



Background paper

“What does gender equality mean for economic growth and employment?”

Stockholm, 15-16 October 2009

Institutional and organisational background of the inclusion of Gender Issues in the OSCE

The 1975 Helsinki Final Act laid out the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, which incorporates political-military, economic-environmental and human dimensions. While the OSCE's security framework emerged out of the Cold War, its multi-dimensional approach to security continues to be a major asset in addressing today's security challenges. The OSCE recognizes the importance of the equal rights of women and men as an essential aspect of peace, sustainable democracy and economic development. While the OSCE's gender work is rooted in international legal frameworks, the organization has adopted several specific policies and measures in support of gender equality: The Istanbul Summit Declaration (1999), MC.DEC/14/05 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation and MC.DEC/15/05 on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women. MC.DEC/14/04 on the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality provides the concrete framework for OSCE action on Gender.

The three pillars of the OSCE approach to incorporating gender:

Mainstreaming gender in the Organization's structures, recruitment procedures and working environment (Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, section III, A)

The OSCE has implemented flexible working arrangements in the Secretariat to accommodate the needs of staff members with families. Additionally, changes to the staff rules and regulations also entitle to maternity and most recently to paternity leaves.

The OSCE has attained almost parity level regarding the proportion of women in professional staff categories: women account currently for 45% of professional staff in the OSCE. The Organization aims to achieve a greater gender balance in higher management positions (P5 and above). The share of women in senior positions increased from 19 per cent in 2008 to 24 per cent in 2009. The OSCE has issued a policy against harassment and discrimination and a number of recommendations in order to promote a gender sensitive working environment. In both the Secretariat and field missions several (male) senior managers have been appointed as Gender Focal Points.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective in all OSCE activities, policies, programmes and projects (Action Plan, section III, B)

Gender mainstreaming has been adopted as a strategy to achieve gender equality in all areas and at all levels of work within the OSCE. Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the differentiated impact of policies, programmes and projects on women and men in order to ensure that gender-based discrimination is avoided and that the needs, knowledge and experience of both women and men are considered in OSCE activities. Training and capacity building tools for OSCE staff and State delegations have been developed and disseminated to this effect. In addition, international thematic events such as a round table on the benefits of integrating gender issues into Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control or in peace negotiations have been organized to promote policy maker's awareness of gender issues. Currently, a database is being developed to promote the recruitment of female experts in the areas of military and policing, where women are least represented among OSCE executive structures. During the year 2008-2009, some 70 projects conducted by OSCE field missions have undertaken a gender analysis or included a gender dimension in the substance of their work. The themes covered by these projects ranged from e.g. police projects to fight violence against women in Kyrgyzstan, to promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere in Ukraine to e.g. strengthening the work of the Department of Equal Opportunities in Albania.



Promoting the rights, interests and concerns of women in six priority areas where inequality and discrimination are most prevalent. (Action Plan, section V)

In each thematic priority area identified in the OSCE 2004 Gender Action Plan, the OSCE has attained significant results in 2008-2009:

● *Non-discriminatory legal and policy frameworks*

- Publication and dissemination of an OSCE “Guide on Gender Sensitive Labour Migration policies”
- Women in governance projects, Gender analyses of draft laws (multiple projects, eg. Albania, Armenia, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan, FYROM)
- Capacity building for state level equal opportunities coordinators and state employees (Tajikistan, Kazakhstan)

● *Violence against women*

- Publication and dissemination by the Gender section of the OSCE of a good practices compilation “Bringing Security Home: Combating Violence Against Women in the OSCE Region”
- Multiple policy level events to combat violence against women (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Vienna, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova)
- Multiple police, media and civil society capacity building projects

● *Participation of women in political and public life*

- Research on women’s political participation and mapping barriers to women’s participation in elections (Armenia, Ukraine, Moldova, Macedonia)
- Capacity building for women and civil society to participate in politics (Kyrgyzstan);

● *Participation of women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction*

- Creation of an online roster for female experts “GenderBase”;
- Production and dissemination of an OSCE “Guide on Police-Public Partnerships” and a Guide on Gender in Policing;
- Conferences on UNSCR 1325 (Montenegro, Serbia, Vienna)

● *Equal opportunity in the economic sphere*

- Publication of a “Guide on Gender and Environment”
- Activities and support to resource centers in promotion of women’s entrepreneurship (Caucasus, Central Asia)
- Local Economic Partnership & Development Projects (LEaP/LEaD Ukraine)

● *National mechanisms for the advancement of women*

- Multiple projects on enhancing women’s role in governance and support to national mechanisms to promote gender equality
- Promotion of gender equality in local communities and capacity building (Montenegro, Armenia)
- Training for legal practitioners and ombudsman on CEDAW (Macedonia)

The majority of these projects are being implemented in partnership with governmental entities, civil society groups (NGO’s) and international governmental/ non-governmental organisations.



The OSCE Gender Section:

The Gender Section is part of the Office of the Secretary General. It assists OSCE staff and political bodies, including the Secretariat, Institutions and Field Operations in 18 host countries (in Central Asia, South Caucasus, Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe) to achieve gender equality within their organisational units and to integrate a gender perspective into their operations in the political-military, economic-environmental and human dimensions of the OSCE's work. The Section advises OSCE structures on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the OSCE's overall gender mainstreaming. The Gender Section provides technical expertise, capacity building and tools for the achievement of gender equality within the OSCE and participating states.

Through a network of 40 + Gender Focal Points in each Field Operation, Institution and in the Secretariat, the Gender Section provides coherent and comprehensive technical support to gender mainstreaming and programme implementation. The OSCE's work on gender equality is supported by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which initiates and supports women rights projects carried out in a number of Field Operations. In addition, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly appointed a Special Representative on Gender Issues, who has the responsibility of raising awareness on Gender Issues among parliamentarians.

What does gender equality mean for economic growth and employment?

The OSCE is in a unique position to promote gender equality throughout its 56 participating states. The OSCE's comprehensive security mandate and Action Plan on Gender Equality, its flexible programming, capacities and constant dialogue with participating states allow the OSCE to lead and support a variety of initiatives, from the community to the international levels.

Economic development and gender equality are intricately linked. The correlation between gender equality and e.g. levels of education, wage parity, income and employment profiles or gross domestic product has been well established. While international and EU wide commitments on attaining gender equality, as well as economic data exists, the situation of men and women remains far from equal. Progress may be further challenged in view of the current economic downturn, particularly in states with transition economies: Women are less likely to be protected by labour legislation and are more vulnerable to job loss and exploitation. Women tend to accept additional work to compensate for reduced household incomes, resulting in overburdening. Reduced social spending restricts household budgets for schooling and healthcare and access to credit is restricted.

The OSCE recognizes that addressing these issues is central to good governance and essential for stability, prosperity, sustained democratic progress and to avoid a reversal of current achievements. Reviews of national policies offer a unique entry point for gender sensitive policy adjustments in the economic sphere in the medium-long term. However, the creation of opportunities, as well as conditions, under which both men and women can participate in economic activities and labour markets, should be a priority to secure- as well as to promote- gender equality achievements in the short term. While the macro-economic reforms create a necessary framework, micro- level interventions aimed especially at women's empowerment result in significant progress in achieving gender equality and the reduction of women's economic vulnerability in national settings.

Comprehensive programming and coordination to tackle the complexities of today's challenges is essential. The OSCE Gender Section considers the building of partnerships, dialogue and exchange of best practices as an essential component in delivering a coherent and sustainable policy in the OSCE, as well as EU area.

In line with the European Union's commitments on gender equality and the European Charter of Human Rights, as well as reflecting the priorities in the area of gender outlined by the Swedish presidency, the OSCE Gender Section aims to contribute to the efforts of identifying, promoting and institutionalizing coherent and effective gender sensitive economic policies. Specifically:

1. Provide multi-disciplinary platforms¹ for best practice exchange on national and regional levels to increase dialogue on women's participation in the economy on equal terms and to

¹ Governmental, Non-Governmental Organizations, Think tanks and the Academia, Women's Organisations, Employer Associations/ Private Sector representatives and other stakeholders ought to be involved;



- identify gaps and opportunities to particularly enable national stakeholders of all levels to conceptualize and ultimately adopt best practice models
2. Share and exchange knowledge beyond the EU by facilitating dialogue and exchange among decision and policy makers throughout the OSCE region
 3. Support local level employment opportunities for women through (labour) market relevant programmes
 4. Facilitate and promote the development of a guide on best practices for the promotion of women's entrepreneurship in the OSCE region (resource guide with practice orientation)
 5. Promote networking and build the capacities of women business leaders and organizations
 6. Advocate for equal pay, employment creation, improved working conditions for women and the diversification of women's employment profiles as part of the OSCE's gender equality and good governance objectives

Conclusion:

The depth and scope of issues that determine and affect progress in the field of economic development overall, and gender in economics in particular, are immense. Since opportunities, as well as obstacles, vary across the EU and OSCE region, there is a consensus that dialogue and consultative processes are conducive, add value and increase effectiveness, especially in promoting gender equality as a uniquely cross-cutting issue. While the OSCE Gender Section aims to contribute to this process in the EU area through the action points outlined above, there is also an opportunity for transferring best practices and models into the wider OSCE area.

List of recent publications by the Gender Section

The Secretary General's Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality – September 2009

http://www.osce.org/documents/sg/2009/09/39746_en.pdf

2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/2004/12/3917_en.pdf

Bringing Security Home: Combating Violence Against Women in the OSCE Region - A Compilation of Good Practices.

http://www.osce.org/gender/item_11_38013.html

Guide on Gender-Sensitive Labour Migration Policies.

http://www.osce.org/gender/item_11_37689.html

Integrating a gender approach into police-public partnerships.

http://www.osce.org/gender/item_11_36581.html

Gender and environment: a guide to the integration of gender aspects in the OSCE's environmental projects.

http://www.osce.org/gender/item_11_36575.html

Filling the GAPS - Annexes.

http://www.osce.org/gender/item_11_29802.html



Office of the Secretary General
Gender Section
Wallnerstrasse 6
A-1010 Vienna

tel.: +43 (01) 514 36 6927
e-mail: equality@osce.org
<http://www.osce.org/gender>