



**REALIZING GENDER EQUALITY IN PARLIAMENT**  
Expert Meeting for international stakeholders and academia

# **SHORT BIOGRAPHIES AND SUMMARIES OF THE INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Online // Thursday, 31 March 2022, 9.00-12.00 CET

## PANEL I

### **Gender Sensitive Parliaments in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Commonwealth Perspective**

James Pinnell

In 2001, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) produced a Gender Sensitising Parliaments Report which identified a number of mechanisms and initiatives to improve the gender sensitivity of Commonwealth Parliaments. Key amongst these recommendations were a need for commitment and cooperation between all genders and the removal of barriers to the fullest participation of women in political life and elected office. The CPA has now reaffirmed its commitment to Gender Sensitive Parliaments through the Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines: Standards and a Checklist for Parliamentary Change. This intervention will highlight the motivations and ambitions for this project of work as well as the continued importance of ensuring gender sensitivity across institutions.

**James Pinnell** is currently the Deputy Head of Programmes – Multilateral Engagements at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). This portfolio of work includes overseeing the activities of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians network, which seeks to promote the representation of women in Commonwealth parliaments and women's full and equal participation in all political and parliamentary leadership at all levels. He holds a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Liverpool and a Master of European Law from the University of Leiden.

### **Gender equality in national parliaments across the EU and the European Parliament**

Helena Morais Maceira

EIGE has used its [Gender-sensitive parliaments tool](#) to assess the gender sensitivity of the national parliaments across the EU and the European Parliament. An [assessment](#) carried out in the context of the last European Parliament elections showed that although these elections were positive in many ways —for example, in improving women's numerical representation in the European Parliament— they demonstrated the continued challenges in enabling women to enter public life, ensuring gender parity in decision-making, and in adopting a gender perspective in policymaking. I will discuss key findings and some challenges with regard to gender sensitive parliaments in the EU.

**Helena Morais Maceira** is a Researcher on Gender Mainstreaming at EIGE. Helena has worked in a number of different projects and is currently managing EIGE's work on gender budgeting, gender-responsive public procurement, gender-responsive evaluation and on institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming. Before moving to Lithuania and joining EIGE in 2015, Helena worked for more than ten years as a gender and development expert for the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation and several international NGOs. She has also served as a consultant for UN Women.

## **Documenting and addressing sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments**

Brigitte Filion

IPU research projects on sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament are at the heart of transforming parliaments into gender-sensitive institutions. From the first mapping out of anti-harassment policies in parliaments to the parliamentary surveys that yielded data on and evidence of gender-based violence experienced by women in parliaments, much has been achieved. The IPU guidelines against sexism and gender-based violence in parliament created momentum and direction that prompted several parliaments to use this resource to develop and implement concrete measures. Over the past 5 years, more and more parliaments have taken new measures to transform themselves into more inclusive work environments aiming to be free from sexism and abuse.

**Brigitte Filion**, since 2009, has been a key staff member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Gender Partnership Programme. She pilots IPU's research on violence against women parliamentarians and female parliamentary staff and is the lead author of the ground-breaking 2016 international [study on sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians](#) and of two regional studies on the same topic: the [2021 study in parliaments in Africa](#), published with the collaboration of the African Parliamentary Union (APU), and the [2018 study in parliaments in Europe](#), published in partnership with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). She is also the editor of the [2019 IPU guidelines to address sexual harassment and violence against women in parliament](#).

## **Towards violence-free parliaments**

Rachel Weston Eschenbacher

Violence against women (VAW) parliamentarians is a human rights violation threatening women's participation globally. Violence is perpetrated to block women from power, silence them in policy formulation and limit their decision-making agency. Indicative studies suggest the problem is pervasive, with alarming levels of documented harassment and threats, including online. Yet, official data is lacking and, according to the IPU, fewer than 1/4 of parliaments have a sexual harassment policy for MPs, less than half for staff. UN Women's work with parliaments around the world reveals several lessons for adopting meaningful gender-sensitive reforms, and supporting evidence-based advocacy, prevention, and mitigation.

**Rachel Weston Eschenbacher** is the Regional Policy Specialist on Political Participation and Governance for the UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office. She previously served three terms as an elected member of the Vermont House of Representative and holds over a decade of experience in political participation and governance work globally. She holds a B.A. from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Vermont. She is currently completing a Master of Law in Constitutional and Human Rights Law from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

## PANEL II

### **How can Parliaments achieve a sustainable gender equality work?**

#### **Insights from Sweden**

Josefina Erikson

The Swedish Parliament is often described as a role model when it comes to gender equality. Already by 1995, a women's network was established and this was the starting point for a series of gender equality reforms. For instance, a child-care centre for MPs, fixed meeting hours and regular gender equality action plans. In this speak I will give a brief overview of the *Riksdag's* gender equality work and give some advice that might be useful to achieve a sustainable gender equality work in Parliaments. In particular, I will discuss the importance of three features: continuity, institutionalization and legitimacy.

**Josefina Erikson** is an associate professor in the Department of Government Uppsala University, Sweden. She has worked in a number of different research projects in the field of gender and politics and in her most recent project, she has explored the inner workings of the Swedish parliament from a gender perspective. In addition to her research, she has also worked as consultant for the Swedish parliament's gender equality group and as an expert for the Swedish Gender Equality Agency and ODIHR.

### **Transforming supranational parliamentary processes and practices: the European Parliament and its gender mainstreaming strategy**

Petra Ahrens

As one of few parliaments worldwide the European Parliament (EP) adopted in 2003 gender mainstreaming as its official internal strategy to promote gender equality. The implementation strategy is comprehensive, yet faces multi-layered challenges discussed in this intervention. Next to interrogating EP committees as core parliamentary actors in charge of policies, I engage with EP administration as well as political groups and their party politics and how the various levels impact transforming formal and informal processes and practices towards a more gender-sensitive EP. Particular attention will be paid to oppositional forces, not least from radical right parties.

**Petra Ahrens** is Academy Research Fellow at Tampere University, Finland. She focuses on gender policies and politics in the European Union and its institutions, gender equality in Germany, gender-sensitive parliaments, and transnational civil society. Alongside articles, she is the author of *Actors, Institutions, and the Making of EU Gender Equality Programs* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), with Katja Chmielewski, Sabine Lang, and Birgit Sauer of *Gender Equality in Politics - Implementing Party Quotas in Germany and Austria* (Springer 2020), and co-editor, with Lise Rolandsen Agustín, of *Gendering the European Parliament. Structures, Policies, and Practices* (Rowman & Littlefield / ECPR Press, 2019).

**Realizing Gender Equality in Parliaments:  
Re-centring Members of Parliament's staff**

Cherry Miller

This intervention draws on published work on the UK House of Commons. I argue that MPs' staff are key subjects and agents that should be attended to in discussions to bring about gender-sensitive parliaments. MPs' staff carry out key policy research, casework, administrative responsibilities, and communications. I focus on the introduction of parliamentary rules to tackle the bullying and (sexual) harassment for MPs' staff. I consider the Independent Complaints and Grievance procedure, what it achieved and didn't, and the broader changes and conditions that might be needed to bring gender-equality into fruition for this population of parliamentary actors.

**Cherry Miller** is currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Tampere University, Finland. Her research centres on gendered parliamentary work and theories and methods to make sense of gender inequality in parliaments. Her latest book published by Palgrave Macmillan: *Gendering the Everyday in the UK House of Commons: Beneath the Spectacle* (2021) took an ethnographic approach to explore the reproduction of gender 'everyday' in the UK House of Commons. Her most recent research explores the reproduction of gender in the practices of the political groups of the European Parliament, as part of the European Research Council Funded EUGenDem project.

**GSP and the role of the feminist academic critical actor:  
Instigating and initiating institutional change**

Sarah Childs

Like the original critical actor - the elected politician – today's feminist academic critical actor is not content to wait patiently for gender sensitization to occur, as if this is somehow inevitable. Instead, she engages in institutional (re)designing and (re)building to bring about a gender sensitive parliament. Reflecting on my 2015-16 secondment to the UK House of Commons, and the drafting of *The Good Parliament Report*, my presentation explores how, the feminist academic critical actor - temporarily an institutional insider of sorts - works with internal and external collaborators to exploit everyday parliamentary opportunities to transform her parliament.

**Sarah Childs** is currently Professor of Politics & Gender at Royal Holloway, University of London; she will be joining the University of Edinburgh in May 2022. Her research centres on the theory and practice of women's representation, gender and political parties, parliaments and institutional change. Her latest book *Feminist Democratic Representation* was published by Oxford University Press (with Karen Celis) in 2020. Childs is also author of *The Good Parliament Report* (2016), which followed a secondment to the UK House of Commons. She is finalizing her new book: *Designing and Building Feminist Institutions: the Making of the Good Parliament*.