

Directorate General of Human Rights Equality Division



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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 new approaches, new strategies and new 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.

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.

What is gender mainstreaming

In 1998, the Council of Europe defined gender mainstreaming as: *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.

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 Schools

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 *Promoting Gender Mainstreaming in Schools* was published in 2004. The Report makes recommendations for promoting gender mainstreaming in schools 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

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. The report focuses on how to organise gender budgeting processes and methodologies and how to apply its methods and tools. It provides a flexible framework for use by countries and presents practical examples of gender budgeting.

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.

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 implementation 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) and in health (September 2006).

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

Adopted texts

Following the CDEG's report on gender mainstreaming, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted **Recommendation No. R(98)14 on gender mainstreaming** in October 1998. The text recommends that governments disseminate the report widely and encourage its use as a tool for implementing the strategy in the public and private sectors.

The Committee of Ministers also adopted a **Message to steering committees of the Council of Europe on gender mainstreaming**, inviting them to draw inspiration from the CDEG's report and to implement the strategy in their programmes of activities.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe adopted during its Plenary Session, in May 2004, the **Recommendation 148 (2004) and the Resolution 176 (2004) on gender mainstreaming at local and regional level: a strategy to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions.**

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