



GENDER MAINSTREAMING

INFORMATION BRIEF

WHAT IS GENDER MAINSTREAMING?



Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is the process of integrating both women's and men's interests and concerns into all policies, programmes and projects, so that gender equality is promoted in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making (Council of Europe, 1998).

Gender mainstreaming involves integrating a gender perspective into the content of different policies, as well as addressing the issue of men's and women's representation in the relevant policy area.

A commitment to gender mainstreaming is one of the most effective ways that governments can support and promote gender equality. Gender mainstreaming aims to ensure that both women and men have equal rights and opportunities to access resources and contribute to decision making.

WHY IS GENDER MAINSTREAMING IMPORTANT?

Gender mainstreaming is an inclusive strategy that aims to integrate the needs of all people – men and women, boys and girls in all their diversity – into policies and programmes. Gender mainstreaming makes public interventions more effective by ensuring that inequalities are not perpetuated.

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WHAT IS THE EU4 GENDER EQUALITY REFORM HELPDESK?

The [EU4 Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk](#), funded by the European Union, provides demand-driven assistance to governments¹ and EU Delegations in Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries² on mainstreaming gender in policy-making and the implementation of reforms to ensure the delivery of effective results for women and men.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This brief may be of use to anyone who produces legal acts, policies, programmes and projects (staff of government institutions, EU Delegations, civil society organisations and other international development partners) that aim to benefit people in Eastern Partnership countries and beyond. It may be also of use to researchers, representatives of academia and the mass media in these countries who study and/or report on legal frameworks, policy-making and project design.

¹ In Belarus, the Reform Helpdesk only provides assistance to the EU Delegation.

² The Eastern Partnership is a joint initiative involving the EU, its Member States and six Eastern European partner countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.



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Gender mainstreaming leads to higher quality, more relevant policy-making and legislative work because it enables policies and programmes to effectively respond to the needs of all citizens. Better results lead to increased well-being for both women and men, and the creation of a more socially just and sustainable society.

This approach also enables the efficient allocation of resources; by contrast, decisions which do not fully take into account the needs and situations of all beneficiaries involve inappropriate solutions and the inadequate allocation of public funds.

HOW DO WE MAINSTREAM GENDER INTO THE POLICY/ PROGRAMMING CYCLE?

At a programmatic level, gender mainstreaming may be applied throughout the programme cycle following a sequence of steps:

1

STEP 1: GENDER ANALYSIS

The goal of gender analysis is to collect evidence for gender-sensitive legal and policy development and programming. Gender analysis is the critical starting point for gender mainstreaming. It is an integral part of the context analysis which identifies if, how and why issues affect women and men differently and unequally in a particular context or development sector, and what options exist to address these challenges. For more information on this stage, see the EU4Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk's information brief on gender analysis.

2

STEP 2: PROGRAMME DESIGN

This stage involves using the findings of the gender analysis to inform the programme's design. Programme design includes the selection of priority issues, target groups and coverage, and their integration in terms of programme results, indicators and intervention modalities.

3

STEP 3: RESOURCE ALLOCATION

In the process of gender mainstreaming, it is crucial to ensure the allocation of adequate resources to effectively address gender equality considerations in the programme cycle.

4

STEP 4: PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

This step involves fostering multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary partnerships to implement a programme, engaging a range of stakeholders, including women's organisations.

5

STEP 5: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Effective monitoring and evaluation allows us to build the evidence base for strategic decisions related to gender equality, enable better development planning and hold institutions to account for their commitments on gender equality (UN Women, 2014).

GLOBAL AND EU PROVISIONS ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Gender mainstreaming is recognised in the international legal framework, including international instruments on human rights and gender equality that Eastern Partnership countries have committed to, such as:

1. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979.
2. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995.
3. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and nine additional UN Security Council WPS resolutions.
4. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Gender mainstreaming has increasingly become an important issue within the European Union's (EU) political agenda. Through various documents, the EU has demonstrated its commitment to implementing gender mainstreaming. At the EU level, EU institutions are in charge of implementing gender mainstreaming, whereas at the national level, mainstreaming gender is up to EU Member States' governments.

The [EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025](#) presents policy objectives and actions to make significant progress by 2025 towards a gender-equal Europe. The goal is a Union where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our European society.

The strategy's key objectives are ending gender-based violence; challenging gender stereotypes; closing gender gaps in the labour market; achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy; addressing the gender pay and pension gaps; closing the gender care gap and achieving gender balance in decision-making and in politics. The Strategy pursues a dual approach of gender mainstreaming combined with targeted actions, and intersectionality is a horizontal principle for its implementation.




While the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 focuses on actions within the EU, it is coherent with the EU’s external policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The EU’s [Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 \(GAP III\)](#) aims to accelerate progress on empowering women and girls. GAP III promotes a transformative and intersectional approach, and mainstream gender in all policies and actions. The EU has committed to ensuring that at least 85% of its external actions should have gender equality as a principal or significant objective. Through the [renewed Eastern Partnership agenda of recovery, resilience and reform](#), the EU is committed to support the Eastern partner countries in their efforts to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in all policy areas and support equal access to resources through systematic gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting.

GOOD PRACTICES

Although gender equality is formally enshrined in the constitutions and legal systems of Eastern Partnership countries, a lack of gender mainstreaming prevents substantive gender equality. Therefore, the [EU4Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk](#) has been supporting gender mainstreaming in programmes and reforms in Eastern Partnership countries since its inception. Examples of good practices include:

 **Armenia:** The Reform Helpdesk supported the mainstreaming of gender in the Economic Response Programme and the Action Plan of the Republic of Armenia, the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021–2027 for Armenia, and EU Delegation to Armenia’s Action Fiche on Education.



Azerbaijan: The Reform Helpdesk supported gender mainstreaming in justice sector reforms by training staff at the Ministry of Justice and Penitentiary Services and the Justice Academy of the Republic of Azerbaijan on gender-sensitive prison management and the re-integration of women prisoners into society.



Georgia: The Reform Helpdesk conducted a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) of Georgia’s draft law on “Food Loss and Waste Reduction, and Food Donation” to support gender mainstreaming in new legislation.



Moldova: The Reform Helpdesk is currently providing assistance to Moldova’s Ministry of Defense to develop a new Action Plan based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.



Ukraine: The Reform Helpdesk assisted the creation of a group of 40 experts on gender mainstreaming in the Ukraine Recovery Plan 2022–2032. The group worked to integrate gender across the 24 sectoral working groups set up under Ukraine’s National Council. A gender mainstreamed approach was integrated into five policy briefs and analytical materials prepared for the Ukraine Recovery Conference (Lugano, July 2022) on key topics: economic recovery, social recovery, infrastructure recovery, smart recovery architecture, and environmental recovery.

USEFUL LINKS

- [EU4Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk project page](#)
- [Gender Equality Library](#)
- [EU Neighbours East website](#)



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EQUALITY LIBRARY