

Gender mainstreaming

Action undertaken by the Council of Europe

Principles underlying the action

The Council of Europe has a crucial role to play in promoting gender equality in its member states, for example by defining common principles and standards to promote the full participation of women and men in society.

Even if women have obtained *de jure* equal rights and equal status with men in the majority of European countries, they are still discriminated against in many areas. Legislation to combat discrimination and promote equal treatment has been adopted and equality mechanisms to monitor implementation have been set up.

However, imbalances between women and men continue to exist and to influence all walks of life and it is clear that other strategies and other methods are needed to reach the goal of gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming is one of these strategies.

The concept of gender mainstreaming appeared for the first time in international texts after the United Nations Third World Conference on Women (Nairobi, 1985), in the debate on the role of women in development. The Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) called for the promotion of gender mainstreaming.

In 1998 a *Report of the Council of Europe on Gender Mainstreaming*, prepared by the CDEG

and considered since then as a fundamental text in the field, was published. It presents the conceptual framework, the methodology and good practice. It has been followed by a *Recommendation* on gender mainstreaming and a *Message to steering committees of the Council of Europe* inviting them to draw inspiration from the CDEG's report and to implement the strategy in their programmes of activities.

On the occasion of the 6th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women Men (Stockholm, 8-9 June 2006), the Ministers adopted a Resolution in which, *inter alia*, the Council of Europe and its member States were encouraged to assess the cost of the lack of gender equality and to make full use of gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data to implement the gender mainstreaming strategy, including gender budgeting in order to achieve *de facto* gender equality.

The thematic debate organised in 2009 by the Committee of Ministers on gender equality gave it the opportunity to renew its message to steering committees to integrate a gender perspective in their activities and to encourage the CDEG to continue its action in the field.

What is gender mainstreaming?

According to the definition of the 1998 report, it is: *the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages,*

by the actors normally involved in policy-making.

Gender mainstreaming cannot replace specific policies which aim to redress situations resulting from gender inequality. Specific gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming are dual and complementary strategies and must go hand in hand to reach the goal of gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming can only be developed when some prerequisites are fulfilled. The most important prerequisite, but often one of the most difficult to obtain, is the political will to implement this strategy. Furthermore, a gender equality policy must already be in place and gender-sensitive data and statistics must be available. Tools and instruments to put the strategy into practice have to be developed and the people involved have to be trained.

A good time to start mainstreaming is when a new law is being prepared or a policy is being planned or revised, for example in the field of education. The policy process is reorganised so that the people usually involved in policy-making (and not just gender equality experts) take a gender perspective into account from the very beginning of the process. Mainstreaming gets gender equality out of the isolation of specific gender equality policies and involves more and new actors in building a balanced society.

Activities

Studies and research

The Council of Europe's *Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men* (CDEG) first started working on gender mainstreaming in 1995 straight after the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women.

Framework and methodology

In 1998 a report on *Gender mainstreaming: Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practice* was published. It describes the origin of gender mainstreaming and its relation to specific gender equality policies and outlines a methodology for implementing gender mainstreaming, defines the prerequisites, techniques and

tools, and the roles to be played by the different actors involved. It also contains examples of good practices.

Gender mainstreaming in education

In 2001 policies and practices in the school system were examined with a view to devising ways and means of promoting gender mainstreaming in schools and a report on *Promot-*

ing gender mainstreaming in Schools was published in 2004. It presents the different ways for promoting this strategy through, *inter alia*, teacher training, introducing new teaching methods and learning contexts, revision of curricula and teaching materials. The report also contains examples of good practice. Following this report, *Recommendation CM/Rec (2007) 13 on gender mainstreaming in education* was prepared jointly by the CDEG and the Steering Committee for Education (CDED).

Gender budgeting

In its report on *Gender Budgeting* (2004), the Council of Europe gave the following definition of this concept:

Gender budgeting is an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It means a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.

The report aims to provide guidelines for member States either on introducing gender budgeting or when considering reforms in this field.

A *Handbook on practical implementation of gender budgeting* was published in 2009.

Awareness-raising

The Conference *Gender mainstreaming: a step into the 21st century* (Athens, September 1999), organised by the Council of Europe, examined how gender mainstreaming is implemented in specific areas. Concrete examples of mainstreaming projects/programmes at local, regional and national level were presented.

A Conference *State budgets: a key factor of real equality between women and men* has been organised for launching the *Handbook on the practical implementation of gender budgeting* (Athens, May 2009).

In 2001, the Council of Europe launched the **Informal Network on Gender Mainstreaming** aimed at creating a forum where once a year gender mainstreaming specialists meet with experts from other disciplines to discuss ways of promoting this strategy in their activities.

These meetings provide an opportunity for member states to exchange good practices and discuss ways of overcoming the obstacles to implementing the strategy. One of the aims is to provide an impetus to develop networks at national, regional and international levels.

The first meeting of this Informal Network (October 2001) examined ways of promoting gender mainstreaming and obstacles to its im-

plementation as well as the priorities for the future. The subsequent meetings focused on the promotion of gender mainstreaming in the following fields: in social policies (October 2002); at local and regional levels (September 2003); in education (October 2004); in the budgetary process ("*gender budgeting*") (September 2005); in health (September 2006); *effective tools for the implementation of the strategy of gender mainstreaming: good practices and obstacles* (September 2007); media (September 2008). The 9th meeting is devoted to Women and poverty – social protection.

Other activities

The CDEG also works together with other Council of Europe bodies and steering committees to introduce this strategy in their activities.

It participated in the elaboration of *Guidelines on user involvement in social services and integrated social services delivery* and to the drafting of a recommendation on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy in 2006 prepared by the *European Health Committee (CDSP)*. It also co-operated in the drafting of the *White book on intercultural dialogue of the Council of Europe* in 2007.

Adopted texts

Committee of Ministers

- *Recommendation No. R (98) 14* on gender mainstreaming
- *Recommendation CM/Rec (2007) 13* on gender mainstreaming in education
- *Recommendation CM/Rec (2008) 1* on the inclusion of gender differences in health policy

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

- *Recommendation 1739 (2006)* on Gender budgeting

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

- *Recommendation 148 (2004)* and *Resolution 176 (2004)* on gender mainstreaming at

local and regional level: a strategy to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions.

Update: 22 October 2009

Gender Equality Division
Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Tel. +33 (0)3 88 41 37 36
Fax +33 (0)3 88 41 27 05
dghl.equality@coe.int