the General Council.⁵⁰

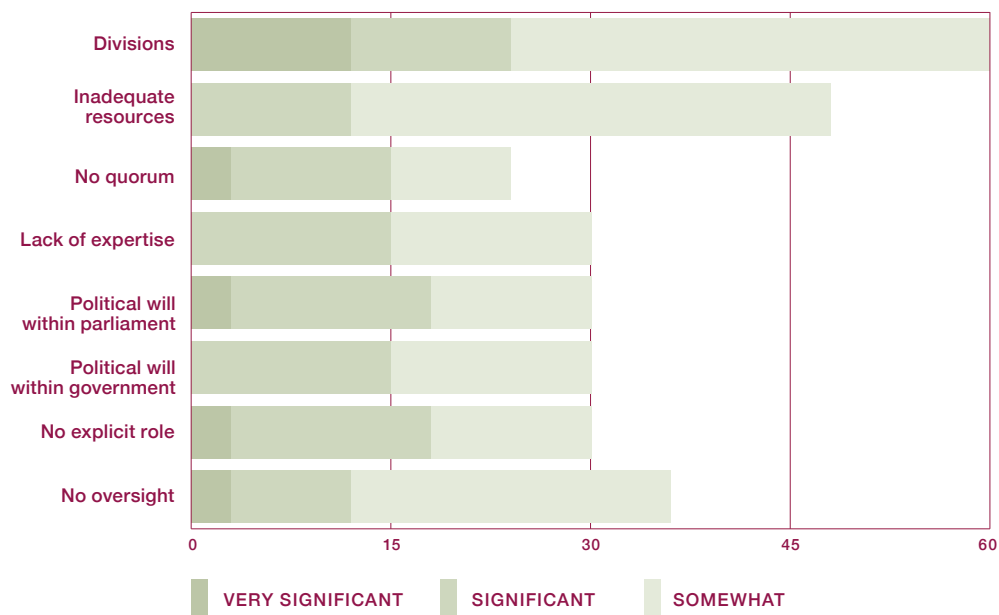
Legislative committees, such as the Committee for Social Affairs and Equality in the General Council, are mandated to examine legislative proposals, non-legislative proposals, information, or topics referred to them by the Ombudsperson.⁵¹ The Committee works very closely with the Secretary of State for Social Affairs, often providing advice, proposals and new ideas for policy implementation, as well as with the Andorran Institute for Women (*Institut Andorrà de les Dones*). The Andorran Institute for Women is an institutional mechanism located within the Andorran government, which has a legal mandate to act as an advisory body on gender equality issues to the General Council through the Committee.⁵² Additionally, the Committee regularly invites members of CSOs to their hearings, and civil society can also approach the Committee if they have a petition or a legislative proposal.⁵³

The Agreement to Promote Gender Equality, and therefore also the Committee, resulted from discussions held once the General Council achieved equal composition of male and female MPs in 2011. A series of informal meetings on gender began in February 2013 between MPs; all parliamentary groups took part. During these meetings, the IPU Action Plan on Gender-Sensitive Parliaments⁵⁴ was studied extensively and the participating MPs realized that the Parliament lacked data on gender equality, making it difficult to implement the plan in Andorra and to promote comprehensive gender equality policies. These informal talks led to the formation of the Committee. Today the Committee works to make the General Council more gender-sensitive.

2.3 Challenges

In addition to looking at achievements and outcomes, the survey also asked about the **challenges** that can hamper the work of formal bodies for gender equality. The following issues were identified as very significant, significant or somewhat significant obstacles to the bodies' work: divisions along party lines; inadequate human and/or financial resources to support the work; meetings cancelled due to lack of a quorum; lack of expertise on gender mainstreaming; lack of political will to support gender equality in parliament; lack of political will to support gender equality in government; no explicit role in cases of legislation that is not gender-targeted; and not being given enough oversight power. Divisions along party lines was by far the most significant challenge, with 61 per cent of respondents saying that it negatively affected their work.⁵⁵ This could be interpreted as confirmation that polarization is having a negative impact on the advancement of gender equality in parliaments.

Challenges that can hamper the work of formal bodies for gender equality.



2. FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Inadequate human and/or financial resources are also a considerable obstacle for many bodies (48 per cent of respondents). The majority of bodies considered that the lack of an explicit role in cases where legislation is not gender-targeted (20 per cent) and meetings being cancelled due to a lack of a quorum (24 per cent) had the least impact on their work. Some formal bodies also identified more specific challenges* related to their work:

Challenge 1: Lack of a dedicated formal body

In cases where a parliament only has a multi-portfolio body, respondents reported that gender equality concerns might be better addressed by a dedicated body. The Judicial Affairs and Education Committee (Iceland) wrote that if there was a specific Committee dedicated to gender equality then gender equality work would be more effective. The Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities Committee (Slovakia) said that the best way to improve the work of the Committee in regards to gender equality would be to constitute a new body, solely dedicated to gender equality.

Challenge 2: Unclear gender equality mandate

Even when a parliament has a dedicated body this does not mean that gender equality concerns are always successfully addressed. The Gender Equality Committee (Denmark) said that the Committee has almost no legislation within its remit, as the majority of draft laws are assigned to other committees when entering parliamentary procedure, in line with their sectoral policy mandate. This means that it is difficult for the Committee to fulfil its mandate to promote gender equality in legislation. Multi-portfolio bodies also have similar issues with their mandate. The Standing Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities between Men and Women (Cyprus) reported that a regular obstacle it faces is that draft laws or issues pertaining to gender equality are assigned to other committees. They said that a clearer understanding of the Committee's mandate would be beneficial.

The challenge of an unclear gender equality mandate is especially prevalent among multi-portfolio formal bodies. Often, these bodies have several other issues within their jurisdiction and their exact role in gender equality work and gender mainstreaming is most often less clearly defined than that of dedicated bodies.

* In particular, in answer to the question: "What are ways to improve the impact of the formal specialized body in future? Please name up to three solutions you have identified."

Challenge 3: Insufficient oversight power

The Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (Türkiye) reported that the Committee's mandate on oversight should be strengthened. They suggested it should be mandatory for the government and administration to report to the Commission. The Committee on Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality (Serbia) stated that the oversight role of the Committee could be strengthened through cooperation with the Ombudsperson, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and civil society organizations. In addition, the Committee's role in monitoring international standards on gender equality could be enhanced.

Challenge 4: Uneven distribution of male MPs

Several bodies mentioned the need to engage men further in the work of formal bodies. Another trend identified from the data is the uneven distribution of men across different types of formal bodies; male MPs were very under-represented in dedicated formal bodies. Of the 16 dedicated bodies reported in the survey responses, only four had more than 40 per cent male members. A significant majority of the dedicated bodies — nine — had less than 20 per cent male membership. In parliaments where men make up more than 40 per cent of members of the formal bodies, this is only due to the under-representation of women MPs in those parliaments (below 25 per cent).⁵⁶ Therefore, it could be said that the more equal representation of men in these parliamentary bodies for gender equality was due more to the overall gender disbalance in the parliaments than to any genuine attempt at equal representation.

Compared to the dedicated bodies, however, 67 per cent of the 42 multi-portfolio bodies reported over 40 per cent male membership; 33 per cent of the multi-portfolio bodies had over 55 per cent male membership. One body had no female members at all (the Committee on Human Rights, Lithuania)⁵⁷. Of these bodies, only two were in chambers with over 40 per cent female MPs, suggesting that the overall under-representation of women in parliaments may contribute to the under-representation in those parliamentary bodies.⁵⁸ Yet it is still evident that male MPs are more strongly represented in multi-portfolio bodies than dedicated ones.

CASE STUDY — BELGIUM

Achievements and challenges in the Senate's Advisory Committee⁵⁹

The bicameral parliament of Belgium has advisory committees working on gender equality in both houses — the Advisory Committee on Social Emancipation in the House of Representatives and the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men in the Senate. In the Belgian parliamentary system, the Senate is indirectly elected, and its legislative powers mainly cover the organization and functioning of the federal system. It has the right to propose legislation but only in regards to certain matters, such as amending the Constitution, political party and electoral finance, the functioning of the Senate, and the institutions of the German community.⁶⁰ The Senate may draft legislative proposals, resolutions and reports. Within the Belgian Senate — in contrast to standing committees that examine bills, proposals and other matters referred to them — advisory committees initially had less power and so were able only to offer recommendations to the Senate.⁶¹ In the Senate Rules of Procedure, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities has a formal mandate to “give opinions on issues related to equal opportunities between women and men, either at the request of the President of the Senate, in accordance with the provisions of Article 22,⁶² or on its own initiative”.⁶³ However, the Advisory Committee today has evolved somewhat and also plays an active role in amending proposed resolutions.⁶⁴

The Senate has acquired the power to produce, upon request, reports on matters that affect the Regions and Communities, and this is an area where the Advisory Committee plays an active role. For instance, the Committee recently made a report on bodily self-determination and the fight against gynaecological violence, and its recommendations were adopted by the Senate. The Committee has also released other reports on different topics, such as the wage gap between men and women (2021) or the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women (2021). During the course of the inquiry into gynaecological violence, the Committee held consultations with several civil society organizations in Belgium, as well as the Office of the European Commissioner for Equality, the European Women's Lobby and members of the academic community in Belgium and others.⁶⁵ The Committee works closely with a wide range of external experts and regular exchanges take place with other similar bodies in Europe (e.g., the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the European Parliament) and elsewhere (e.g., a recent exchange with the Women's Caucus of Niger). The Committee also presents important resolutions on gender equality that are then taken

2. FORMAL PARLIAMENTARY BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

up by the Senate plenary, such as a recent resolution to strengthen the fight against economic violence within a couple (2023).⁶⁶

However, the Committee faces several challenges because of its mandate and institutional setup and its advice is sometimes not taken up by Senate bodies. For example, a recent, large-scale inquiry into emergency contraception was not taken into account after it left the Advisory Committee. The Committee must also be renewed during each convocation of parliament. In 2014, the Committee's mandate was not renewed until the new parliament was convened in 2019.

3

Informal bodies for gender equality

3.1 Classification

There are two common types of informal bodies in the OSCE region: **women's caucuses** and a broader group of bodies, described here as **cross-party, gender-focused bodies**. The main differences between them is their membership and focus.

Women's caucuses have only women MPs as members (at least within the OSCE region). Membership is either voluntary, or all female MPs are automatically members of the caucus, in which case active participation is voluntary. Women's caucuses are cross-party mechanisms, primarily designed to strengthen the cooperation and capacities of women parliamentarians. They tend to work on the interests of their members, for example, by promoting their legislative priorities, providing support to members and advancing gender mainstreaming within parliament.⁶⁷ Women's caucuses may be formalized through official recognition by parliament, such as the Alliance of Women MPs in Albania, which is recognized in the parliament's Rules of Procedure. However, they are mostly informal bodies, ad hoc gatherings of female MPs. Informal caucuses may have to follow national regulations applied to associations or other groups, but they tend to have more freedom from parliamentary rules on topics such as fundraising and membership than formally recognized groups. Unlike formal specialized

3. INFORMAL BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

bodies, such as standing committees, neither type of women's caucus has an institutionalized role in the legislative process. Of the 53 informal bodies in the OSCE region, 17 are women's caucuses.⁶⁸

The other type of informal body identified in the survey data is **cross-party, gender-focused bodies**. There are differences between the institutional setup, level of institutionalization and scope of these bodies, but they share some common dynamics. They work on gender equality issues rather than women MP's issues, either broadly or with a very narrow focus. Their membership is comprised mostly of MPs, but there may be members from other areas of political life and civil society. Membership is open to both women and men MPs.

Some research on parliamentary bodies working for gender equality has identified All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) as yet another, third type of cross-party body for gender equality; a mix between a formal and informal body.⁶⁹ In this tool, they are treated as informal bodies, because they do not have an institutionalized role in the legislative process. However, the survey has picked up a number of other informal bodies within parliaments working on gender equality. These include not only APPGs (in the United Kingdom and Switzerland), but also congressional caucuses (in the United States of America and Ukraine), parliamentary councils (in Sweden and Finland) and working groups of MPs (in Poland and Lithuania). There are 36 such informal bodies in the OSCE region.

3. INFORMAL BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Table 4. Comparison of different cross-party gender-focused bodies

| | Working Group on Gender Equality (Sweden) ⁷⁰ | Women, Peace, and Security Caucus (United States) ⁷¹ |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Formation | <p>The Working Group on Gender Equality was set up in 1995 by the Speaker. In light of the Swedish parliament reaching a new world record in terms of women’s representation, the Speaker gathered seven female MPs, one from each party in parliament. This led to the formation of the Speaker’s Women’s Network, envisioned to be a forum for women MPs to discuss how to improve their work within the masculinized parliamentary environment. Since then, the Group’s mandate, role and name have developed into what it is today.</p> | <p>Congressional caucuses, or Congressional Members Organizations (CMOs) are formed on an ad hoc basis by MPs to support a common legislative objective.⁷² The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Caucus was formed in March 2020, on the initiative of the CSO, Our Secure Future.⁷³</p> |
| Recognition by parliament | <p>The Group has been reconstituted by each Speaker since 1995. While initially an informal forum without any formal rules regulating its form or functions, its mandate is now clearly set out in the Action Plan for Gender Equality adopted during each convocation. The Action Plan also stipulates that administrative support and a budget are provided by the <i>Riksdag</i>.</p> | <p>The WPS Caucus is registered with the House. Caucuses that wish to obtain certain resources are required to register with the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives. There is no registration process in the Senate. A caucus must register with the Committee during each legislative session to maintain its status. Caucuses who have registered still do not receive administrative support, a budget or meeting space from the legislature.</p> |

3. INFORMAL BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| <p>Membership</p> | <p>Since 2014, the Working Group has had a gender-balanced membership. The Working Group rules stipulate that there must be a member from each political party in parliament. Members are appointed by the Board of the <i>Riksdag</i>. The First Deputy Speaker is chair of the Working Group, and the Second Deputy Speaker is Deputy Chair. The Group is supported by staff from the Speaker's Office and can draw on the expertise of a group of scholars from various disciplines.</p> | <p>The WPS Caucus has 20 members, 35% women and 65% men. Only four members are from the Republican party and the rest are Democrats. It has two co-chairs, one man (Republican) and one woman (Democrat). It does not have any members from the Senate. Any MP can choose to join the WPS Caucus. It does not have any dedicated support staff.</p> |
| <p>Focus</p> | <p>Today, the Working Group is an established forum for discussing gender equality matters within parliament. Gender equality is worked on in a broad perspective. The current Action Plan for 2022-2026 states that the Working Group's focus during this convocation will be on cultural issues and attitudes between members of the <i>Riksdag</i> as well as the external treatment of MPs. Proposed activities include: a workshop on communication strategies for MPs, research on psychological violence against MPs, and analysis of the need for childminding in the <i>Riksdag</i>.⁷⁴</p> | <p>The WPS Caucus works to ensure that WPS goals set out in international standards and in the Women, Peace, and Security Act (2017) are actively considered in US national security and foreign policy priorities. It works to raise awareness of WPS issues; to educate the public and Congress on WPS; to oversee the implementation of the WPS National Strategy; and to explore WPS issues in global conflicts.</p> |

3. INFORMAL BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The bodies described in the table are at different ends of the spectrum of informal bodies within the OSCE region; the Working Group on Gender Equality is highly institutionalized, with a permanent, formalized role in parliament. It has existed for nearly 30 years, working on a wide range of gender equality issues in Sweden. Its membership must be gender-balanced and represent all political parties in parliament. The Group also has administrative and research support, alongside a budget from the Secretary-General of the *Riksdag*. In contrast, the WPS Caucus is only four years old and is not a permanent body in Congress. It can choose to be recognized by the legislature in order to get resources, such as official funds for communication about its work. There are no membership requirements beyond being an elected MP.

3.2 Outcomes

The survey responses show that informal parliamentary bodies produce important, positive outcomes that enhance gender equality and the gender sensitivity of parliaments. They are different from, but complement the outcomes of formal bodies. The data suggests that there are four main outcomes: contributions to gender equality legislation and policy, increased awareness of gender equality in parliament, enhanced capacity and influence of members, and the engagement of men in gender equality work.

Outcome 1: Contributions to gender-sensitive legislation and policy

Like formal bodies, informal bodies for gender equality contribute to mainstreaming gender equality into lawmaking. However, since they do not have a formalized role in the process, this is rather by providing a forum for informal discussion of new legislative projects or existing draft legislation. In contrast to formal bodies, MPs can bring their own initiatives for discussion among their peers in a less formal setting. These forums also allow parliamentarians or government ministers to consult on new policies.

In their survey response, the Irish Women's Parliamentary Caucus noted several Caucus achievements where it acted as a knowledge hub and forum for discussion of legislation and policy related to gender equality. In 2023, the Caucus hosted a workshop on the care economy, which led to a Rights-Based Care Economy motion passed in the *Seanad*.⁷⁵ The Caucus also has a sub-group on breastfeeding that meets regularly with the Government to discuss breastfeeding policy and services. The Caucus also presented

3. INFORMAL BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

a report on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to the Government in 2022. The Women MP's Group in Montenegro reported they played a significant role in several legislative projects, such as amending the Criminal Code on sexual offences against minors, and amendments to the Law on Mandatory Health Insurance, which expanded those eligible for medically assisted fertilization.

Outcome 2: Increased awareness of gender equality in parliament

One of the most common achievements mentioned by informal bodies in their survey responses was hosting events on topics or seminars related to gender equality.* The Women Parliamentarian's Club in **North Macedonia** noted the first session on the promotion of gender equality of the plenary of the parliament, held on 8 March 2023, as a particular achievement. In another example, the Cross-Party Group for Sexual Health and Rights in Switzerland hosts regular events with their civil society partner, Sexual Health Switzerland. In March 2024, they organized an event in the Federal Palace called "Giving birth in the most precarious conditions – reproductive health in humanitarian crisis situations".

Outcome 3: Enhanced capacity and influence of members

This outcome particularly applies to women's caucuses, which work to support and empower women within parliament. Women's caucuses regularly host capacity-building events and provide an environment in which women MPs feel comfortable to discuss their concerns as parliamentarians. This can also help to empower women to take up more prominent roles in parliament. For example, as a recent achievement, the Group for Parliamentary Advocacy of Women's Interests in Latvia reported that they had managed to get women MPs into the top three positions in parliament; the Speaker and both Deputy Speakers are now women.

As with many institutions, parliaments are generally acknowledged by researchers to be gendered institutions, i.e., governed by masculine institutional rules and norms. Aside from practical support and capacity building, informal bodies for gender equality support feminist institution building,

* This is based on responses given to the survey question: "What are five major results or achievements of the informal specialized body in regards to advancing gender equality in the last five years?"

3. INFORMAL BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

allowing members to discuss issues in a setting outside dominant parliamentary norms. In this way, members feel empowered to debate issues on the parliamentary agenda from the perspective of gender equality, and gender concerns are emphasized in ways that may not be possible in other parliamentary spaces.⁷⁶

Outcome 4: Engagement of men in gender equality work

Cross-party, gender-focused bodies give men MPs the opportunity to engage voluntarily in a range of topics related to gender equality.⁷⁷ Two informal bodies, the Working Group on Gender Equality in Sweden and the Council for Gender Equality in Finland,⁷⁸ require gender-balanced membership. Several of the cross-party, gender-focused bodies in the OSCE have over 30 per cent male members: including the UK APPGs on State Pension Inequality for Women, on Women in Defence, on White Ribbon UK, on Get Refusal,⁷⁹ on Muslim Women, on Ovarian Cancer, and in the United States, the Pro-Life Caucus, the Pro-Choice Caucus and the WPS Caucus. It is possible that male parliamentarians may find it easier to join informal bodies related to certain gender equality topics.

It is important to highlight the two informal bodies in the OSCE region **dedicated to engaging male MPs in gender equality**. The UK Parliament has an APPG on White Ribbon UK, named after the CSO that provides their secretariat. The purpose of the APPG, according to the Register of APPGs, is to “engage parliamentarians (especially male parliamentarians) in raising awareness and challenging male violence against women and girls in all forms”.⁸⁰ Similarly, since 1988, the Council for Gender Equality in Finland has had a Subcommittee on Men and Gender Equality. The Council has published numerous reports on men and gender equality and has as one of its permanent experts a representative from the CSO, the Confederation of Finnish Men’s Organizations.⁸¹

CASE STUDY — KYRGYZSTAN

Achievements of the Kyrgyz Council on Women's Rights

In February 2022, the Council on Women's Rights, Children and Gender Equality was re-established by decision of the *Toraga* (Speaker) of the *Jogorku Kenesh* (parliament). Similar councils also existed in previous convocations. The Council now reports to the *Toraga* as a consultative and advisory body. Members of the Council include MPs from all political parties represented in the *Jogorku Kenesh*, as well as representatives from government agencies, international organizations and representatives of CSOs working on protecting the rights of women, children and other vulnerable groups. The Council was established to coordinate policy implementation in the fields of women's rights, children's rights and gender equality and is tasked with the following: improving the existing legislative framework; promoting the integration of the topic into legislation and state programmes; monitoring the implementation of legislation; assisting state bodies in implementing state obligations, such as the CEDAW; coordinating the activities of the *Jogorku Kenesh* on the topic with government agencies, CSOs and international organizations; and conducting scientific research.⁸²

Recent achievements of the Council include a review of the 2019 International Labour Organization Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190), which was then adopted through a law passed in the *Jogorku Kenesh* and ratified by the President in February 2024. This should launch data collection of gender-based workplace harassment, which is not currently done in Kyrgyzstan. The Council also took part in ODIHR's 2022-2023 Gender Audit of the *Jogorku Kenesh*,⁸³ and recently approved a plan to implement the recommendations.⁸⁴ The Council has several male parliamentarian members and other male MPs are keen to join.

Kyrgyzstan does have another informal body, the Parliamentary Forum for Women, which is a women's caucus. However, only the Council has an official, permanent role assigned by the *Toraga*. It also has a formalized mechanism for cooperating with the two formal bodies in parliament that are mandated to work on gender equality issues — the Committee on Social Policy and the Committee on Constitutional Law-Making. Representatives of the secretariats of both committees are members of the Council, ensuring mutual coordination.

3.3 Challenges

The survey data revealed three major challenges that informal bodies face. These are often because they are not perceived to be as important as formal bodies by the parliament. Therefore, there can be less political will to establish or engage with them, and they are prone to disappearing between parliamentary terms. There is also a view that, if there is formal body, no informal body is necessary, despite their numerous complementary functions.

Challenge 1: Lack of support for their work

As informal bodies do not have a formal role in the legislative process, they are less visible than formal bodies. This can mean that there is less political will to engage with them in parliament. It can also limit the impact of the activities of informal bodies, such as hosting events or capacity-building activities. Since they are largely voluntary associations, it can be difficult to find dedicated members, who are willing to contribute their time and resources to strengthening the work of the body. For example, only eight of the 52 informal bodies in the OSCE region are given any resources beyond a meeting space. This puts significant responsibility onto group members to build the momentum to make their work impactful and visible.

Challenge 2: Lack of sustainability

As informal groups are set up, in the vast majority of cases, from convocation to convocation on the initiative of individual MPs, they are often unsustainable; informal groups are liable to disappear when the MPs who set them up leave office or governments change and do not renew the body. This means that they do not become part of the permanent parliamentary gender mainstreaming infrastructure. One example is in the Netherlands, where an informal body existed from 2017 to 2021. The Multiparty Initiative on Gender was disbanded in 2021, because many of the MPs who had been responsible for its setup left parliament. Another example is in Italy, where an informal body, the Parliamentary Intergroup for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, was set up in 2015. The Intergroup was chaired by the President of the Chamber and had 80 members from the Chamber of Deputies, representing all political parties in parliament. It was intended to be a bipartisan forum to discuss legislation related to gender equality.⁸⁵ It was disbanded in 2018, after a change of government following the general election. However, it appears the group has been active again since 2023.⁸⁶

Challenge 3: Lack of political will and awareness about the need to set up informal bodies

Only 22 OSCE participating States have an informal body, so survey respondents were asked why informal bodies had not yet been established and the challenges that emerge in discussions about setting one up.

Table 5. Factors working against establishing informal specialized bodies

| Factor* | Percentage of respondents ⁸⁷ |
|---|---|
| Not enough women in parliament | 0% |
| Culturally embedded gender-based stereotypes | 4% |
| Lack of political will | 18% |
| Lack of cross-party support | 14% |
| Gender issues are covered sufficiently elsewhere | 46% |
| It is not viewed as necessary for enhancing gender equality | 53% |

From the survey responses, it is clear that the central factors working against the establishment of informal bodies are not a lack of women MPs, political will, or cross-party support. Rather, it is that informal bodies are not seen as important elements of the gender mainstreaming infrastructure. This implies that parliaments are not aware of the positive outcomes informal bodies can produce, both within parliament and through parliamentary outputs.

Furthermore, three respondents (Andorra, Cyprus and Luxembourg) specifically stated that there was no need for an informal body, because gender equality work is sufficiently covered by the formal body.** As mentioned earlier, in the case of Andorra, when the informal body was reconstituted as a formal one, there was no longer seen to be a need for an informal body.

* Multiple-choice answers were provided in the survey.

** In answer to the question: "Why have movements to create an informal specialized body in parliament failed?"

3. INFORMAL BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

However, **formal and informal bodies are not mutually exclusive**. They face different challenges and have different positive outcomes, which can be complementary, especially when they coordinate well. For example, the leadership of the Women’s Parliamentary Club (North Macedonia) has “ex officio” status in the formal body, the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. This means that informal discussions in the Club often feed into the Committee’s legislative work, (such as in the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Law on Maternity Leave). One body provides a forum for women MPs to strategize and develop common objectives across party lines, while the other provides the institutionalized platform to bring gender equality into the legislative process and allows the engagement of men in gender equality work. The presence of both formal and informal bodies in a parliament can substantially enhance the gender sensitivity of the institution.

Informal bodies can complement the work of formal bodies in several ways, for example, by providing a more targeted focus on gender equality where a parliament only has a multi-portfolio formal body. Informal bodies tend to have greater flexibility over the size of their membership than formal bodies, which means they can engage with more MPs on gender equality work. Where parliaments have strict rules on establishing standing committees or other types of formal bodies, MPs can set up informal bodies for gender equality. Informal bodies can also enhance the work of formal bodies by increasing the visibility of gender equality issues within parliament and in the public eye; offering a forum for discussing gender equality issues in a less formalized environment; facilitating the establishment of networks with external experts (such as CSOs or academics); assisting the development of a joint agenda on certain issues; and enabling further cross-party dialogue on gender equality issues.⁸⁸

CASE STUDY — MONTENEGRO

Mobilization of women MPs as part of the Montenegrin Women's MP Group

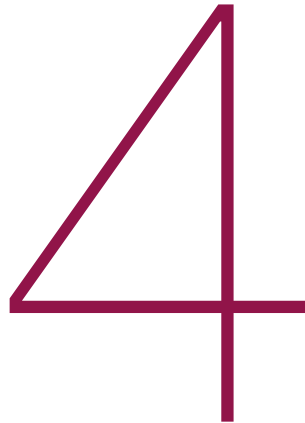
The Women's MP Group was set up in 2021 through a formal memorandum in parliament⁸⁹ and with the support of various international organizations working in Montenegro. According to this memorandum, the Group's initial goals were to promote gender equality at all levels of decision-making; encourage the political participation of women; promote women's engagement in society; and foster and promote solidarity. To achieve this, the memorandum set the Group several tasks, all related to improving Montenegro's legal framework in regards to gender equality.

Following the June 2023 parliamentary elections, the Group was renewed in the new convocation of parliament. However, the membership of the Women MP's Group — 22 female MPs from across the political spectrum — were experiencing some issues related to the leadership structure envisioned in the initial memorandum. Previously, the Group was governed by the Collegium, a decision-making body comprised of one representative from each political party in parliament and led by two co-chairs, one being the Vice-President of the Parliament (who must be from the under-represented sex according to regulations) and one member of the opposition. In December 2024, the Group signed a Memorandum outlining a new leadership structure, with four co-chairs instead of two. Between January and April 2024, two co-chairs were appointed from the ruling parties alongside two co-chairs from opposition parties. Soon after the new leadership was finalized, the Group discussed and defined its own internal Rules of Procedure to ensure full transparency and the participation of all female MPs in the Group's decision-making, including those who are not members of the Collegium.

In May 2024, the Group proposed an amendment to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, giving official MP group status to the Women MP's Group. This gives the Group some measure of permanence within the parliamentary infrastructure; it must now be renewed at the beginning of each convocation. It also gives the Group important resources, including access to budget planning, human resources and a dedicated meeting room.

3. INFORMAL BODIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Thus far, the Group's activity has been held back by the institutional adjustments necessary to make their work effective. Despite this, they have still had an impact on the legislative process. Members of the Group were recently approached by the Chamber of Pharmacists in Montenegro to propose a law addressing perceived discrimination in the salaries of pharmacists. The Chamber approached the Group because over 95 per cent of pharmacists in Montenegro are women. Members of the Group worked on a draft law, gaining support from fellow members. The draft law was adopted unanimously in May by the Parliament. The Group now plans to work on a number of interesting ideas, such as raising the legally binding electoral gender quota from 30 per cent to 40 per cent, and making it mandatory for at least 40 per cent of the board seats of large companies to be held by the under-represented gender.⁹⁰



Recommendations

The eight recommendations presented below are intended for gender equality advocates within national parliaments. They can and should be tailored to individual parliamentary contexts and systems. The underlying principle is that effective parliamentary bodies for gender equality should be cross-party, inclusive, sustainable, well-resourced, visible, flexible and well-equipped to promote gender mainstreaming.

General recommendations

Recommendation 1: Consider introducing both formal and informal specialized parliamentary bodies for gender equality

Formal and informal bodies for gender equality are important elements of the gender mainstreaming infrastructure in parliaments. Both can produce positive outcomes that enhance the gender sensitivity of parliaments. Each plays a different role, and parliaments should ensure there are effective and clearly specified coordination mechanisms in place, so that the bodies' activities are complementary and can contribute to the wider gender equality agenda.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 2: Ensure that formal and informal bodies are permanent parts of the parliamentary infrastructure

Formal and informal bodies should be institutionalized in the parliamentary setup to ensure their work across successive parliaments. Permanent formal and informal bodies ensure not only the continuity of their work, but also that gender equality work remains a priority across parliamentary terms. At the same time, steps should still be taken to ensure that permanent parliamentary bodies are able to adapt to changing political realities.

Recommendation 3: Ensure mechanisms are in place to engage CSOs and external experts in the work of bodies for gender equality

Parliamentary bodies for gender equality should be strongly encouraged to involve CSOs and external experts in their work in different ways. Efforts should be made to ensure that bodies work with a wide range of CSOs, of differing sizes, geographically diverse and focused on different groups, such as women with disabilities, young women, women from low-income backgrounds or women from ethnic minorities, as well as organizations that engage men in gender equality.

Recommendation 4: Take steps to engage male parliamentarians in parliamentary bodies for gender equality

Parliaments should consider gender balance in bodies for gender equality and could introduce thresholds for each gender in these and all other parliamentary bodies and delegations. They could also consider having rules on the gender balance of the leadership of the bodies, e.g., with chairs of different genders. Promoting the work of parliamentary bodies working for gender equality should raise the prominence of gender equality in parliament as a high-priority political issue and this, in turn, should incentivize male MPs to join. Formal and informal bodies can also conduct research or organize public events on engaging men in gender equality.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations on formal bodies

Recommendation 5: Consider introducing dedicated formal bodies for gender equality with a clear and comprehensive mandate

Dedicated formal bodies result in greater attention to gender equality in parliament in general and greater visibility for gender issues as a parliamentary priority. If no formal bodies for gender equality currently exists, parliaments might also consider adding gender equality to the mandate of an existing body rather than constituting a new body. Formal bodies should have a clear and comprehensive mandate; i.e., they are mandated to mainstream gender into all parliamentary functions, including lawmaking and oversight. While a broader gender mainstreaming mandate applies to all parliamentary committees, having a dedicated gender equality committee might help move the gender equality agenda to the next stage through targeted actions.

Recommendation 6: Institutionalize the use of gender mainstreaming tools as part of formal bodies' mandates

Advancing gender equality works best when practical gender mainstreaming tools are applied. Formal bodies can take the lead in making sure that ex ante gender-sensitive regulatory impact assessments are compulsory for draft laws. Bodies can also help to ensure that ex post gender evaluations of existing legislation are done, either by the government, or as part of the post-legislative scrutiny activities of the formal body itself.

Recommendations on informal bodies

Recommendation 7: Give informal bodies adequate resources and visibility

Informal bodies should have access to sufficient resources to contribute meaningfully to gender equality work, in the same way as formal bodies do. This should include not only meeting space, but also funding for activities and staffing, as well as technical assistance. Where possible, parliaments should ensure that the work of informal bodies is visible, e.g., on its website, in press releases and on occasions such as International Women's Day.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 8: Ensure informal bodies can adapt to changing realities

Women MPs caucuses and groups are useful tools for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Once they have achieved certain goals — for example, a significant increase in women's presence in parliament — parliaments should evaluate whether new formats are needed, such as setting up cross-party, feminist MP groups that bring together female and male MPs, and/or forming thematic gender equality groups, which can focus on certain topics or bring together (female and male) MPs from certain parties in parliament.

Annexes

ANNEXE 1:

Survey on specialized parliamentary bodies for gender equality

(Questions completed by OSCE participating States between August 2023 and February 2024.)

Women's political participation and gender balance in parliaments have been continuously improving in the OSCE area over the last three decades. Parallel to that, parliaments have taken measures to institutionalize gender equality, including through their formal and informal specialized bodies. Already in 2013, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) conducted research on parliamentary bodies for women MPs, which resulted in the publication of "*Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region*".

Ten years later, ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) have prepared this questionnaire in order to gather data on the proliferation, activities, and impact of specialized parliamentary bodies for gender equality. We aim to update our data on the existence of these bodies across the OSCE region and their institutional set-up as well as to identify good practices and challenges in their implementation and operation, which will enhance our ability to perform our direct work and assist national parliaments.

We kindly ask each parliament to prepare **one response to the questionnaire for the entire parliament**. If the parliament is bicameral, a response should be prepared for each chamber separately. We recommend that the parliament's research team or a similar parliamentary unit should respond to the questionnaire. We advise the responding staff member(s) to consult, if existing, the chairs or co-chairs and parliamentary staff working for specialized parliamentary bodies for gender equality on the information provided. You may also want to consult any other staff or MPs that might be relevant in responding to this survey.

ANNEXES

The questionnaire has **two sections**, one on formal specialized bodies and one on informal specialized bodies. These sections have multiple options and we request that you to choose one option within each section and complete the related questions. Please fill in both sections, reading all of the available options before selecting the appropriate one, as there are relevant questions even if a formal or informal specialized parliamentary body does not currently exist.

Your answers do not represent an assessment of a given parliamentary body but will help us to understand how informal and formal specialized parliamentary bodies can be set up in OSCE parliaments to enhance gender equality. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

SECTION 1:

Formal Specialized Parliamentary Bodies for Gender Equality

In this introduction, we are collecting some basic data on the parliament and the person responding to our questionnaire. Your responses to all the questions in this questionnaire are very important to us and we kindly ask you not leaving any questions unanswered.

1. Country* (drop down menu for all 56 countries) :
2. Name of parliament and parliamentary chamber (if the parliament is bicameral)*:
3. Name of questionnaire respondent*:
4. Position of questionnaire respondent*:
5. Contact email of questionnaire respondent*:

Formal specialized parliamentary bodies for gender equality are bodies set up by the parliament through a formal document, like the Rules of Procedure or Standing Orders. Formal parliamentary bodies for gender equality are usually composed of MPs from all major parliamentary political parties and are tasked with parliamentary representation, lawmaking, and parliamentary oversight.

Please choose one of three below options in this section and answer the following questions.

- Option 1: Our parliament has a formal specialized body that is solely dedicated to a broad set of issues related to gender equality.** The body contains an explicit mention of gender equality, equality of sexes, equal opportunities or the equality of women and men in its name. It does not cover other policy areas, like social policy or issues related to family, youth, and other social groups. This formal specialized body can be, for example, a standing parliamentary committee or sub-committee, parliamentary council or commission, or another type of formal working body.
- Option 2: Our parliament has a formal specialized body that has gender equality included in its mandate, alongside other policy areas and issues.** The specialized body covers different policy issues, but it is also explicitly mandated with gender equality, equality of sexes, equal opportunities, or the equality of women and men, which might also be reflected in the name of the working body. This formal specialized body can be, for example, a standing parliamentary committee or sub-committee, parliamentary council or commission, or another type of formal working body.
- Option 3: A formal specialized body dedicated to gender equality or including gender equality in its mandate does not currently exist.**

QUESTIONS, if OPTION 1 is selected:

1. What is the name of the formal specialized body? Please provide a short answer.
2. What type of formal specialized body is it? Please select one option.
 - A standing committee or sub-committee
 - A parliamentary council with a different mandate than a standing committee
 - Other type of working body, please name it:
3. What is the composition of the formal specialized body?
 - % of women - % of men
4. When was the formal specialized body introduced for the first time as a parliamentary body? Please select one option.
 - 1989 or earlier - 1990-1999 - 2000-2009
 - 2010-2019 - 2020-2023
5. Which document is the source of the gender equality mandate for the parliamentary body? Please provide the name.
6. What are the gender equality-related mandates of the formal specialized body? Please select all options that apply.
 - To promote the balanced representation of women and men in parliament
 - To promote the introduction and advancement of gender-sensitive practices throughout the parliament's activities, bodies, and mechanisms
 - To add items related to gender equality to the parliamentary agenda
 - To conduct a review of draft laws from a gender perspective
 - To conduct parliamentary oversight of particular topics related to gender equality
 - To monitor the implementation of laws and government policies from a gender perspective
 - To oversee the implementation of gender equality-related international treaties that the countries has ratified
 - Other, please name:
7. What is the scope of the formal mandate of the specialized body related to overseeing the drafting, adoption, and implementation of laws from a gender equality perspective? Please select one option.
 - The body is mandated to mainstream a gender equality perspective into all types of legislation, regardless of the thematic focus of the legislation.
 - The body is only mandated to oversee the drafting and implementation of legislation, which has an explicit gender equality focus.
 - Other, please elaborate:
8. If your country has a national law on gender equality, equality of sexes, equal opportunities, or the equality of women and men, which of the following activities are performed by the formal specialized body? Please select all that apply.
 - Oversight of law implementation in form of government reports on a regular basis (annual/biannual)
 - Thematic oversight hearings and other oversight activities on specific aspects of the law

ANNEXES

- Ensuring that new legislation in the legislative process is gender mainstreamed, in line with the provision from the national law on gender equality
 - Our country has no national law on gender equality, equality of sexes, equal opportunities, or the equality of women and men
- 9.** How often does the formal specialized body work with representatives from different sectors? Multiple choice grid - five options, from Very often to Rarely
- Domestic women rights NGOs and other civil society organizations working on gender equality
 - Gender equality experts in academia
 - International organizations working on gender equality advancement
 - Governmental bodies for the advancement of gender equality
 - Representatives of local self-government working on gender equality
- 10.** What are five major results or achievements of the formal specialized body in regards to advancing gender equality in the last five years? Please provide a short narrative response on results where the body had a direct role.
- 11.** To what extent do the following represent a challenge to the work of the formal specialized body? (Multiple choice grid - five options, from significantly to not at all)
- Divisions along party lines
 - Inadequate human and/or financial resources to support the work
 - Meetings cancelled due to a lack of a quorum
 - Lack of expertise on gender mainstreaming in lawmaking and parliamentary oversight in parliament
 - Lack of political will to support gender equality within parliament
 - Lack of political will to support gender equality within government
 - No explicit role in cases of legislation that is not gender targeted
 - Not given enough oversight power
 - Other challenges, please elaborate:
- 12.** On a scale from 1-10, how well is the formal specialized body able to fulfill its mandate for enhancing gender equality? (1-not at all, 10-fully meeting its mandate)
- 13.** What are ways to improve the impact of the formal specialized body in future? Please name up to three solutions you have identified.

QUESTIONS, if OPTION 2 is selected:

- 1.** What is the name of the formal specialized body? Please provide a short answer.
- 2.** What type of formal specialized body is it? Please select one option.
 - A standing committee or sub-committee
 - A parliamentary council with a different mandate than a standing committee
 - Other type of working body, please name it:
- 3.** What is the composition of the formal specialized body?
 - % of women
 - % of men

ANNEXES

- 4.** When was the formal specialized body introduced for the first time as a parliamentary body? Please select one option.
- 1989 or earlier
 - 1990-1999
 - 2000-2009
 - 2010-2019
 - 2020-2023
- 5.** Which document is the source of the gender equality mandate for the formal specialized body? Please provide the name.
- 6.** What other policy areas and issues are part of the formal specialized body's mandate alongside gender equality? Please list them.
- 7.** What are the gender equality-related mandates of the formal specialized body? Please select all options that apply.
- To promote the balanced representation of women and men in parliament
 - To promote the introduction and advancement of gender-sensitive practices throughout the parliament's activities, bodies, and mechanisms
 - To add items related to gender equality to the parliamentary agenda
 - To conduct a review of draft laws from a gender perspective
 - To conduct parliamentary oversight into particular topics related to gender equality
 - To monitor the implementation of laws and government policies from a gender perspective
 - To oversee the implementation of gender equality-related international treaties that the countries has ratified
 - Other, please name:
- 8.** What is the scope of the formal mandate of the specialized body related to overseeing the drafting, adoption, and implementation of laws from a gender equality perspective? Please select one option.
- The body is mandated to mainstream a gender equality perspective into all types of legislation, regardless of the thematic focus of the legislation.
 - The body is only mandated to oversee the drafting and implementation of legislation, which has an explicit gender equality focus.
 - Other, please elaborate:
- 9.** If your country has a national law on gender equality, equality of sexes, equal opportunities, or the equality of women and men, which of the following activities are performed by the formal specialized body? Please select all that apply.
- Oversight of law implementation in form of government reports on a regular basis (annual/biannual)
 - Thematic oversight hearings and other oversight activities on specific aspects of the law
 - Ensuring that new legislation in the legislative process is gender mainstreamed, in line with the provision from the national law on gender equality
 - Our country has no national law gender equality, equality of sexes, equal opportunities, or the equality of women and men
- 10.** How often does the formal specialized body work with representatives from different sectors? Multiple choice grid - five options, from Very often to Rarely

ANNEXES

- Domestic women rights NGOs and other civil society organizations working on gender equality
 - Gender equality experts in academia
 - International organizations working on gender equality advancement
 - Governmental bodies for the advancement of gender equality
 - Representatives of local self-government working on gender equality
- 11.** What are five major results or achievements made by the formal specialized body in regards to advancing gender equality in the last five years? Please provide a short narrative response on results where the body had a direct role.
- 12.** To what extent do the following represent a challenge to the impact of the formal specialized body? (Multiple choice grid - five options, from significantly to not at all)
- Divisions along party lines
 - Inadequate human resources to support the work
 - Meetings cancelled due to a lack of a quorum
 - Inadequate focus given to gender equality in the body's work because of the dominance of other policy areas
 - Lack of expertise on gender mainstreaming in lawmaking and parliamentary oversight in parliament
 - Lack of political will to support gender equality within parliament
 - Lack of political will to support gender equality within government
 - No explicit role in cases of legislation that is not gender targeted
 - Not given enough oversight power
 - Other challenges, please elaborate:
- 13.** On a scale from 1-10, how well is the formal specialized body able to fulfill its mandate for enhancing gender equality? (1-not at all, 10-fully meeting its mandate)
- 14.** Do you think it would be more effective to have a formal specialized body solely dedicated to gender equality? Please elaborate your response.
- 15.** What are ways to improve the impact of the formal specialized body related to its gender equality mandate in future? Please name up to three solutions you have identified.

QUESTIONS, if OPTION 3 is selected:

- 1.** Why has no formal specialized body dedicated to gender equality or including gender equality in its mandate been created in parliament? Please select all that apply.
- Gender equality and gender mainstreaming are included in the mandate of all parliamentary bodies and there is no need for dedicated formal specialized body
 - Lack of political will to address gender equality issues
 - Lack of cross-party support for setting up a formal specialized body
 - Other, please elaborate:
- 2.** Are there currently plans to establish a formal specialized body dedicated to gender equality or including gender equality in its mandate? Please select one response only.
- Yes, we do plan to establish a formal specialized body exclusively mandated for gender equality.

ANNEXES

- Yes, we do plan to establish a formal specialized body, which will deal with gender equality among other topics.
 - Yes, we do plan to extend the mandate of an existing formal specialized body so it includes a gender equality mandate.
 - No, there are no such plans.
- 3.** In the absence of a formal specialized parliamentary body, through which structures are gender equality issues addressed? Please select all that apply.
- Through the work of another parliamentary body, please name:
 - Through the work of all parliamentary bodies.
 - Only through certain government bodies, please name:

SECTION 2:

Informal Specialized Parliamentary Bodies for Gender Equality

In this introduction, we are collecting some basic data on the parliament and the person responding to our questionnaire. Your responses to all the questions in this questionnaire are very important to us and we kindly ask you not leaving any questions unanswered.

1. Country*: (drop down menu for all 56 countries)
2. Name of parliament and parliamentary chamber (if the parliament is bicameral)*:
3. Name of questionnaire respondent*:
4. Position of questionnaire respondent*:
5. Contact e-mail of questionnaire respondent*:

Informal specialized parliamentary bodies for gender equality are bodies set up by the parliament through an informal process, aiming at bringing together either women MPs or women and MPs working on a common gender equality agenda. Informal bodies can be set up on a permanent basis or for a certain advocacy goal, in which case they can be re-established after parliamentary elections in the same or similar format. In the majority of cases, informal bodies have no formal recognition in Rules of Procedure or Standing Orders and play no formal role in the lawmaking process. Informal bodies can be caucuses, unions, or networks of women MPs, representing a single party or bringing together women from several parties. They can also take the form of thematic bodies, such as feminist MP groups that bring together women and/or men MPs.

Please choose one of the two below options in this section and fill the following questions.

- Option 1: Our parliament has an informal specialized body that is solely dedicated to a broad or narrow set of issues related to gender equality.**
- Option 2: Our parliament has no informal specialized body that has gender equality included in its mandate.**

In case you have multiple informal specialized bodies for gender equality (Option 1), we would kindly ask you to provide multiple responses to this section, one for each informal specialized body.

QUESTIONS, if OPTION 1 is selected:

1. What is the name of the informal specialized body? Please provide a short answer.
2. What type of informal specialized body is it? Please select one option.
 - A cross-party women MP's caucus
 - A single-party women MP's caucus
 - A cross-party feminist MP's group, bringing together women and/or men MPs working on a broad gender equality agenda
 - A thematic cross-party MP's group, bringing together women and/or men MPs working on a more narrow gender equality agenda
 - Other type of informal body, please name it:
3. How many members does the informal specialized body have?
4. What is the composition of the informal specialized body?
 - % of women
 - % of men
5. How is the leadership of the body decided? Please select one option.
 - Leadership positions are elected by the group
 - There is a leadership team instead of one person being in charge
 - Leadership positions are rotated for the purpose of fairness
6. When was the informal specialized body introduced for the first time as a parliamentary body? Please select one option.
 - 1989 or earlier
 - 1990-1999
 - 2000-2009
 - 2010-2019
 - 2020-2023
7. What resources does parliament provide to the informal specialized body? Please select all that apply.
 - Full time staff
 - Funding for activities
 - Space for activities
 - Other, please elaborate:
 - No resources are provided
8. The informal specialized body has clear rules of functioning set out in its own Rules of Procedure or a similar document. (Yes/No)
9. The informal specialized body has a clear work plan on annual or multiannual basis. (Yes/No)
10. If the body has a work plan, what are three priority areas for future activities? Please provide a short narrative response.
11. Activities and advocacy are primarily focused on
 - Advancing gender equality and gender-balanced representation in parliament
 - Advancing gender equality in society
 - Both above points equally
12. What are five major results or achievements made by the informal specialized body in regards to advancing gender equality in the last five years? Please provide a short narrative response on results where the body had a direct role.

ANNEXES

- 13.** How often does the informal specialized body work with representatives from different sectors? Multiple choice grid - five options, from Very often to Rarely
- Domestic women rights NGOs and other civil society organizations working on gender equality
 - Gender equality experts in academia
 - International organizations working on gender equality advancement
 - Governmental bodies for the advancement of gender equality
 - Representatives of local self-government working on gender equality
- 14.** To what extent do the following represent a challenge to the impact of the informal specialized body? (Multiple choice grid - five options, from significantly to not at all)
- Divisions along party lines reflected in the body's composition and work
 - Inadequate human resources to support the work
 - Meetings cancelled due to a lack of a quorum
 - Lack of expertise on gender mainstreaming and gender equality advancement
 - Lack of political will to support gender equality within parliament
 - Lack of political will to support gender equality within government
 - Other, please name:
- 15.** On a scale from 1-10, how well is the informal specialized body able to fulfill its mandate for enhancing gender equality? (1-not at all, 10-fully meeting its mandate)
- 16.** What are ways to improve the impact of the informal specialized body related to its gender equality mandate in future? Please name up to three solutions you have identified.

QUESTIONS, if OPTION 2 is selected:

- 1.** Has there ever been a movement to create an informal specialized body in parliament?
(Yes/ No)
- 2.** If so, why did the movement fail? Please provide a short narrative response.
- 3.** What are the factors working against the establishment of such a body? Please select all that apply.
 - Not enough women in parliament
 - Culturally embedded gender-based stereotypes
 - Lack of political will
 - Lack of cross-party support
 - Gender issues are covered sufficiently elsewhere
 - It is not viewed as necessary for enhancing gender equality

Thank you for taking the time to fill out our survey!

ANNEXE 2: List of parliamentary bodies for gender equality in national parliaments of the OSCE region

(Based on survey responses and desk research)

| Participating State (Chamber) | Formal body | Informal body |
|--|--|--|
| Albania | | Alliance of Women MPs |
| Andorra | Committee for Social Affairs and Equality | |
| Armenia | | |
| Austria: National Council | Equal Treatment Committee | |
| Austria: Federal Council | Equal Treatment Committee | |
| Azerbaijan | Committee for Family, Women's and Children's Affairs | |
| Belarus: House of Representatives | Standing Committee on Health, Physical Culture, Family and Youth Policy | |
| Belarus: Council of the Republic* | | |
| Belgium: House of Representatives | Advisory Committee on Social Emancipation | |
| Belgium: Senate | Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men | |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina: House of Representatives | Committee on Gender Equality | |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina: House of Peoples | | |
| Bulgaria | | |
| Canada: House of Commons | Standing Committee on the Status of Women | All-Party Parliamentary Women's Caucus |
| Canada: Senate | | All-Party Parliamentary Women's Caucus |
| Croatia | Gender Equality Committee | |
| Cyprus | Standing Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men | |
| Czech Republic: Chamber of Deputies | Permanent Commission for Family and Equal Opportunities | |

ANNEXES

| Participating State (Chamber) | Formal body | Informal body |
|--|---|---|
| Czech Republic: Senate | | |
| Denmark | Gender Equality Committee | |
| Estonia* | | <i>Riigikogu</i> Women's Association |
| Finland | Employment and Equality Committee | Council for Gender Equality Network of Women Members of the Finnish Parliament |
| France: National Assembly** | Delegation for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities Between Men and Women | |
| France: Senate** | Delegation for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities Between Men and Women | |
| Georgia | Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council | |
| Germany: <i>Bundestag</i> | Committee on Family, Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth | |
| Germany: <i>Bundesrat</i> | Committee on Women and Youth | |
| Greece | Special Permanent Committee on Equality, Youth and Human Rights | |
| Hungary* | Committee on Justice | |
| Iceland | Judicial Affairs and Education Committee | |
| Ireland: <i>Dáil Éireann</i> | Joint Committee on Children, Disability, Equality and Integration | Irish Women's Parliamentary Caucus |
| Ireland: <i>Seanad Éireann</i> * | Joint Committee on Children, Disability, Equality and Integration | Irish Women's Parliamentary Caucus |
| Italy: Chamber of Deputies* | Commission of Inquiry on Femicide and all Forms of Gender-Based Violence | Intergroup for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities |
| Italy: Senate* | Commission of Inquiry on Femicide and all Forms of Gender-Based Violence | Intergroup for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities |
| Kazakhstan: House of Representatives** | Committee on Social and Cultural Development | |
| Kazakhstan: Senate | | |

ANNEXES

| Participating State (Chamber) | Formal body | Informal body |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Kyrgyzstan ⁹¹ | Committee on Social Policy Committee on Constitutional Lawmaking | Council for Women's Rights, Children's Rights and Gender Equality Parliamentary Forum for Women |
| Latvia | Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee | Group for Parliamentary Advocacy of Women's Interests |
| Liechtenstein | | |
| Lithuania | Committee on Human Rights | Temporary Women's Group |
| Luxembourg | Committee on Home Affairs and Gender Equality | |
| Malta | | |
| Moldova | Commission on Human Rights and Interethnic Relations Commission on Social Protection, Health, and Family | Platform of Women MPs |
| Monaco | Committee on Family Rights and Equality | |
| Mongolia* | Standing Committee on Social Policy | Women's Caucus |
| Montenegro | Gender Equality Committee | Women's MP Group |
| Netherlands: <i>Tweede Kamer</i> | | |
| Netherlands: Senate | | |
| North Macedonia | Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men | Women Parliamentarian's Club |
| Norway** | Standing Committee on Family and Cultural Affairs | |
| Poland: <i>Sejm</i> | Committee for Social Policy and Family | Parliamentary Grouping for Women's Rights |
| Poland: Senate | | Parliamentary Grouping for Women's Rights |
| Portugal | Sub-committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination | |
| Romania: Chamber of Deputies** | Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men | |
| Romania: Senate | Committee for Human Rights, Equal Opportunities, Cults and Minorities | |
| Russian Federation: State Duma* | Committee on Family, Fatherhood, Motherhood and Children | Club of Women Parliamentarians |

ANNEXES

| Participating State (Chamber) | Formal body | Informal body |
|--|---|--|
| Russian Federation: Council of the Federation* | Committee on Social Policy | Club of Women Parliamentarians |
| San Marino | | |
| Serbia | Committee on Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality | Women's Parliamentary Network |
| Slovakia | Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities Committee | |
| Slovenia: National Assembly | Commission for Petitions, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities | Women Parliamentarian's Club |
| Slovenia: National Council* | Commission of the National Council for Social Welfare, Labour, Health Care and the Disabled | |
| Spain: Congress of Deputies ^{92**} | Equality Commission | |
| Spain: Senate* | Equality Commission | |
| Sweden | | Working Group on Gender Equality |
| Switzerland: National Council | Science, Education, and Culture Committee | Cross- Party Group of Women Parliamentarians Cross-Party Group for Sexual Health and Rights |
| Switzerland: Council of States* | Science, Education and Culture Committee | Cross- Party Group of Women Parliamentarians Cross-Party Group for Sexual Health and Rights |
| Tajikistan: <i>Majlisi namoyangadon*</i> | Committee on Social Affairs, Family, and Health | Alliance of Women Parliamentarians |
| Tajikistan: <i>Majlisi Milli*</i> | Committee on Social Issues, Health, Science, Culture, Women, and Youth | Alliance of Women Parliamentarians |
| Türkiye | Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men | |
| Turkmenistan** | | |
| Ukraine* | Committee on Human Rights, Occupation and Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, National Minorities and International Relations | Equal Opportunities Caucus |

ANNEXES

| Participating State (Chamber) | Formal body | Informal body |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| | Sub-committee on Ukraine's Compliance with International Commitments on Human Rights and Gender Policy | |
| United Kingdom: House of Commons** | Women and Equalities Select Committee | APPG on Women in Parliament APPG on State Pension Inequality for Women APPG on Women in Enterprise APPG on Women and Work APPG on Women, Peace and Security APPG on Women in Contact with the Justice System APPG on Women in Defence APPG on Women in Transport APPG on UN Women APPG on Sexual and Reproductive Health in the UK APPG on White Ribbon UK APPG on Women's Health APPG on Birth Trauma APPG on Black Maternal Health APPG on Get Refusal APPG on Muslim Women APPG on Ovarian Cancer APPG on Women's Football APPG on Domestic Violence and Abuse |
| United Kingdom: House of Lords* | | APPG on Women in Parliament APPG on State Pension Inequality for Women APPG on Women in Enterprise APPG on Women and Work APPG on Women, Peace and Security APPG on Women in Contact with the Justice System APPG on Women in Defence APPG on Women in Transport APPG on UN Women APPG on Sexual and Reproductive Health in the UK APPG on White Ribbon UK APPG on Women's Health APPG on Birth Trauma |

ANNEXES

| Participating State (Chamber) | Formal body | Informal body |
|---|--|--|
| | | APPG on Black Maternal Health APPG on Get Refusal APPG on Muslim Women APPG on Ovarian Cancer APPG on Women’s Football APPG on Domestic Violence and Abuse |
| United States: House of Representatives ⁹³ | | Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues House Endometriosis Caucus Maternity Care Caucus Black Maternal Health Caucus Pro-Choice Caucus Pro-Life Caucus Women in STEM Caucus Women, Peace, and Security Caucus Black Women and Girls Caucus Servicewomen and Women Veteran’s Caucus |
| United States: Senate | | Congressional Caucus for Women’s Issues House Endometriosis Caucus Maternity Care Caucus Black Maternal Health Caucus Pro-Choice Caucus Pro-Life Caucus Women in STEM Caucus Women, Peace, and Security Caucus Black Women and Girls Caucus Servicewomen and Women Veteran’s Caucus |
| Uzbekistan: Legislative Chamber* | | |
| Uzbekistan: Senate* | Committee on Women and Gender Equality | |

* Chamber did not respond to the survey

** Chamber did not respond to Section 2 (on informal bodies)

ODIHR's Gender-responsive Governance Toolkit and other gender and politics publications

The **Gender-responsive Governance Toolkit** is a series of targeted tools, each with a distinct practical and thematic focus. They introduce or advance institutional and policy solutions and practices for gender-responsive governance. The toolkit is aimed at participating States' parliaments, political parties, other democratic institutions and civil society organizations, and complements ODIHR's existing gender-equality publications. The following tools have been released so far:

Tool 1: Advancing gender equality in politics —
National assessments and action plans

Tool 2: Transforming political parties from within —
Gender audits and action plans

Tool 3: Parliamentary bodies for gender equality —
Overview and recommendations

List of ODIHR resources on gender equality

- Institutional Mechanisms as Critical Actors for Gender Equality: A Review from the OSCE Region, 2023
- Addressing Violence against Women in Politics in the OSCE Region: Toolkit, 2022
- Participatory Gender Audits of Parliaments: A Step-by-Step Guidance Document, 2022
- Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region, 2021
- Making Laws Work for Women and Men: A Practical Guide to Gender-Sensitive Legislation, 2017
- Compendium of Good Practices for Advancing Women's Political Participation in the OSCE Region, 2016
- Handbook on Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties, 2014
- Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan, 2011

Endnotes*

- 1 Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, OSCE, 3 October 1991, para. 40.
- 2 See the list of OSCE Ministerial Council decisions focused on [gender equality](#).
- 3 Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/04, “2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality”, OSCE, Sofia, 7 December 2004, para. 44 (b).
- 4 Ministerial Council Decision No. 7/09, “Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life”, OSCE, Athens, 4 December 2009, paras. 1 and 3.
- 5 OSCE, MC Decision No. 14/04, footnote 2, referenced from Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-Second Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/52/3/Rev.1), chapter IV, para. 4.
- 6 OSCE, MC Decision No. 7/09, para 5.
- 7 OSCE, MC Decision No. 14/04, para 44 (g).
- 8 OSCE, MC Decision No. 14/04.
- 9 See [a compilation](#) of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s resolutions related to gender equality, 1992-2024.
- 10 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, United Nations, 15 September 1995, para. 204(d).
- 11 See [Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: A Global Review of Good Practice](#), IPU, 2011; [Kigali Declaration](#), IPU, 2022; [Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines](#), CPA, 2020; and [Gender Equality in the European Parliament and in national parliaments in the European Union: 2023 state of play](#), EIGE, 2024.
- 12 [Realizing Gender Equality in Parliaments: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 6 December 2021.

* All links last accessed on 5 December 2024.

ENDNOTES

- 13 Sarah Childs & Sonia Palmieri, “Gender Sensitive Parliaments: Feminizing Formal Political Institutions”, in Marian Sawer, Lee Ann Banaszak, Jacqui True and Johanna Kantola (editors), *Handbook of Feminist Governance*, (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2023).
- 14 See *Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region*, OSCE/ODIHR, 30 September 2013; *Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments*, IPU, 2017, Action Area 3; *One Size Does Not Fit All: Lessons Learned from Legislative Gender Commissions and Caucuses*, NDI and International IDEA, 2010; OECD *Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality 2023*, OECD, 25 July 2023, chapter 4B; Marian Sawer, *Gender mainstreaming and the substantive representation of women: where do parliamentary bodies fit?*, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, Vol. 8.3, 21 April 2020; and Marian Sawer, “Specialised parliamentary bodies”, in Marian Sawer, Lee Ann Banaszak, Jacqui True and Johanna Kantola (editors), *Handbook of Feminist Governance*, (Edward Elgar Publishing: 2023).
- 15 IPU data on bodies for gender equality and women’s caucuses is available on the [IPU Parline database](#).
- 16 EIGE’s 2021 data on institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming is available on their [website](#). Data was also provided by EIGE during the review of this publication.
- 17 Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.
- 18 France (National Assembly), France (Senate), Norway, Romania (Chamber of Deputies), Spain (Congress of Deputies), Turkmenistan and United Kingdom (House of Commons).
- 19 See Sawer, *Specialised parliamentary bodies*, *op. cit*, note 14; NDI and International IDEA, *One Size Does Not Fit All*; OECD, *Toolkit*; Melinda J. Adams, John A. Scherpereel, & Kristen N. Wylie, *The adoption of women’s legislative caucuses worldwide*, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 21.2, 24 January 2019; Karen Celis, Sarah Childs, & Jennifer Curtin, *Specialised Parliamentary Bodies and the Quality of Women’s Substantive Representation: A Comparative Analysis of Belgium, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand*, *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 69.4, 9 March 2016; and Lenita Freidenvall and Josefina Erikson, *The speaker’s gender equality group in the Swedish parliament — a toothless tiger?*, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, Vol. 8.3, 20 April 2020.
- 20 IPU, *Plan of Action*, 2017. Further information on how the IPU conceptualizes parliamentary bodies for gender equality can be found in the [clarifying provisions](#) in the questionnaires used by the IPU to collect data on such bodies.
- 21 Celis, Childs and Curtin, *Specialised Parliamentary Bodies*.
- 22 ODIHR, *Comparative Study*, p. 11.
- 23 See Adams, Scherpereel, & Wylie, *The adoption of women’s legislative caucuses worldwide*.
- 24 See Sawer, *Specialised parliamentary bodies*, *op. cit*, note 14.
- 25 See [Gen+ParlNet: Gender-Focused Parliamentary Institutions Research Network](#), Kings College London website.
- 26 For more on the concept of sustainability in parliamentary gender equality work,

ENDNOTES

- see Josefina Erikson and Lenita Freidenvall, [Exploring Sustainability in Parliamentary Gender Equality Work. Insights from the Swedish Riksdag](#), *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, Vol. 32, Issue 1, 27 February 2024.
- 27 On the Working Group on Gender Equality, see Freidenvall and Erikson, [The speaker's gender equality group in the Swedish parliament](#).
- 28 Sawyer, Specialised parliamentary bodies, *op. cit.*, note 14; see also [Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws](#), OSCE/ODIHR, 16 January 2024, paras. 216-227.
- 29 For the rules governing APPGs, see the [Guide to the Rules on All-Party Parliamentary Groups](#), Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, last updated 12 September 2023, Appendix 4.
- 30 For the full list of current active APPGs, their areas of work, and their secretariats, see the [Register of All-Party Parliamentary Groups](#), Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, 24 January 2024.
- 31 Sub-committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination (Portugal) and Sub-committee on Ukraine's Compliance with International Commitments on Human Rights and Gender Policy (Ukraine).
- 32 Delegation for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities between Men and Women (France, Senate and National Assembly) and Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council (Georgia).
- 33 Advisory Committee for Social Emancipation (Belgium, House of Representatives) and Advisory Committee for Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men (Belgium, Senate).
- 34 Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Femicide and all forms of Gender-Based Violence (Italy, Chamber of Deputies and Senate).
- 35 Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities Committee (Slovakia).
- 36 [Kadin erkek firsat eşitliği komisyonu kanunu](#) (Law No.5480 on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women), Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, 25 February 2009, Art. 3, (in Turkish).
- 37 See [Türkiye büyük millet meclisi içtüzüğü](#) (Rules of Procedure of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye), Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, 1973.
- 38 See [Rules of Procedure of the Parliament](#), Parliament of Georgia, 2024, Art. 76.
- 39 [Legge n.12 Istituzione de una Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sul femminicidio, nonche' su ogni forma de violenza di genere](#) (Law No.12 on the Institution of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Femicide and all Forms of Gender-Based Violence), Parliament of Italy, 18 February 2023, (in Italian, informal translation).
- 40 Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, [Law No. 5480](#), 2009.
- 41 See: Parliament of Italy, [Law no.12](#), 2023; and Parliament of Georgia, [Rules of Procedure](#), 2024.
- 42 Belgium, France and Italy all have one in each chamber.
- 43 Austria, Germany, the Russian Federation, Spain and Tajikistan have one body in each chamber. Kyrgyzstan and Moldova have two bodies in their unicameral parliaments.
- 44 Fifteen chambers responded to this section.
- 45 See also ODIHR, [Guidelines on Democratic Lawmaking for Better Laws](#), p. 127.

ENDNOTES

- 46 Responses of 42 formal bodies. No response was received to the survey from 13 bodies also included in the data: Italy, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Slovenia (National Council), Spain, Tajikistan and Ukraine. A further five did not respond to this section of the survey, including: Equal Treatment Committee (both chambers of the Austrian parliament), the Committee on Women and Youth (*Bundesrat*, Germany), the Standing Committee of Family and Cultural Affairs (Norway) and the Committee for Social Policy and Family (*Sejm*, Poland).
- 47 As one of their achievements, the Committee mentioned that they conducted ex-post analysis of the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development, the Law on Tourism and Hospitality, the Law on Inheritance and the Law on Salaries of Public Sector Employees.
- 48 See more information on the founding of the Committee on the Women and Equalities Committee – Role and strategy [webpage](#).
- 49 [Proposta d'acord per promoure la igualtat de gènere des del Consell General](#) (Agreement to Promote Gender Equality in the General Council), General Council of Andorra, 7 January 2025 (in Andorran Catalan).
- 50 See [Llibre Blanc de la Igualtat](#) (White Paper on Equality), General Council of Andorra and the Government of Andorra, 2018 (in Andorran Catalan).
- 51 [Reglament del Consell General](#) (Rules of Procedure of the General Council), the General Council of Andorra, Art. 47 (in Andorran Catalan).
- 52 For more on the Institute's mandate, see: [Llei 6/2022, del 31 de març, per a l'aplicació efectiva del dret a la igualtat de tracte i d'oportunitats i a la no-discriminació entre dones i homes](#) (Law 6/22 of 31 March 2022, For the Effective Application of the Law on Equal Treatment and Opportunities and Non-Discrimination between Women and Men), General Council of Andorra, March 2022 (in Andorran Catalan). Also, for more on institutional mechanisms for gender equality, see: [Institutional Mechanisms as Critical Actors for Gender Equality, A Review from the OSCE Region](#), OSCE/ ODIHR, 16 November 2023.
- 53 Interview with Committee Chair, Noemí Amador Perez, conducted online in March 2024.
- 54 IPU, [Plan of Action](#), 2017.
- 55 If a body responded with “very significant”, “significant”, or “somewhat”, then it was deemed that the body considered it a challenge. Additionally, 10 of the survey respondents did not provide any response for this section on challenges, so data analysis was done on the basis of 33 bodies (of the 43 responding bodies).
- 56 These three chambers were: the House of Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina (19.0% women MPs), the Chamber of Deputies of Romania (19.2%) and the Senate of Uzbekistan (24.4%). Data was sourced from the IPU [Parline database](#).
- 57 Data was not available on two bodies: the Committee on Social Affairs, Family and Health (*Majlisi namoyangadon*, Tajikistan) and the Sub-committee on Ukraine's compliance with International Commitments on Human Rights and Gender Policy (Ukraine).
- 58 These two chambers were the Parliament of Finland (46.0% women MPs) and

ENDNOTES

- the Senate of Ireland (40.0%). Data was sourced from the IPU [Parline database](#).
- 59 Other data on parliamentary bodies for gender equality, such as the IPU, list the Commission on Cross-cutting issues as the formal body for gender equality in the Belgian Senate, as it has full legislative power. However, the survey response provided by the chamber listed the Advisory Committee for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men.
- 60 [The Belgian Constitution](#), Belgian House of Representatives, 30 March 2021, Art. 77.
- 61 [Règlement du Sénat De Belgique](#) (Rules of Procedure of the Belgian Senate), Senate of Belgium, 2022, Art. 20 (in French).
- 62 *Ibid.*, Art. 22.1, (in French, unofficial translation): “The President of the Senate may decide ex officio, if he deems appropriate, or at the request of the Chairman of one of the committees, to request a reasoned opinion on a draft or proposed law from a different committee than the one to which it was originally referred.”
- 63 *Ibid.*, Art. 79.
- 64 Interview with the Committee secretaries, Virginie Randaxhe and Freia Van Hee, conducted online in March 2024.
- 65 See more detailed information about the inquiry and the consultations [here](#) (in French).
- 66 See more detailed information about the inquiry [here](#) (in French).
- 67 Adams, Scherpereel, & Wylie, [The adoption of women’s legislative caucuses worldwide](#).
- 68 See [Guidelines for Women’s Caucuses](#), IPU, 2013 for extensive guidance on women’s caucuses, including their importance, diversity and key take-aways for their successful implementation.
- 69 *Ibid.*; also, Celis, Childs and Curtain, [Specialized Parliamentary Bodies](#); and Marian Sawyer, [Beyond Numbers: The Role of Specialized Parliamentary Bodies Promoting Gender Equality](#), *Australasian Parliamentary Review*, 30(1), 1 March 2015, pp. 105-122.
- 70 Information on the Working Group for this case study is drawn from Erikson and Freidenvall, [Exploring Sustainability in Parliamentary Gender Equality Work](#).
- 71 See [Women, Peace, and Security Caucus](#) website for more details on the body’s membership and focus.
- 72 [Congressional Member Organizations \(CMOs\) and Informal Member Groups: Their Purpose and Activities, History, and Formation](#), Congressional Research Service, 21 March 2023.
- 73 See [Our Secure Future](#) Launches the Women, Peace and Security Congressional Caucus, Our Secure Future, 20 March 2020, video.
- 74 [Action programme for gender equality in the Riksdag for the electoral period 2022-2026](#), Swedish *Riksdag*, 2022.
- 75 The upper house of the Irish parliament.
- 76 Adams, Scherpereel, & Wylie, [The adoption of women’s legislative caucuses worldwide](#).
- 77 Women’s caucuses in some parliamentary systems also accept male members. The survey data revealed that there are currently no women’s caucuses with male members in the OSCE region, hence the focus here on cross-party gender-focused bodies.

ENDNOTES

- 78 This body was included in the survey response from Finland. However, it should be noted that formally it exists under a Ministry rather than Parliament, despite meeting several of the other definitional criteria for parliamentary bodies for gender equality.
- 79 This body is named after a CSO working to promote the needs of women in Jewish religious marriages.
- 80 *Register of All-Party Parliamentary Groups*, January 2024, p. 1266.
- 81 See TANE: *Tasa-arvoasiain neuvotelukunta* (Finland's Council for Gender Equality)'s website.
- 82 See *Совет по правам женщин, детей и гендерному равенству при Торага Жогорку Кенеша Кыргызской Республики* (Council on Women's Rights, Children's Rights, and Gender Equality under the *Torag* of the *Jogorku Kenesh* of the Kyrgyz Republic), Civil Platform, 3 February 2023.
- 83 Interview with council members, Ainura Usupbekova and Nurzhan Bardinova, conducted online in March 2024.
- 84 *Advancing Gender Equality in the Jogorku Kenesh: Report on the Participatory Gender Assessment of the Parliament*, ODIHR, May 2023.
- 85 *Nasce alla camera intergruppo su questioni di genere, composto da 80 deputate di tutti i gruppi. Boldrini: spetta a noi nelle istituzioni dare voce e diritti a milioni di donne* (The Chamber of Deputies Intergroup for Women's Rights has been created; composed of deputies from all groups. Boldrini: It is up to us in the institutions to give voice and rights to millions of women.), Chamber of Deputies of Italy, Press Release, 28 October 2015.
- 86 See *Press Releases* issued by the Democratic Party (Partito Democratico) on the Intergroup's work in 2023 and 2024.
- 87 Based on the 28 countries without informal bodies who answered this question.
- 88 NDI and International IDEA, *One Size Does Not Fit All*.
- 89 *Sporazum o osnivanju ženskog kluba u skupštini crne gore* (Memorandum on the Establishment of a Women's Group in the Parliament of Montenegro), Parliament of Montenegro, 2021 (in Montenegrin).
- 90 This case study was built from information provided during an interview with Drita Llolla, the current co-chair of the Women MP's Group.
- 91 Kyrgyzstan responded to Section 2 for the Council for Women's Rights, Children's Rights and Gender Equality. The Parliamentary Forum for Women was added from desk research.
- 92 The Congress of Deputies completed Section 1 before the Equality Commission was formed following the 2023 parliamentary elections. Desk research was used here with the consent of the respondent.
- 93 The House of Representatives and Senate included the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues. Other caucuses were added from desk research.

