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Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

ODIHR and Gender Equality

"…Full and true equality between men and women is a fundamental aspect of a just and democratic society."
(Moscow Document, 1991)

What is Gender Equality?

Gender equality means equal rights and opportunities for women and men in laws and policies, and equal access to resources and services within families, communities and society. It refers to women and men being able to access and participate in all spheres of life on an equal footing, including in democratic governance, decision-making and the security sector. Gender equality requires that women and men receive adequate and equitable protection of their human rights, including the right to live free of violence in a safe and supportive home and community.

Why is the OSCE involved?

While significant advances have been made in promoting gender equality in the OSCE region, inequalities persist in both the private and public spheres, based often on stereotypes and conventions perpetuated at the state level and in society at large.

The OSCE Office for Democractic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has a mandate to assist OSCE participating States in promoting women's political participation, to monitor and report on women's participation in electoral processes, and to provide expertise and support to strengthen democratic institutions for advancing gender equality, as described in the *OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality*, adopted in 2004 in Sofia.

As mandated by Ministerial Council decisions from Ljubljana in 2005, ODIHR supports participating States in focusing on the role of women in matters of peace and security at all levels, as well as in preventing and combating all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls.

How does ODIHR work on Gender Equality?

ODIHR assists participating States in advancing equality between men and women in all spheres of life and at all levels. ODIHR works to promote women's participation in politics, elections and the security sector; to strengthen national mechanisms for the advancement of women; and to prevent and combat violence against women and girls.

ODIHR also advocates for the provision of equal treatment and gender-sensitive assistance to men and women victims of all forms of trafficking in human

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