



DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ASSISTANCE

**Programme on Increased Participation of Women in Politics
(1300577)**

**FUNDED THROUGH
EXTRABUDGETARY CONTRIBUTIONS**

Warsaw, September 2012

Programme on Increased Participation of Women in Politics (1300577)

Current budget: EUR 1,024,786¹

1. Background

The 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality tasks ODIHR with assisting participating States in implementing their commitments related to women's participation in political and public life. ODIHR is also tasked with strengthening the national mechanisms of participating States to promote and protect gender equality. While significant advances have been made in promoting gender equality and women's political participation in recent decades, women are still under-represented in governance structures across the OSCE region, including in political parties. A majority of participating States have undertaken measures to promote gender equality, but many lack effective state mechanisms to ensure their effective implementation. Across the region, exchange of experience in this field is limited and expertise is not often available to participating States that wish to undertake reform.

2. Approach

The programme supports OSCE participating States in legislative and policy reforms, developing and enhancing their national and institutional mechanisms, towards gender equality and equal participation of women and men in political and public affairs. The programme aims for greater awareness and knowledge among legislators, political parties, women's organizations and wider civil society, of existing good practices/lessons learnt in promoting gender equality and women's political participation. Programme activities will be implemented in close co-operation with the OSCE Senior Advisor on Gender Issues and OSCE field operation gender focal points.

2.1 *Planned activities for 2012-2013 (funds permitting)*

Increasing women's political participation

ODIHR will provide support and expertise to government and civil society actors on positive measures and effective legal and policy frameworks that promote women's political participation. ODIHR will compile a *Handbook on Measures to Promote Women's Participation in Political Parties* and provide training to political stakeholders on methods to achieve this. Opportunities for women's concrete advancement in political parties will be promoted in roundtables/meetings with representatives of political parties, civil society and women's groups. ODIHR will also assist or promote reform of political party legislation to increase women's participation in parties.² Research on parliamentary structures for women Members of Parliament in the region will identify good practices for promoting gender equality in parliamentary office. Where applicable, ODIHR will engage local stakeholders in implementing recommendations from OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Missions which relate to women's participation in the political process. ODIHR will particularly engage states with a low level of women's representation in elected office, providing targeted assistance through research, knowledge-sharing, networking, exchange of expertise and support for public events. Such activities will be implemented in close co-operation with field operations and/or on the basis of requests from field operations.

Strengthening national mechanisms for advancing gender equality

¹ For the period 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2013.

² Using the *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation* jointly developed by the OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, and published in October 2010.

ODIHR reviews good practices from a wide range of mechanisms existing across the OSCE. ODIHR's *Handbook on NHRIs' Role in Protecting and Promoting Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the OSCE Region*, developed in 2012, will be used in roundtables and targeted training to strengthen the capacity of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to protect women's rights effectively.

Preventing and combating violence against women

Violence against women is a serious human rights violation, and undermines efforts to achieve gender equality. Therefore, ODIHR will continue to support OSCE field operations in effectively preventing and combating violence against women, including domestic violence, by strengthening policy and legislative frameworks.

2.2 *Indicators of achievement*

- OSCE participating States increasingly apply good practices from across the region to enhance their legal and policy frameworks for promoting gender equality and women's political participation.
- State authorities, political parties, field operations and other stakeholders draw upon ODIHR as a repository of expertise and resources from across the OSCE region.

2.3 *Strategy/methodology*

The programme's strategy builds on achievements of ODIHR's previous work in developing stakeholders' capacity to strengthen institutional and policy frameworks so that they move towards gender equality. ODIHR will build its existing network of partners, including government representatives, civil society and women's NGOs across the OSCE region. This programme underpins ODIHR's efforts to promote effective democratic governance, seeking synergies with work on political parties, legislative review and elections. The Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender Issues, OSCE Senior Advisor on Gender Issues, OSCE field operations, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe, UN Women, UNDP and other international stakeholders will be involved as appropriate. ODIHR also sees preventing and combating violence against women as a crucial element in promoting gender equality and emphasizes it across programme activities.

2.4 *Assumptions and risks*

The primary assumption is that strong political will and a co-operative approach exist among key stakeholders in governments, political parties, national human rights institutions and civil society to achieve compliance with OSCE gender equality commitments. A long-term strategy emphasizing partnership with international and local stakeholders is needed to address continued low levels of women's political representation in government and political parties in certain states. The risk of a reverse in gains in women's representation also requires sustained attention from governments, not only to the number of women in elected office, but also to the degree to which political/government actors commit to gender equality in practice.

2.5 *Quality factors*

ODIHR's mandate provides it with the opportunity to consolidate, share and transfer the disparate and heterogeneous expertise already in existence across the OSCE region. It can work

with and match up many participating States, at different stages on the path to gender equality. ODIHR's approach, with its emphasis on regional and intra-OSCE knowledge sharing, allows ODIHR to complement the local work of OSCE field operations and to reach those States where no OSCE field operation is present.