

## Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

# Gender equality

“For the OSCE, and our participating States, gender equality is a top priority - as the full and equal participation of women is key to long-term security, economic prosperity and sustainable security.”

- OSCE Secretary General  
Lamberto Zannier

## Promoting gender equality in the OSCE

The OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, which incorporates the politico-military, economic and environmental and human dimensions, was first outlined in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. The OSCE's multi-dimensional and comprehensive approach to security continues to be a major asset in addressing today's security challenges.

The OSCE recognizes the importance of the equal rights of women and men as essential to foster peace, sustainable democracy and economic development.

While the OSCE's gender work is rooted in international legal frameworks, the 57 OSCE participating States have also adopted several specific policies and measures in support of gender equality: the 1999 Istanbul Summit Declaration; the Ministerial

Decision on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation; the Ministerial Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women; the Ministerial Decision on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life and the Ministerial Decision on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere. The Ministerial Decision on the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality provides the main framework for the OSCE activities on gender.

## OSCE commitments on gender

### The OSCE Action Plan for the promotion of gender equality

The Action Plan assigns responsibilities and tasks to the Organization's Secretariat, Institutions and field operations as well as to the 57 OSCE 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 higher positions;
- Supporting the efforts of participating States in achieving gender equality;
- Setting specific priorities for the promotion of women's rights;
- Highlighting and promoting the role of women in conflict prevention and peace reconstruction processes;
- Monitoring and evaluating progress on the implementation of the Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. The OSCE Secretary General presents a progress report annually to the Permanent 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 the OSCE participating States to include gender concerns and women's contribution in the OSCE security policies and activities and to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It recommends that participating States:

- Create rosters of potential female candidates to serve in the area of conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation processes, in particular for senior management posts;
- Support training and education focusing on the rights of women and girls;
- Share experiences and best practices to engage with women's peace initiatives;
- Evaluate gender mainstreaming efforts.

## Decision on preventing and combating violence against women

This decision recognizes that violence against women remains persistent throughout the OSCE region and undermines security. Participating States are encouraged to adopt specific measures, including the following:

- Raise awareness and collect, analyze and disseminate data and research on violence against women;
- Ensure victim's access to justice, remedies and medical and social assistance;
- Prosecute perpetrators;
- Strengthen the economic independence of women and equal access to education;
- Prevent gender-based violence during and after armed conflicts and in the case of emergencies.

## Decision on women's participation in political and public life

The 2009 Ministerial Council Decision was adopted in response to continued concern over the under-representation of women in the OSCE area in decision-making structures within the legislative, executive and judicial branches.

The Decision calls upon participating States to:

- Develop legislative measures to facilitate the participation of women in decision-making in all spheres of political and public life;
- Take measures to ensure balanced recruitment, retention and promotion of women and men in security services, including the armed forces;
- Promote shared work and parental responsibilities between women and men in order to facilitate women's equal opportunities to effectively participate in political and public life.

## Decision on promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere

Adopted in 2011, 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 thus is essential to the security and stability of the OSCE region. The decision aims to address women's economic empowerment at a strategic and policy level in support of the OSCE comprehensive security approach, and affirms the commitments made in the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. It calls on participating States to support numerous specific measures for promoting women's participation in the economic sphere.

### What is gender mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy and method to achieve gender equality. It is the process of assessing in a given society or area how men and women have access and control over resources, decision-making and benefits, and integrating these considerations to the equal benefit of women and men, girls and boys, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects in all political, economic and social spheres.



## Putting words into action

The OSCE approach to incorporating gender in its policies and operations is based on three pillars:

### I. Mainstreaming gender in the Organization's structures, recruitment procedures and working environment

The OSCE has focused on the needs of staff members in areas such as work-life balance and parental leave entitlements. The Organization has issued a policy against sexual harassment and discrimination, as well as recommendations to promote a gender-sensitive working environment.

The Gender Section analyses recruitment and secondment trends of professional management positions in the OSCE. In 2012, women reached a high of 47 per cent of professional staff in the OSCE. The Organization aims to achieve a greater gender balance in senior management positions (P5 and above). The share of women in these senior management positions reached 30 per cent in May 2012.

A database to promote the recruitment of female experts in the areas of military and police, where women are least represented amongst the OSCE executive structures, has also been developed; [genderbase.osce.org](http://genderbase.osce.org)

### II. Mainstreaming a gender perspective across dimensions in all OSCE activities, policies, programmes and projects

The Action Plan clearly states that the differentiated impact of any OSCE activity on women and men must be assessed, and that the needs, knowledge and experience of both women and men should be considered in any project, not only in the human dimension but also in the politico-military and economic and environmental dimensions. The specific situation of women and men in each country must be a part of the projects' planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Training and capacity building tools for OSCE staff and State delegations have been developed and used to this effect. In addition, roundtable discussions and technical meetings on the benefits of integrating gender issues into each of the OSCE dimensions are being held regularly to promote policy makers' awareness of gender equality issues.

Important steps toward achieving gender equality in OSCE are being taken by field operations. During the period from 2011 to 2012, 365 projects conducted by the OSCE field operations in Central Asia, South Caucasus, Eastern Europe and South-Eastern

Europe, have conducted a gender analysis or included a gender dimension in the substance of their work.

The themes covered by these projects ranged from police projects to initiatives in fighting violence against women; promoting equal opportunities for women in the economic and environmental sphere and strengthening women's political participation.

### III. Promoting the rights, interests and concerns of women in six priority areas where inequality and discrimination are most prevalent

Field operations, the Secretariat and the Institutions are called upon by the Gender Action Plan to assess the need for new activities and to assist participating States in implementing the relevant commitments in six priority areas:

- Establishing non-discriminatory legal and policy frameworks;
- Preventing violence against women;
- Promoting the participation of women in political and public life;
- Promoting women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction;
- Promoting equal opportunities for women in the economic sphere;
- Creating national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

## Recent publications

- The Secretary General's Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. Published annually.
- Gender Mainstreaming in Aarhus Activities – A guideline for practitioners, January 2012.
- Mending Inequalities – Men and Gender Equality in the OSCE Region, May 2011.
- Women's Economic Empowerment – Trends & Good Practices on Women's Entrepreneurship in the OSCE Region, December 2010.
- Quarterly E-Newsletter: The Gender Monitor, March 2010 - Present.
- Gender Matters in the OSCE: CD Toolkit, January 2010.
- Bringing Security Home: Combating Violence Against Women in the OSCE Region - A Compilation of Good Practices, June 2009.
- Guide on Gender-Sensitive Labour Migration Policies, May 2009.

Publications are available at: [www.osce.org/gender/documents](http://www.osce.org/gender/documents)





# Who is who

## OSCE Gender Section

The Gender Section is part of the Office of the OSCE Secretary General. It assists with the integration of a gender perspective into the Organization's policies and programmes in the three dimensions of security: the politico-military, the economic and environmental and the human dimension. It advises OSCE executive structures and political bodies on the implementation and monitoring of the OSCE's Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and gender-related Ministerial Council Decisions. It provides direct assistance to the field operations, to Institutions and to the Secretariat's units.

The Gender Section implements thematic programmes and develops operational tools, guidelines and capacity building materials to assist staff members and participating States. The Section also organizes roundtable discussions, thematic meetings and, in co-ordination with the Training Section, courses on gender mainstreaming for OSCE staff.

## Gender Focal Points

The OSCE has appointed gender focal points in each field operation and Institution, as well as in all departments of

the Organization's Secretariat. Some field operations have appointed the Deputy Head of Mission as a gender focal point following the recommendation of the Secretary General's 2008 Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan. Without being full-time gender advisers, the gender focal points are tasked with raising awareness and supporting OSCE staff in the mainstreaming of gender issues in different policies and projects.

## OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

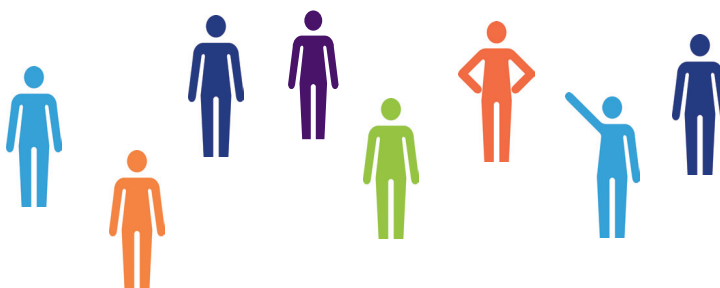
The Office's Democratization and Human Rights departments implement programmes on increasing the participation of women in the political and public arena, capacity building of women's networks, combating violence against women and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 emphasizing the involvement of women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

## OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The Parliamentary Assembly has appointed a Special Representative on Gender Issues, whose responsibility it is to mainstream gender issues in the Assembly's decisions, reports and resolutions.

## Contact information

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The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) works for **stability, prosperity** and **democracy** in 57 States through political dialogue about shared values and through practical work that makes a lasting difference.