



## CONCEPT NOTE

### REALIZING GENDER EQUALITY IN PARLIAMENT

Expert Meeting for international stakeholders and academia

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

#### BACKGROUND<sup>1</sup>

National parliaments, as essential democratic institutions, are uniquely placed to champion progress towards, and full achievement of, gender equality in politics and indeed in all spheres. This crucial role for parliaments has also been well entrenched in international conventions and commitments. The concept of “gender-sensitive parliaments” (GSP) has become the clearest expression of parliaments’ responsibility to promote and achieve gender equality. International parliamentary organizations such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) have been at the forefront of these efforts, having produced an evidence base as well as political texts that encourage further action in support of gender sensitivity around the world.<sup>2</sup> Today, a number of intergovernmental entities, including the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations system, have also dedicated resources to support the removal of barriers to women’s full and effective participation in parliament. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly have joined this global community.

At the same time, a number of academics have taken an interest in GSP, lending their gender and politics expertise to these international organizations and specific parliaments as advisers and “critical friends”.<sup>3</sup> The interaction between academics and practitioners has led to further reflection on the ultimate goal of a GSP, prompting a new definition: “a GSP values and prioritizes gender equality as a social, economic and political objective and reorients and transforms a parliament’s institutional culture, processes and practices, and outputs towards these objectives”.<sup>4</sup> More than maybe ever, academics are today conducting diverse research on “gender-sensitive parliaments”. In 2020 and at the beginning of 2021, ODIHR undertook a study of good practices and lessons learned on the gender sensitivity of national parliaments in the OSCE region. Undertaken in co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and all national parliaments of OSCE participating States, this research resulted with a new guide: [Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region](#). [Dr. Sonia Palmieri](#) from the Australian National University has been

<sup>1</sup> Excerpts and information taken from ODIHR, [Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region](#) (Warsaw: ODIHR, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> IPU, *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: A Global Review of Good Practice* (Geneva: IPU, 2011); CPA, *Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines: Standards and a Checklist for Parliamentary Change* (London: CPA, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example Marian Sawyer and Sonia Palmieri (eds.), “New Critical Actors: Gender-Focused Parliamentary Bodies”, *Politics, Groups and Identities*, Vol. 9, 2021; Sarah Childs, *The Good Parliament* (Bristol: University of Bristol, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Childs and Sonia Palmieri, “Gender Sensitive Parliaments: Feminizing Formal Political Institutions”, in Marian Sawyer, Lee Ann Banaszak, Jacqui True and Johanna Kantola (eds.), *Handbook on Feminist Governance* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, forthcoming).

ODIHR's consultant on this project and she is also the guide author. "Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament" builds on previous studies produced by the ODIHR on structures on women MPs (2013) and gender-sensitive lawmaking (2017). This practical guide is intended to support the full range of parliamentary actors—from parliamentary leadership teams, members of parliament, and political and parliamentary staff, to parliamentary practitioners and civil society organizations dealing with gender equality issues—in transforming these institutions into gender-sensitive parliaments. This expert meeting is organized on the occasion of the publishing of this new Guide.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE EVENT**

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights is organizing this expert meeting between representatives of international organizations and leading researchers to discuss innovative approaches on 'gender sensitive parliaments'. We want to facilitate peer learning, on how research is conducted, and what the good practices, lessons learned and innovations are to support parliaments in order to better deliver for all women and men, in all their diversities. We will also use the occasion to inform international partners and GSP-researchers about ODIHR's new guide *Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region*.

### **TARGET AUDIENCE**

- Representatives of a selected group of international organizations working on issues of gender sensitive parliaments, incl. parliamentary organizations;
- Selected group of leading GSP-researchers from the OSCE region (and beyond);
- Representatives of OSCE executive structures;

### **TECHNICAL INFORMATION**

The event will be held online, via Zoom conferencing platform.  
Working language will be English.

### **CONTACT**

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact  
Saša Gavrić, ODIHR's Associate Gender Officer, [sasa.gavric@odihhr.pl](mailto:sasa.gavric@odihhr.pl)

## AGENDA

### REALIZING GENDER EQUALITY IN PARLIAMENTS Expert Meeting for international stakeholders and academia

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

Wednesday, 30 March 2022	
10:00-12:00 CET	<p><b>REALIZING GENDER EQUALITY IN PARLIAMENTS: TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS, DELIVERING FOR ALL WOMEN AND MEN</b></p> <p>Joint Web Dialogue event by the ODIHR and the OSCE PA, including: <b>Presentation of ODIHR's new 'gender sensitive parliaments' tool</b> <i>Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region</i></p> <p>Dr. Sonia Palmieri, ODIHR's International Expert Policy Fellow, Australian National University, Canberra</p> <p>Please <b>register participation</b> at: <a href="https://www.osce.org/odihr/511999">https://www.osce.org/odihr/511999</a></p>
Thursday, 31 March 2022	
09:00-09:10 CET	<p><b>Opening remarks</b> Kateryna Ryabiko, First Deputy Director, ODIHR</p>
09:10-10:30 CET	<p><b>Panel I: Lessons learned of international stakeholders</b></p> <p>James Pinnell, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association: <i>Gender sensitive parliaments in the 21st century: A Commonwealth perspective</i></p> <p>Helena Morais Maceira, European Institute for Gender Equality: <i>Gender equality in national parliaments across the EU and the European Parliament</i></p> <p>Brigitte Filion, Inter-Parliamentary Union: <i>Documenting and addressing sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments</i></p> <p>Rachel Weston Eschenbacher, UN Women: <i>Towards violence free parliaments</i></p> <p>Moderator: Sara Haapalainen, Adviser on Gender Issues, OSCE/ODIHR</p>
10:30-10:45 CET	<p><b>Virtual coffee break</b></p>

<p>10:45- 11:55 CET</p>	<p><b>Panel II: Lessons learned of ‘gender sensitive parliaments’ (GSP) researchers</b></p> <p>Josefina Erikson, Uppsala University: <i>How can Parliaments achieve a sustainable gender equality work? Insights from Sweden</i></p> <p>Petra Ahrens, Academy of Finland: <i>Transforming supranational parliamentary processes and practices: the European Parliament and its gender mainstreaming strategy</i></p> <p>Cherry Miller, Tampere University: <i>Realizing gender equality in parliaments: Re-centring members of parliament’s staff</i></p> <p>Sarah Childs, Royal Holloway University of London: <i>GSP and the role of the feminist academic critical actor: Instigating and initiating institutional change</i></p> <p>Moderator: Saša Gavrić, Gender Officer, OSCE/ODIHR</p>
<p>11:55- 12:00 CET</p>	<p><b>Closing remarks: Ways forward</b></p> <p>Dr. Yulia Netesova, Chief of Democratic Governance and Gender Unit, ODIHR</p>