

## CONCEPT NOTE

### REALIZING GENDER EQUALITY IN PARLIAMENT: TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS, DELIVERING FOR ALL WOMEN AND MEN

*Joint Web Dialogue event by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)*

Online // Wednesday, 30 March 2022, 10.00-12.00 CEST

#### BACKGROUND

Across modern democracies, including those in the OSCE region, women have been present in many parliamentary chambers for over a century. While rarely constituting a majority of those chambers, women's presence has become increasingly normalized in these formal institutions of representative democracy. This has not, however, been achieved by chance: it has taken considerable political mobilization, often by women thinking strategically and acting collectively. Furthermore, the OSCE adopted a comprehensive framework on women's participation in public and political life, including the Ministerial Council decisions 14/04, "OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality", and 7/09, "Women's Participation in Political and Public Life". In 2005, the OSCE PA adopted a Resolution on improving gender equality in the OSCE region, inviting "*all Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to promote participation of women in politics and civil society-building in their home countries, starting at their respective constituencies*".<sup>1</sup>

In 2022, the OSCE region boasts strong representation of women across the parliaments of its participating States, ranging from near parity to a little less than 15 per cent. In fact, the OSCE regional average (30.4 per cent) is higher than the global average (26 per cent).

Modern societies have recognized that gender inequality—demonstrated across a range of social, economic, cultural and political indicators—remains a fundamental impediment to progress and prosperity. This long-standing recognition is evidenced in the 1991 OSCE Moscow Document, which states: "*full and true equality between men and women is a fundamental aspect of a just and democratic society based on the rule of law. [Participating*

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<sup>1</sup> OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Gender in the Work of the Parliamentary Assembly. Available at <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/8/121640.pdf>.

*States] recognize that the full development of society and the welfare of all its members require equal opportunity for full and equal participation of men and women.”<sup>2</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 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in paragraph 203, for example, requires governments to report “*on a regular basis, to legislative bodies on the progress of efforts, as appropriate, to mainstream gender concerns*”.<sup>3</sup>

In the ensuing decades, 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>4</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 ODIHR and OSCE PA have joined this global community.

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 46 national parliaments of OSCE participating States, this research resulted in development of the “[Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region](#)”. This practical guide was published in December 2021 and builds on previous studies produced by the ODIHR on structures on women MPs (2013) and gender-sensitive lawmaking (2017). It 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.

To launch the guide and facilitate discussion on possible steps to be taken to work towards gender-sensitive parliaments, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will organize a Joint Web Dialogue on “Realizing gender equality in parliament: transforming institutions, delivering for all women and men” on 30 March 2022.

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<sup>2</sup> “Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE”, 3 October 1991. Available at <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/14310>.

<sup>3</sup> UN, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 15 September 1995. Available at [https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing\\_Declaration\\_and\\_Platform\\_for\\_Action.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf).

<sup>4</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).

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE EVENT**

The event will provide an opportunity to discuss innovative approaches on “gender sensitive parliaments” and the transformation of national legislatures to better deliver for all women and men. More specifically, the event will aim to:

1. Provide a platform to exchange good practices, lessons learned and innovations on how national parliaments are mainstreaming gender in its composition, structures, operations, working methods, and day-to-day work, in order to be able to produce gender-responsive policy outcomes; and
2. Raise awareness among parliamentarians of OSCE participating States of OSCE tools and resources, including on ODIHR’s new guide on *“Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region”*.

## **TARGET AUDIENCE**

- Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and relevant staff
- Members and parliamentary service leadership of national parliaments of OSCE pSs
- Representatives of OSCE executive structures
- Delegations of pSs to the OSCE
- Experts in the field of gender sensitive parliaments and women’s political participation

## **REGISTRATION**

All interested participants need to register their participation at the following [LINK](#). Once registered, participants will receive a zoom link to their e-mail address.

## **TECHNICAL INFORMATION**

The event will be held online, via Zoom conferencing platform. English/Russian/English and International Sign Language interpretation is provided.

## **CONTACT**

Should you have any questions regarding the registration and participation, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Ilias Trochidis at [ilias.trochidis@oscepa.dk](mailto:ilias.trochidis@oscepa.dk) or at +43 676 320 03 95

## AGENDA

### REALIZING GENDER EQUALITY IN PARLIAMENT: TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS, DELIVERING FOR ALL WOMEN AND MEN

Online // Wednesday, 30 March 2022, 10.00-12.00 CEST

10:00-10:15	<p><b>Opening remarks</b>          Margareta Cederfelt, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly          Kateryna Ryabiko, First Deputy Director of OSCE/ODIHR</p> <p>Moderators:          Saša Gavrić, Gender Officer, OSCE/ODIHR          Hana Đogović, Programme Officer, OSCE PA</p>
10:15-10:30	<p><b>Presentation of ODIHR's new 'gender sensitive parliaments' tool</b>          Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament:          A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region</p> <p>Dr. Sonia Palmieri, ODIHR's International Expert          Policy Fellow, Australian National University, Canberra</p>
10:30-11:00	<p><b>Reflections of Members of Parliament</b></p> <p>Speakers:          Dr. Hedy Fry, Member of the House of Commons of Canada,          OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues</p> <p>Klotilda Bushka, Member of the Parliament of Albania</p> <p>Meg Munn, International Expert on Gender Sensitive Parliaments, former MP          and Minister for Women and Equality, United Kingdom</p>
11:00-11:45	<p><b>Questions and answers</b></p>
11:45-12:00	<p><b>Closing remarks:</b>  <b>Ways forward – Five recommendations for OSCE parliaments</b>          Dr. Yulia Netesova, Chief of Democratic Governance and Gender Unit, ODIHR</p>