

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

Realizing Gender Equality in and by Parliaments A gender-sensitive parliaments review workshop for national parliaments from Europe and Central Asia

3-4 June 2025, Helsinki, Parliament of Finland, Auditorium

*An initiative by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR),
with the support of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, 2025 OSCE Chairperson-in-Office & OSCE field
operations, kindly hosted by the Parliament of Finland*

National parliaments, as essential democratic institutions, are uniquely placed to champion progress towards, and full achievement of, gender equality in politics and all other spheres of public and private life. This crucial role for parliaments has also been well entrenched in international conventions and commitments, including in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, which 30th anniversary we mark this year. The concept of 'gender-sensitive parliaments' has become the clearest expression of parliaments' responsibility to promote and achieve gender equality. International parliamentary organizations, such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association 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. The [2022 IPU Kigali Declaration](#) serves a reminder on the global parliamentary commitment to the gender-sensitive parliaments agenda.

Today, a number of intergovernmental entities, including the European Institute for Gender Equality, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, International IDEA (InterPares) and the United Nations system, have also dedicated resources to support the removal of barriers to women's full and effective participation in parliament, and making parliaments to deliver on gender parity, gender equality policy and gender-sensitive parliamentary oversight. All around North America, Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, many national parliaments, independently, or with support of academia, civil society or international partners, have undertaken concrete actions and steps, to implement 'gender-sensitive parliaments' commitments into national parliamentary realities, aiming at advancing women's presence but also improving gender-sensitive lawmaking and parliamentary oversight.

For almost 15 years the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) have been part of the global 'gender sensitive parliaments' community, and have been working hand-in-hand, leading to important achievements in the last few years, such as:

- At the end of 2021, ODIHR released [Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament: A Guide for Parliaments in the OSCE Region](#). This practical guide, developed with the support of the OSCE

PA and presenting data and lessons learned from 46 national parliaments, 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;

- In 2022, ODIHR and the OSCE PA published [Participatory Gender Audits of Parliaments: A Step-by-Step Guidance Document](#). The document contains a unique and revised gender audits methodology, designed to support the full implementation of participatory gender audits of parliaments across the OSCE region, putting the emphasis on gender-balanced representation, gender-sensitive lawmaking and gender-sensitive parliamentary oversight.
- At the end of 2024, ODIHR and the OSCE PA released additionally [Parliamentary bodies for gender equality — Overview and recommendations](#). This tool, with data from 48 OSCE parliaments from North America, Europe and Central Asia, shows how parliamentary bodies for gender equality are one of the key gender mainstreaming mechanisms available to national parliaments, and assesses their role and function within parliaments.
- The parliaments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia received targeted support and advice by ODIHR, including but not limited to gender audits, on how to transform the global ‘gender-sensitive parliaments’ commitment into parliamentary day-to-day reality.

Building upon all these developments, ODIHR, with the support of the OSCE PA, the 2025 OSCE Chairperson-in-Office of Finland, the OSCE field operations and the Parliament of Finland is organising this review workshop.

Workshop objectives

- Facilitate peer-to-peer learning among representatives of national parliaments on how they have enhanced and implemented the ‘gender-sensitive parliaments’ agenda in their national context and diverse barriers have been overcome;
- Increase awareness on the ‘gender-sensitive parliaments’ agenda and potential new avenues for promoting gender equality, including through engaging men parliamentarians as critical actors for gender equality, responding to mobilisation against gender equality and gender equality backsliding;
- Discussing and endorsing “Helsinki Principles on Gender-sensitive parliaments in the OSCE region”, as a reminder on the gender-sensitive parliaments agenda to the OSCE states and parliaments;

Working format

- The workshop is structured in form of thematic sessions. For each session, one or multiple keynote speakers, thematic experts from international organisations, academia or national parliaments, will introduce the session topic. Afterwards, the moderator will facilitate an interactive debate with participants;
- Participants are kindly invited, in preparation to the workshop, to conduct a mapping on key developments related to the ‘gender-sensitive parliaments’ agenda in their national parliament. Collected information will allow them to contribute to the workshop with data, lessons learned, promising practices but also identified challenges;
- In preparation to the workshop, registered participants will receive the draft of the “Helsinki Principles on Gender-sensitive parliaments in the OSCE region”, an informal document which is

to be issued in follow up to the workshop, calling on national parliament to commit to the 'gender-sensitive parliaments' agenda and undertake specific action in order to localise it as part of parliamentary representation, lawmaking and oversight. Participants will be invited to comment on the text and to contribute to its finalisation, aiming at endorsing it at the last workshop session;

Target audience

- Representatives, parliamentarians and staff, from national parliaments which have the gender-sensitivity of the parliament high on agenda, with a track record of important policy and legislative action, including but not limited to implementing gender audits;
- Representatives from international organisations part of the global gender-sensitive parliaments community;
- Representatives of OSCE institutions and executive structures;

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The workshop will be held on two full days, hosted by the Parliament of Finland.

Lunches, refreshments and coffee breaks will be provided by the host, while all other costs, including travel and accommodation, are to be covered by the participating parliaments.

Working language will be English, with simultaneous translation into Russian (if needed).

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact

Saša Gavrić, ODIHR's Gender Adviser, sasa.gavric@odihr.pl

DRAFT AGENDA

Realizing Gender Equality in and by Parliaments A gender-sensitive parliaments review workshop for national parliaments from Europe and Central Asia

3-4 June 2025, Helsinki, Finland

| | Tuesday, 3 June 2025 |
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| 09:00-09:30 | Opening remarks Parliament of Finland representative 2025 OSCE Chairperson-in-Office of Finland representative Pia Kauma, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (tbc) ODIHR representative <i>* Family picture</i> |
| 09:30-10:30 | Ice breaker session: River of Life – History of Gender Equality <i>Session goal: Participants, in an interactive way, have established a common understanding on the key milestones and international documents related to women's political participation and gender equality in politics in the OSCE space, but have also shared country-specific examples</i> Facilitator: ODIHR representative |
| 10:30-11:00 | Coffee break & networking |
| 11:00-12:30 | Working session I: The global 'gender sensitive parliaments' agenda <i>Session goal: Participants are introduced to the development, norms, standards and actors of the global 'gender-sensitive parliaments' agenda and discussed diverse examples of the agenda's localisation in national parliaments</i> Speakers: IPU (tbc), CPA, ODIHR, International IDEA/InterPares (tbc), EIGE Moderator: |
| 12:30-13:30 | Lunch break |

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| 13:30-14:30 | <p>Working session II: Parliamentary bodies for gender equality</p> <p>Session goal: <i>Participants are aware of the mandates, setups, rules, practices and activities of diverse parliamentary bodies that take the lead on gender equality advancement within and by parliaments and discussed also potential new formats for MPs organising on gender equality initiatives</i></p> <p>Keynote input: Moderator:</p> |
| 14:30-15:00 | Coffee break & networking |
| 15:00-16:15 | <p>Working session III: Gender audits and parliamentary gender equality action plans</p> <p>Session goal: <i>Participants understand the importance of institutional transformation towards gender parity and gender equality delivery, and how gender mainstreaming tools – like gender audits and gender equality action plans – can be fundamental to inform parliamentary action towards transformative gender equality</i></p> <p>Keynote input: Moderator:</p> |
| 16:15-17:00 | <p>Introduction & discussion on the draft Helsinki Principles on Gender-sensitive parliaments in the OSCE region</p> <p>Moderator:</p> |
| 17:00-17:30 | <i>Voluntary: Tour through the parliament building</i> |
| 17:30 | <p>Reception by the Parliament of Finland Main building</p> |

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| | Wednesday, 4 June 2025 |
| 09:00-09:30 | Recap from day one |
| 09:30-11:00 | <p>Working session IV: Gender-sensitive lawmaking and parliamentary oversight</p> <p>Session goal: <i>Participants advanced their knowledge from international comparative research and parliamentary practice on rules, mechanisms, resources, practices and skills needed in order to ensure that the lawmaking</i></p> |

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| | <p><i>process and oversight activities will take into account the different needs and experiences of women and men in all their diversity</i></p> <p>Keynote input: Moderator:</p> |
| 11:00-11:30 | Coffee break & networking |
| 11:30-12:30 | <p>Working session V: Violence against women in politics – The role of parliaments</p> <p><i>Session goal: Participants increased their awareness about the different forms violence against women in politics takes and the tools and actions national parliaments apply to counter it</i></p> <p>Keynote input: Moderator:</p> |
| 12:30-13:30 | Lunch break |
| 13:30-14:30 | <p>Working session VI: Engaging men parliamentarians as critical actors for gender equality</p> <p><i>Session goal: Participants discussed entry-points on how to advance men politicians stronger ownership over gender equality developments and potential new formats how such processes can be facilitated in and by parliaments</i></p> <p>Keynote input: Moderator:</p> |
| 14:30-15:15 | <p>Closing session: Discussing and endorsing the Helsinki Principles on Gender-sensitive parliaments in the OSCE region</p> <p><i>Session goal: Participants discussed and agreed to the draft text of the Helsinki Principles, to be shared to all national parliaments in the OSCE region, aiming at a renewed commitment to the ‘gender-sensitive parliaments’ agenda</i></p> <p>Moderator:</p> <p>Closing remarks Parliament of Finland representative ODIHR representative</p> |