

# Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Gender Equality



# Why gender equality?

The OSCE recognizes the importance of the equal rights of women and men as essential to fostering peace, sustainable democracy and economic development. The OSCE aims to provide equal opportunities for women and men and to integrate gender equality into policies and practices, both within participating States and the Organization itself.

With local partners, the OSCE develops and runs projects across the OSCE region to empower women, and develop local capacities and expertise on gender issues. It co-operates with authorities

in reviewing legislation and assists in strengthening national mechanisms to ensure equality between women and men.

While the OSCE's gender equality work is rooted in the international legal framework, the OSCE's 57 participating States have also adopted several specific policies and measures in support of gender equality. The **OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality** provides the basis for the Organization's activities on gender equality and assigns responsibilities and tasks to the OSCE's Secretariat, Institutions and field operations as well as to the participating States, including:

- Ensuring that all OSCE policies, programmes and activities are gender mainstreamed;
- Providing staff members with tools and training on gender mainstreaming;
- Developing a professional, gender-sensitive

management culture and working environment;

- Increasing the share of female managers in senior positions;
- Supporting the efforts of participating States in achieving gender equality;
- Highlighting and promoting the role of women in conflict prevention and peace reconstruction processes.

The implementation of the Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality is monitored on an annual basis through a progress report presented by the OSCE Secretary General to the Permanent Council.



# Key OSCE commitments

The participating States have adopted a number of key OSCE documents and commitments, which outline the goals that have been set to achieve gender equality within the Organization, as well as promote gender equality in the States themselves, in line with international standards and norms.

## **2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality**

The Plan highlights the importance of gender equality in achieving comprehensive security and identifies gender mainstreaming as a key strategy. A decision by the OSCE Ministerial Council in 2014 tasked participating States to

develop an addendum to update the 2004 Action Plan.

## **2005 Ministerial Council Decision on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-conflict Rehabilitation**

This decision emphasizes the importance of women's full and equal participation in all

phases and levels of conflict prevention, resolution and peace building. It urges states to include gender concerns and women's contribution in OSCE security policies and activities and to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

## **2005 and 2014 Ministerial Council Decisions on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women**

Recognizing that violence against women is persistent throughout the OSCE region and undermines human security, these decisions urge states to take measures to prevent gender-based violence in all circumstances, including during and after armed conflict and emergencies. They call on participating States to develop legal frameworks and partnerships, prevent and prosecute violence against women, protect victims and collect and analyse data.

## **2009 Ministerial Council Decision on Women's Participation in Political and Public life**

This decision was adopted in response to the continued under-representation of women in the OSCE region in decision-making structures within the legislative, executive and judicial branches, including the security services. It calls on participating

States to consider legislative measures that could lead to the more balanced participation of women and men in political and public life, and encourages all political actors to promote the equal participation of women and men in political parties.

## **2011 Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere**

This decision formally recognizes that women's equal participation in the economic sphere contributes significantly towards economic recovery, sustainable growth and the creation of cohesive societies, and is essential to the security and stability of the OSCE region. It calls on states to take concrete measures to address barriers and take measures to facilitate equal opportunity for women in labour markets.

In addition to these OSCE Ministerial Council decisions focused on gender issues, several other decisions in key areas of work across the three dimensions of security: the politico-military, the economic and environmental and the human dimension, include reference to the OSCE Gender Action Plan, gender mainstreaming and the importance of women's equal participation.

## **What is gender mainstreaming?**

According to the OSCE Gender Action Plan: Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. (...) The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

# How we work

The OSCE's executive structures and field operations, through their respective mandates, are tasked to support participating States in implementing their commitments on gender equality.

The **Gender Section**, in the Office of the OSCE Secretary General, assists with integrating a gender perspective into the Organization's policies and programmes in the three dimensions. The Gender Section develops operational tools, guidelines and capacity-building materials to assist staff members apply gender mainstreaming in their work. It also implements thematic programmes to support

participating States and OSCE structures address gender issues across the three dimensions, including on women in conflict, women's economic participation and combating gender-based violence.

The OSCE has appointed gender focal points in each **Field Operation** and **Institution**, as well as in all departments of the Organization's Secretariat,

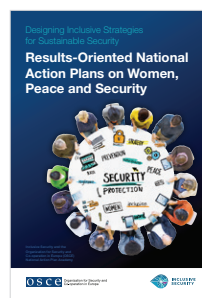
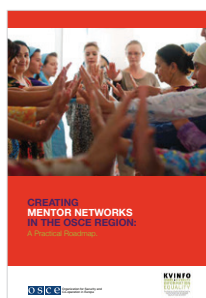
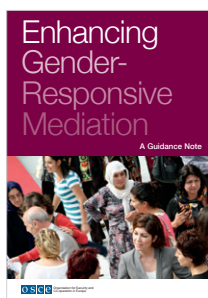
who are tasked to assist and support in the implementation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan. A network of these gender focal points meets on an annual basis and consists of around 60 staff members. Some field operations have full-time staff members who work as gender officers and advisers.

The **OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)** supports participating states in promoting women's participation in politics, elections and the security sector; strengthening national mechanisms for the advancement of women; and in preventing and combating gender-based violence. ODIHR does this through capacity building, expert advice, legislative support

and awareness-raising. There is special emphasis on strengthening women's leadership and networking, and on the rights of women from under-represented groups, including those from Roma and Sinti communities.

The **Parliamentary Assembly** has appointed a Special Representative on Gender Issues whose responsibility it is to follow the gender situation within the OSCE, Institutions and field operations, promote discussion of gender issues within the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly.

The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office also appoints a **Special Representative on Gender**, who provides high-level support to the Chair on gender-related issues.



## Follow OSCE



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