

ODIHR's gender & politics webinar series

Transforming political parties from within – Gender audits and gender action plans



Tuesday, 3 December 2024, 14:00-15:15 CET, Zoom webinar

In 2025, OSCE participating States, together with the rest of the globe, will be marking the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, a central set of international norms on women's rights and gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action sets women's full and equal participation in politics and decision-making as one of twelve priority areas. Reflecting on the last 30 years, the OSCE space has seen a far-reaching development. To name a few of the major achievements: states have tripled the average number of female parliamentarians (31.5%), they adopted ground-breaking gender equality laws, and set up stronger government ministries, agencies and councils that lead on gender equality policy. 26 OSCE participating States also introduced legislative gender quotas, aiming at decreasing male over-representation and targeting gender-balanced politics in the long run. Nevertheless, the OSCE region is in the last year also facing a stagnation in further progress, next to unseen mobilisation against gender equality and gender equality backsliding and a renewed commitment by democratic institutions is needed, including by political parties.

Political parties are often called the 'gatekeepers' of democracy, and, in particular, of women's political participation, because of their fundamental and unique role in the democratic process. They represent the views and perspectives of citizens — men and women — and, once elected, should incorporate these into political decision-making, public policy and legislation. Political parties are the pipeline through which women and men candidates emerge as elected representatives and decision-makers. This is why political parties have such a crucial role to play in ensuring that a country's governance framework is gender-responsive and follows good practice. Recognizing the important role of political parties, the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 7/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life specifically encourages political parties to promote the equal participation of women and men, as a means to achieve gender balance in elected office at all levels of decision-making. This mirrors the global recognition of the role of political parties in advancing gender equality in politics, among others, in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

The 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality among other things, specifically tasks ODIHR to "assist participating States in promoting women's participation in political and public life". As part of its mandate to strengthen and promote the equal and meaningful participation of women and men in political life and to advance gender equality in democratic institutions, ODIHR, among other things, provides direct and targeted support to parliamentary political parties. ODIHR assists political parties in assessing their gender equality through 'gender audits'. In the last decade, ODIHR has supported more than 40 political parties in 10 OSCE participating States in conducting gender audits and developing party-specific gender equality action plans and has published numerous guides, manuals and toolkits on gender equality. Lessons from this process were transformed into our latest publication: [Transforming political parties from within — Gender audits and action plans](#), as part of our [Gender-responsive Governance Toolkit](#).

Gender audits are one of many tools that can help participating States apply their commitments on gender mainstreaming in practice. Gender audits, as tools for institutional transformation, assess and evaluate how well gender equality is institutionalized within an organization, including in their policies, programmes, projects, structures, proceedings and budgets. The goal of gender audits is to support change processes, helping institutions to move away from directly or indirectly discriminatory practices and rules, and targeting solutions that will create a framework and environment that delivers substantive gender equality. At this webinar, we will present:

- Existing good practices on how political parties are promoting women's political participation and gender equality in politics, and
- [ODIHR's revised methodology on gender audits of political parties](#).

The webinar will issue a call for political parties in the OSCE participating States to take voluntary measures in advancing women's political participation and gender equality in politics, but also to apply our methodology in form of self-assessments or externally facilitated gender audits.

The following issues will be discussed:

- How do we understand gender equality in political parties?
- What are some effective strategies applied by political parties to promote gender balance & parity, gender-responsive policies and gender-sensitive organizational cultures?
- How can gender audits support a political party to institutionalise gender equality?

AGENDA

Moderator & methodology presentation

Saša Gavrić, ODIHR's Adviser on Gender Issues

Why internal and voluntary reforms within political parties' matter?

- Hedy Fry, OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues
- Prof. Meryl Kenny, Professor of Gender and Politics, University of Edinburgh
- Susan Markham, NDI Director for Gender, Women and Democracy

Lessons learned with gender audits of political parties

- Valentina Minić, MP and President of the Women's Forum of the Democrats, Montenegro
- Adnan Kadribašić, International Gender Audits Expert

Closing remarks

Yulia Netesova, ODIHR's Chief of Democratic Governance and Gender Unit

Please register your participation [HERE](#) to receive the Zoom Webinar access link.

Please note that the webinar will be in English language only.

Learn more on how ODIHR can support democratic institutions, including parliaments and political parties, on our web page [Gender equality | OSCE/ODIHR](#)