

GENDER EQUALITY AND GOVERNANCE AND DECENTRALISATION

GOOD TO KNOW

- Decentralisation and devolvement of powers and budgets to a regional and/or local level is a key an opportunity to empower women and men and increase their participation.
- Gender Equality is a condition for democracy and good governance.
- Local governments are responsible for large expenditure and the delivery of many public services which need to respond to the lives of women and men accordingly.
- General attitudes and culture in society which construe men as the only real political actors, tend to disqualify women. In the same sense, women in politics are often more closely scrutinized and criticised than men.
- The lack of a written and citable political commitment to gender equality (e.g. National Plan of Action or other policy document) makes it difficult to hold governance structures accountable for low female participation.
- Women can be discouraged by the use of masculine terminology in politics and governance, either under the flawed assumption that men are the only legitimate actors here or under that masculine terminology can also include or represent women – which it does not.
- A lack of media representation of women's political voices, views, demands and leadership, means that other women lack a model with which they can identify and find legitimacy for their own views.
- The unequal division of family responsibilities, including household management and childcare, places women at a disadvantage in terms of time needed to be active in politics. Similarly, limited social services inhibit women's access to "disposable time".
- Many local governments do not cover the costs of childcare or dependent care at all. This causes women to struggle financially and in some cases stand down.
- Women's lower wages and limited entitlements to social benefits, alongside prevalent social expectations that women spend their income on their families, inhibits or prevents expenditure on an uncertain political career.
- Close to their citizens, local authorities are in a best position to address inequalities, they have a deep understanding and knowledge of community needs and contexts. They play a key role in local development and are the main vehicle for delivering local public services. They are an important point of access to the political system for women.
- In Council of Europe member states 13.4 % of mayors and 26 % of local council members are women
- Budgets are rarely gender neutral. All budgets are about politics. All politics are ultimately about who controls the budgets.

WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE DO ABOUT IT?

- Committee of Ministers (2003), Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making provides for a 40% minimum representation of women and men in decision making.
- European Committee on Democracy and Governance – CDDG (2017), CDDG(2017)24: Balanced Participation of Women and Men in decision-making: possible action by the CDDG
- Gender Equality Commission – GEC (2016), Balanced participation of women and men in decision-making: Analytical report – 2016 data
- Council of Europe Good Governance website, Current tools on Good Governance

Texts of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

- Resolution 2111(2016) on assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation
- Resolution 1898(2012) on political parties and women's political representation
- Recommendation 1899(2010) on increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system
- Resolution 1781(2010) on a minimum of 30% of representatives of the under-represented sex in Assembly national delegations

Texts of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

- Recommendation 390(2016) Women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels
- Recommendation 288(2010) Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life
- Resolution 303(2010) Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life

GENDER EQUALITY ASPECTS

- Ensure the balanced participation of women and men as local government officials and elected representatives: consider quotas or parity systems, work with political parties, encourage women to become candidates, take affirmative action and measures to include women candidates in the parties' lists (40% minimum target).
- Gender responsive budgeting: analyze resource allocation and revenue generation from a gender equality perspective. The budget should reflect the differing needs of women and men and contribute to gender equality. If that is not the case, restructuring is required.
- Employment in the public sector: take measures to eliminate all forms of (sexual) harassment and discrimination in relation to pay, pensions and access to employment. Ensure equal opportunities for women and men at all levels and categories. Employment policies should be gender-sensitive, notably in relation to reconciliation of private and working life for both women and men. If "down-sizing" of the public sector employment is foreseen, consider its potential differential impact on women and men.

- Participatory consultation processes for policy planning: equal representation and voice of women and men. Apply specific consultation methods, if needed. Include relevant civil society organisations in consultation processes, including women's organisations.
- Institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming: creation of gender machinery and adoption of gender equality strategies, action plans, etc.
- New service delivery responsibilities of the local level authorities: conduct assessments of service delivery from a gender equality perspective in order to take into account the different needs and priorities of women and men. Ensure equal access to services to both women and men (availability, accessibility, etc.).
- When having to make budget cuts and reducing deficits take account of the accumulative impact on women, who often are the main users of local services on behalf of themselves, their families and those they care for.
- Capacity building: after the assessment of existing capacities, plan and carry out necessary gender-sensitive training courses and training in gender equality issues, including gender budgeting for authorities, elected representatives and relevant staff members. It is important to change women's mindsets to encourage them to step forward and show their interest in participation in this field. Training sessions can focus on breaking glass ceilings and giving responsibility to women themselves.

DO NOT FORGET

- International and national commitments to gender equality should be reflected in decentralisation, good governance and local policies.
- Mere women's representation does not guarantee women's issues are addressed. Legal, institutional and policy frameworks, advocacy capacity building and awareness-raising are equally important.
- All policy making and planning should be based on the situation analysis to identify possible existing gender inequalities and their causes and consequences. Sex-disaggregated data is essential for that purpose.
- The role of the local governments to tackle violence against women in the public and private spheres (creation of safe public spaces, providing support and services to victims).
- Hold the local authorities and elected representatives accountable on gender equality issues.
- Ensuring gender-balanced participation of women and men in activities, highlighting the importance of gender mainstreaming before the national counterparts, gender-specific evaluation, gender mainstreaming in the capacity-building activities and when necessary specific gender training components need to be considered.
- Some categories of women experience more discrimination and are in more vulnerable situations and may require specific measures in terms of participation, policy planning and service delivery, for example Roma or women of ethnic origin, disabled women, widows, single mothers, older women, migrant and refugee women, women discriminated against for their sexual orientation or gender identity and women living in poverty.

Gender equality considerations need to be tailored to the different types of interventions carried out through Council of Europe co-operation projects:

AWARENESS RAISING

► Co-operation projects should:

- promote the added value of the Council of Europe and other international standards and instruments in support of local government and gender equality,
- refer to and use examples of good practice on why and how local governments can best promote gender equality,
- raise profiles of successful women; promote use of case studies,
- promote successful gender equality policies, strategies and programmes at local level,
- promote awareness-raising of the importance and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in the media and through education at all levels,
- promote collection and use of gender-disaggregated data, in order to define policies and assess the impact that gender can have on beneficiaries.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

► Co-operation projects should:

- ensure gender equality is mainstreamed in experts' work on developing and implementing local government policies and legislation,
- mainstream gender into local government legislation (including for civil servants, codes of conducts, human resources management, etc.),
- help translate national objectives on gender equality into local policies, strategies and legislation,
- mainstream gender equality in local development policies and/or promote adoption of gender equality policies at local level,
- encourage use of information and data on current situation of men and women, boys and girls, in order to take good account of their priorities and needs.

CAPACITY BUILDING

► Co-operation projects should:

- identify and promote adoption of specific consultation methods to find out views, concerns and needs of women and men, about the services they are responsible for in order to improve participation,
- strengthen leadership development and performance management to promote gender mainstreaming,
- introduce training programmes for civil servants, including in national administrations, to promote collection and use of gender equality indicators, gender impact assessments, evaluation of policies and action, based on good practice,

- collect good practice on gender mainstreaming through local government organisation, local public services, human resources management, public participation, etc.

EXAMPLES

AWARENESS RAISING

From 2005 to 2017 the number of countries having introduced a gender quota in Europe rose from 5 to 17. A comparison of the percentage of women elected in 2005 with 2016 showed a significant increase at all levels in the five countries, which had quota at both points in time.

Leadership Academy training for mayors of newly amalgamated communities in a member state in 2016: in the trainers' team 75% were women and 25% men while 24% of participants were women and 74% men. In terms of content – the Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) contains special sessions on gender mainstreaming in governance – and this is not just about women participating in public administration, but also about how to take gender perspectives into account when making decisions regarding public services – including roads, transportation, schools, construction, etc. In two other member states, the Leadership academy got respectively half women participants session to stand for mayor at next election, and six women participants who stood for Parliament.

Another example is this video: SALAR Starter Kit for Sustainable Gender Equality - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYikioYiilU> – it contains good examples about what local authorities can do to ensure gender equality.

GOT INTERESTED?

- European Commission (2006), Briefing Note on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Decentralisation, Public Administration Reform and Local Development
- United Nations - Habitat (2008), Gender Mainstreaming in Local Authorities – Best practices
- Observatory – European Charter For Equality of Women and Men in Local Life
- UCLG Standing Committee on Gender Equality (2015), From SDG5 to Habitat III: The role of local governments in promoting gender equality for sustainability
- Gender Equality and Local Governance - UN Women (Albania)
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (2008), Gender Equality and Participation in Local Government – a source book for trainers
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation – SDC (2003), Gender in practice - A tool-kit for SDC and its partners



Sources for data in this factsheet

- Balanced participation of women and men in decision-making. Analytical report of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission (2016 data)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): Gender Mainstreaming in Practice: A Handbook. 2005