



OSCEval News is the evaluation newsletter of the Office of Internal Oversight.

Its aim is to provide insights into the OSCE's work in evaluation, by sharing key evaluation findings and conclusions, as well as new developments regarding the OSCE's overall evaluation culture.

Evaluation is a management tool that contributes to decision-making, strategic planning, and organizational learning.



## Evaluation Purpose and Scope

In 2012, the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO) conducted its first review of the 2004 Action Plan, focusing on the integration of a gender perspective in the activities, projects, programmes and policies of the OSCE. The 2017 evaluation repeated this approach, and also looked at the institutional structures and processes in place to support gender mainstreaming and gender-specific programming. The work was examined across executive structures, and involved all three OSCE dimensions, the politico-military, the environmental and economic, and the human. The main purpose of this evaluation was to provide recommendations that would help the OSCE strengthen its work, produce results, and better demonstrate the organization's achievements in the future.

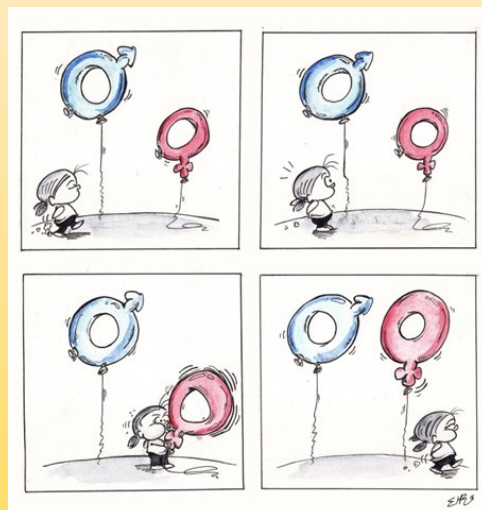
## Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

### *Institutional Structures and Processes*

The OSCE has a number of structures and resources that help advance the implementation of the 2004 Action at the level of the organization and in participating States.

These include the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, the Secretariat's Gender Section, and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. There are also gender advisors and officers who work towards advancing gender equality within their respective executive structures. Together with other OSCE officials, they are united in the OSCE-wide Gender Focal Point Network that has over 70 members from all executive structures.

\*The following cartoon was designed by Emilio Morales Ruiz from Spain, who won the first place in a Comic and Cartoon Competition on Gender Equality, organized by UN Women and others in 2015.



This very first edition of *OSCEval News* is dedicated to the

## Thematic Evaluation of the Implementation of the OSCE's 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality.

This evaluation was conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight in 2017.

### Introduction

The OSCE 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (MC.DEC/14/04), (hereinafter the 2004 Action Plan), together with a number of related Ministerial Council Decisions, constitute the main OSCE policy environment for the Organization's efforts regarding gender equality. The 2004 Action Plan highlights the values that are at the core of the OSCE's mission, and particularly stresses the right of women to fully exercise their human rights, as well as the link between gender equality and comprehensive security - the OSCE's main objective.

The 2004 Action Plan foresees gender mainstreaming as an important strategy for the work towards gender equality, and it calls for a gender perspective to be taken into account in the Organization's activities, projects, and programmes. Participating States, the Chairperson-in-Office, the Secretary General, and the Heads of Institutions and Missions, are jointly responsible for its implementation.

The evaluation identified a number of issues that need to be addressed to further strengthen the Network and to increase its effectiveness as a mechanism to support gender mainstreaming through-out the organization. For instance, there is a general demand for more frequent information exchange among Network members, including the exchange of good practices and lessons learned. The evaluation also identified the need to revisit the composition of the Network, and to ensure that all gender focal points have the required expertise, seniority and access to leadership, in order to be able to influence decision-making.

One of the achievements identified by the evaluation was the development of gender equality roadmaps and action plans by the majority of executive structures in the OSCE. Yet, a review of these documents also revealed that their quality is very uneven, with several of them having significant shortcomings that should be remedied in order to convert them into more effective strategic planning instruments. Good examples of OSCE gender action plans that could serve as role models for others also exist.

### Leadership Commitment

The evaluation found that within the OSCE, management support for gender mainstreaming has varied over time, and across executive structures, management levels, areas of work and dimensions. Consequently, more often than not progress is the result of the personal motivation and enthusiasm of a few individuals, whose commitment and determination have made a difference, rather than the consequence of an institutionalized effort.

It was also observed that misconceptions were still held by many supervisors and other staff alike that contributing to gender equality can be left to the 'gender people' (gender section, gender advisors, gender experts, gender focal points), most of them women, rather than understanding it as every staff member's responsibility.

**Importantly, the evaluation also noticed the lack of a clear narrative and shared theory of change about why gender mainstreaming is important. Many OSCE officials still have a very limited understanding (or no understanding at all) of how the integration of a gender perspective could contribute to achieving the mission and larger objectives of the organization in the area of comprehensive security.**

## Gender Mainstreaming in the Project Cycle

The evaluation established that there were two positive trends since 2011. There has been improvement in the proportion of project proposals that can be considered fully gender mainstreamed, and there has been a small reduction in the number of gender blind proposals. More significant trends, however, have not been especially positive. In 2016, still only about 30 percent of project proposals included gender in a more substantial way. Fully mainstreamed proposals only accounted for less than ten per cent of the total. With few exceptions, most of them belong to the human dimension. There have, however, also been improvements in some field structures in how gender mainstreaming is approached.

### Gender-specific programming and gender mainstreaming

While progress in gender mainstreaming has been slow overall, many interesting and relevant interventions exist in all three dimensions. These include work related to the promotion of UNSCR 1325, countering violent extremism, natural resources management and disaster risk reduction, gender-responsive budgeting, gender-sensitive legal reform, women's political participation, and many others. The evaluation also observed, however, that overwhelmingly the focus of gender mainstreaming interventions is on ensuring women's participation in programming as an end in and of itself. There is a lack of creative thinking and use of transformative approaches that would entail challenging gender stereotypes and cultural attitudes.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

This is an area in need of significant improvement, as achievement of outcomes of the OSCE's work, in terms of transforming gender stereotypes, behavior change, policy implementation, is not systematically measured, and therefore very little data exist. This is unfortunate for many reasons, not least because it makes it very difficult for the OSCE to demonstrate what has been achieved. Evidence suggests that more results may have been achieved than those documented.

### The Way Forward

International experience shows that if gender equality is to become an integral part of the culture of an organization, then consistent and sustained action is needed in many areas. The evaluation generated a number of recommendations to help take the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan to the next level.

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