

A guide and checklist for implementing equality mainstreaming

The right to equality and non-discrimination is a cornerstone of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 1) and the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 14 and Article 1 of its Protocol No. 12). While it is well established in international and national law, and measures have been implemented in many member states, a gap remains between principles and practice—between formal (*de jure*) equality and actual (*de facto*) equality. Discrimination is deeply embedded in the structures of society and extends across the various sectors and governance levels. Having in place a robust legal framework that prohibits discrimination serves as a crucial foundation but is not enough to achieve equality and eradicate discrimination. Tackling discrimination and advancing equality requires to establish policies and standards and to ensure their effective implementation, paving the way for genuine substantive equality.

Promoting equality is implemented using a dual approach (also known as "twin-track strategy") which combines the systematic integration of equality perspectives into all policies (mainstreaming) with specific, targeted policies and actions designed to address particular inequalities. Equality mainstreaming is the systematic incorporation of equality and anti-discrimination concerns into all stages of the policy process, including policy making, policy implementation and policy review.¹ As shown below, equality mainstreaming is itself a policy process composed of those stages. Mainstreaming equality in public policy ensures that all significant public policies make an appropriate contribution to the objectives of equality and non-discrimination. Targeted policies and actions are tailored interventions implemented to prevent, eliminate or remedy specific inequalities faced by particular segments of population (e.g. LGBTI persons).

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for implementing equality mainstreaming, either when developing new legislation, policy or programmes, or when reviewing the existing ones.² It is a guide for those who want to promote equality and combat discrimination more effectively. It seeks to establish a foundation for the design and implementation of an equality mainstreaming approach at the Council of Europe and at national level. While mainly focussing on the grounds under the mandate of CDADI – "race", ethnic/national origin, colour, citizenship, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics –, it is based on a transversal approach that remains open and adaptable to other grounds of

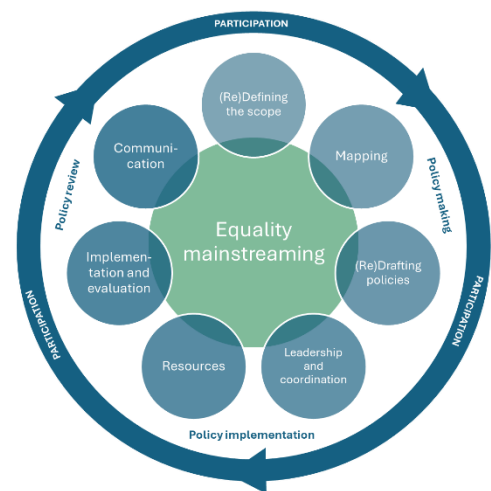
¹ Item 07 CDADI(2024)31 Equality mainstreaming - Definition, methodology and possible next steps.

² For member states, this document is mainly addressed to governments and national level authorities responsible for a systematic and comprehensive approach at the highest governance level. Nevertheless, it can and should be adapted to regional and or local levels in accordance with each member state administrative and political model. Despite this broad overview on mainstreaming equality policies at a very high level, each policy sector, organization and set of actors should prepare their own tools to implement equality mainstreaming at national, regional and or local levels. In Appendix I, a checklist can be found with the core tasks to be carried out in the process of equality mainstreaming, following the guidance compiled in the present document. Appendix II presents a list of existing resources for implementing equality mainstreaming.

discrimination.³ This guide is primarily intended for staff working on equality and equality mainstreaming, including equality mainstreaming coordinators. In the member states, this includes staff working in units relevant for promoting equality in all sectors, including equality bodies; and at the level of the Council of Europe, this covers all three main pillars of its action: intergovernmental work, monitoring and co-operation.

The CoE, many of its member states, as well as many other international organisations have been advancing a gender mainstreaming approach⁴ for many years. This gender mainstreaming experience and the tools produced within this framework serve as inspiration and reference for the approach described in this document. Different mainstreaming efforts, notably gender mainstreaming and equality mainstreaming, should be complementary and mutually reinforce each other from a human rights perspective. This complementarity is achieved through an intersectional approach, aiming for equality across all parts of society, especially for those who are at risk of multiple and intersectional discrimination and may be left behind⁵. Advancing gender mainstreaming, equality mainstreaming and addressing multiple and intersectional discrimination should be done jointly, as all are complementary and mutually reinforcing. To implement broad equality mandates without weakening the gender equality perspective, it is important to put in place mechanisms to ensure sustained dedicated resources and accountability structures for gender mainstreaming; at the same time, those implementing equality mainstreaming should have gender expertise.

Redesigning and implementing equality mainstreaming requires participatory approaches, as it should respond to the needs and perspectives of specific individuals and groups at risk of discrimination, following the motto *Nothing about us without us*.⁶ Attention should be paid to the fact that groups exposed to discrimination are not homogenous groups, but that individuals have multiple identities linked to different personal characteristics and that at times also men can be at risk of discrimination. Mainstreaming the equality perspective should ensure that those at risk of discrimination are actively involved in policy development and decision-making.⁷ This should include the participation of women from all parts of the population, including those at risk of intersectional discrimination regardless of the topic or population segment in question. A participatory planning process engages the relevant stakeholders in an effective and inclusive manner with a view to



³ The Committee of Ministers also decided to mainstream the perspective of persons with disabilities across the Organisation's intergovernmental and co-operation activities.

⁴ [Council of Europe's gender mainstreaming approach](#).

⁵ It should be noted that men and boys, with their multiple identities, can also be at risk of discrimination and that achieving gender equality "is an objective that concerns all women and men, boys and girls. (...) This means acknowledging men and boys as agents and beneficiaries of change, and strategic partners and allies in the achievement of gender equality. ([Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029](#)). See also [Guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women](#). (Council of Europe, 2023).

⁶ The expression has been used by community organizations and movements to fight for the rights of marginalized individuals and groups ([Nothing about Us without Us: Introduction to Participatory Action Research](#), 2024)

⁷ An effective participatory approach prevents tokenism practices as those of involving members of a minority group only to prevent criticism or give the appearance that people are being treated fairly ([The Britannica Dictionary](#)). Similarly, it is important to note that not all groups at risk of discrimination are adequately represented by civil society organisations. In such cases, other ways of involving and consulting should be found, such as seeking key community interlocutors, training group leaders or supporting the formation of representative CSOs. This support for representation is in itself an activity included in an equality mainstreaming approach.

designing interventions from the community level to the national level. It fosters people's ownership and support and ensures respect and representation for all. Such a process requires time, thoughtful and permanent effort, dialogue and a strong commitment. Given its importance and transversality, the participatory approach will be flagged in this document with [⇒ PARTICIPATION ⇐].

The present guide follows the three stages in the policy process – policy making, policy implementation and policy review⁸ – and focusses on seven critical issues that should be taken into account when mainstreaming equality (as summarised in the diagram).⁹

1. (Re)Defining the scope of the equality policy

The scope of equality mainstreaming can vary considerably and may involve different degrees of complexity. Though comprehensive equality mainstreaming should cover all population segments, namely those at risk of discrimination, and all public policies, authorities may decide which group(s) and area(s) to prioritise in a specific moment. Therefore, equality mainstreaming can be designed and implemented from the scope of only one group¹⁰ or ground of discrimination in one particular sector to covering a large number of grounds of discrimination or even the whole population and a large range of sectors; it may be developed through universal or in combination with targeted policies.¹¹ And it can be accomplished through a combination of several of these approaches (see below some examples).

	ONE MAJOR GROUP/GROUND OF DISCRIMINATION	SEVERAL GROUPS/GROUNDS OF DISCRIMINATION	SPECIFIED POPULATION GROUP	ALL RESIDENTS/CITIZENS
ONE SECTOR	<i>Program on advancing access of Roma and Travellers children to quality education</i>	<i>Plan on advancing access to healthcare for LGBTI people</i>	<i>Public Housing Program</i>	<i>Employment Policies</i>
SEVERAL SECTORS	<i>Plan for implementing UN global compact on Refugees</i>	<i>Plan on combating racism and discrimination</i>	<i>Anti-Poverty Strategy</i>	<i>Environment Policy</i>

Fig – Examples of policies where equality mainstreaming can be implemented

The equality mainstreaming process begins with the clarification of the scope of the new or renewed policies and the approach to deal with it. This initial step of policy design depends on the formulation of a public problem¹² and a goal to reach. In policy making, a problem should

⁸ [Compendium of practice on Non-Discrimination/Equality Mainstreaming](#) (European Commission, 2011).

⁹ Although it follows the three phases, it does not provide exhaustive coverage of all stages of the political process but rather highlights key elements with a clear emphasis on the preliminary tasks of policy development, where fundamental decisions for the mainstreaming of equality are taken, and on some salient points of the implementation and review phases.

¹⁰ Women often represent at least half of population groups, and hence the importance of a gender equality perspective when implementing equality mainstreaming.

¹¹ *Universal policies* “aim to ensure all residents or all citizens (or all members of a broad population group; e.g., women, men, children, older people) have equal access to a baseline level of a good or service, commonly taking into account considerations of availability and affordability” and *targeted policies* “aim to provide access to a good or service intended to meet particular needs or goals of a specified population group” (Carey, Gemma, and Brad Crammond. [A glossary of policy frameworks: the many forms of ‘universalism’ and policy ‘targeting’](#). *J Epidemiology Community Health* 71.3 (2017): 303-307).

¹² A *public problem* is “a problem relevant to the public sphere and [that] on this basis legitimise public intervention” (Knoepfel, P.; LaRue, C.; Varone, F.; Hill, M. (2011) [Public Policy Analysis](#). Bristol: The Policy Press, p. 126). It is a socially unsatisfactory situation whose resolution is subject to action by the public sector, and public policy aims to solve this public problem (idem). The first step in policymaking is always to define and analyse the problem. Problem analysis involves answering fundamental questions about its nature, scale, origins, main causes, and the reasons it justifies attention as a

become a public problem, politically acknowledged. This first step concerns the description of the problem to be solved and of the goal to be reached based on available and collected information and data. In this initial stage of the equality mainstreaming process, the context of the policy, the degree of complexity and the type(s) of intervention are defined.

Redesigning and implementing equality policies in a mainstreamed perspective generally require that equality and work to remedy inequality (the problem) be recognised as a political priority.¹³ Equality mainstreaming initiatives should be supported and coordinated at a high political level; at national level namely under the direct responsibility of the president, prime minister or cabinet minister. Ideally, those persons should initiate the equality mainstreaming process and link it to other relevant processes such as gender mainstreaming and the mainstreaming of other cross cutting topics. Equality mainstreaming can, however, still be implemented without clear political leadership. The key is to mobilise political support and ensure commitment from as many relevant stakeholders as possible.

An important element of equality mainstreaming is to ensure that there is an adequate legal framework on promoting equality and preventing and combating discrimination. It may consist of a constitutional provision and a specific normative act such as an Equality Act, Non-Discrimination Act, or Anti-discrimination Act. This legal framework should go beyond simply prohibiting discrimination, and implemented and interpreted in conjunction with legislation and policy related to gender equality.¹⁴

To advance equality and tackle discrimination as a complex social phenomenon, equality data¹⁵ and information, disaggregated (including by sex) and broken down, where possible, by the different grounds of discrimination, should support evidence-based policies and thus help to uncover the (i) causes, (ii) forms, (iii) extent and (iv) effects of discrimination¹⁶ and wider inequality in society.

It is important to rely as much as possible on the information and data that is already available, including from European and international sources. The fact that one might wish to have additional or more detailed information and data about a topic should not be an obstacle to describe a problem with the available knowledge. If time and resources are available, some new data and information can be collected to close gaps, following a precise plan, making sure any data gathered is disaggregated by the different grounds of discrimination.

The discussion about this data (including sex-disaggregated data) and the information gathered should lead to a renewed awareness about the public problem and its elements. The involvement at this stage of relevant actor networks, especially individuals at risk of discrimination and rights-holder organisations relevant for equality mainstreaming and gender mainstreaming, can bring new, diversified views, which are based on daily experience. [➡ PARTICIPATION ⬅] This discussion should avoid the risk of just repeating or reinforcing the existing perception about the problem. In other words, data should not be produced just to

matter of public policy. This includes clarifying what the problem involves, what is already known about it, and what potential solutions exist, and it also requires beginning to gather the information needed to address these questions (Kraft, M. E.; Furlong, S. R. (2007) [Public Policy. Politics, analysis, and alternatives](#). Washington DC: CQ Press).

¹³ As an example in gender mainstreaming, OECD recommends that governments have a medium- to long-term equality vision, anchored in the government's programme or vision statement and/or development goals, as a starting point for the development and implementation of a whole-of government strategy for effective gender equality and mainstreaming (c.f. [Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality 2023](#), OECD, 2023).

¹⁴ See European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), [General Policy Recommendation \(GPR\) No. 7 on National Legislation to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination](#), §§ 2 and 8.

¹⁵ *Equality data* is understood "as any piece of information that is useful for the purposes of describing and analysing the state of equality. The information may be quantitative or qualitative in nature" (Makkonen, 2016, cit. by [Training manual on equality data collection and analysis to prevent and address systemic discrimination](#), 2024, p. 12).

¹⁶ [European Handbook on Equality Data – 2016 Revision](#) (European Commission, 2016, p. 103).

legitimise and substantiate the existing policy approach. This could be achieved, for example, by promoting awareness-raising initiatives, as well as training and capacity-building programs for public officials working on sectoral policies. The definition of the problem can necessitate broadening the intervention scope (e. g., we realise that we cannot advance in education without acting on ensuring decent housing, and then design the policy in these two sectors).

The definition of the problem should include an understanding of the common social perceptions and present narratives around the problem and the policy, and define which social perceptions and narratives to promote instead. If possible, it is worth defining also the costs of not implementing equality policies, whether social, financial, or in terms of security, social tension, etc.

During this early stage, data and information should also be used to define baselines regarding the elements of the problem that will be targeted by the policy in order to enable impact assessment at the end or after the intervention (as described below).

2. Mapping

The Council of Europe and member states have in place equality agendas at different levels of governance for some time now. Equality mainstreaming is a way of implementing them in a more systematic and comprehensive approach, ideally at the highest governance level.

Mainstreaming equality will rely on existing practices and structures, and hence an initial mapping is required. Some practical questions can help guiding the process of recognising what is already in place.

- Is there political commitment with equality policies? Is equality perceived and supported as a political priority? Which political levels and actors already support equality policies? Who should be brought on board and how?
- Which equality policies are already in place? Analysing and identifying current policies/measures (both targeted and universal policies), assessing their current suitability and results, and identifying gaps to fill (policies/measures that are needed in the current moment to advance regarding the re-defined problem), considering also gender equality and gender mainstreaming perspectives.
- Which legislation is already in place? Which discrimination grounds are covered¹⁷? Analysing and identifying the current legal framework that includes specific provisions for promoting equality and anti-discrimination.
- Which is the current institutional framework? Identifying current institutions (authorities, equality bodies, NHRIs, Ombudspersons at different governance level and with different responsibilities, as well as international and European organisations) and institutional coordination (including multilevel coordination), assessing their current suitability and results, and identifying gaps to fill (including the possibility of merging or splitting institutions or services, or reframing internal rules and regulations).
- Which policy tools (training courses, including e-courses, guides and guidelines, platforms and databases) are already available to support equality mainstreaming? In addition to the

¹⁷ As reference can be used the grounds of discrimination identified in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029, namely, Discrimination can be based on a variety of grounds, such as sex, gender, "race", colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status.

available equality data, which are the data gaps?

- Which other relevant actors are available (civil society, companies, religious communities, the media, the research and academic community, social partners, relevant complaint mechanisms)? What is their position/contribution to tackle the problem? Which actors are already involved, and which should be involved?

This analysis should be carried out both broadly and for each relevant sector and level of governance and involve diverse and significant networks of actors. [➡ PARTICIPATION ◀]

Equality Impact Assessment is a specific important tool for integrating equality into policymaking. It allows for the evaluation of a policy's potential effects on promoting equality and eliminating discrimination for individuals or groups at risk of discrimination. Impact assessment is an ex-ante evaluation that analyses a law, policy, or program to proactively determine the likelihood of its positive or negative consequences on equality. It involves estimating the various effects—whether positive, negative, or neutral—of a policy or initiative on specific aspects of equality. This type of evaluation follows a twofold approach: evaluating the current state of equality in relation to the policy under review, and forecasting the potential effects of the same or a different policy on individuals at risk of discrimination after implementation. Equality Impact Assessments may be undertaken in conjunction with gender impact assessments and assessments related to other human rights, with a view to understand the different factors and impacts at play from an intersectional perspective.

3. (Re)Drafting policies

The effective functioning of diverse and multiple mechanisms for equality is a precondition for the successful development and implementation of equality policies. These mechanisms include policies, legislation and institutions.

Equality mainstreaming can have different outcomes, according to each specific policy process, such as¹⁸: to ensure compliance of policy and the behaviour and actions of people with the legal provisions on equality and non-discrimination; to eliminate barriers for those experiencing inequality which limit the benefit of policies on them; to adapt the policy to the specific experience, situation and identity of different individuals and groups experiencing inequality; to advance equality for individuals and groups experiencing inequality in the area covered by the policy; to foster good relations between the wider society and individuals and groups experiencing inequality.

A strategy/plan is an example of a comprehensive policy tool that facilitates the implementation of equality mainstreaming. It presents, in a systematic way, a clear vision for the policy and defines its objectives, actions/measures, responsibilities of institutions, their leaders and managers and other stakeholders, and resources (including financial). These policy tools may cover the protection of individuals and groups at risk of discrimination based on one or several grounds in one or more sectors.

A strategy/plan presents a combination of actions/measures with several objectives (as listed before) and of different types (legislative acts, provision of services, establishment or adjustment of institutions/services, implementation of standards and regulations, data collection mechanisms, training and awareness raising activities, campaigns, etc.), and usually includes both universal and targeted policies. Its drafting process should include a broad consultation with the relevant stakeholders, in particular civil society organisations representing individuals or groups at risk of discrimination. [➡ PARTICIPATION ◀]

¹⁸ [Compendium of practice on Non-Discrimination/Equality Mainstreaming](#) (European Commission, 2011, p. 4).

National strategies and action plans are in place in almost every member state. A step forward in mainstreaming equality can consist in reviewing and improving different national strategies and action plans; and in improving their implementation and/or increasing synergies and complementarity between them, namely from an intersectional perspective, in order to address the problem(s) redefined earlier. National level strategies can also be informed by those developed at international level.¹⁹

While equality and anti-discrimination strategies/plans are specific instruments for equality, a complementary approach to equality mainstreaming is to analyse whether general or sectorial legal or political frameworks promote equality and prevent and combat discrimination, or whether there are elements that produce and reinforce inequalities.

Redrafting policies may result also in reorganising the institutional framework, as institutions (such as public authorities) and services serve as essential instruments for policy implementation.

It is important that the institutional framework for the promotion of equality comprises an interdepartmental or interministerial structure as an equality-focused state organisation, with the possibility to initiate high-level decision-making in all relevant policy areas to facilitate the effective implementation and an intersectoral coordination of equality mainstreaming.²⁰

Regarding other public institutions and services, namely those responsible for implementing universal policies, measures should be taken to ensure that the integration of the equality perspective becomes a sustained part of established internal processes and procedures, with the support of clear directives, guidance, methodologies and tools.²¹ In their mission as public services, equality can be effectively implemented in several ways, such as the following:

- Internal communication: effectively inform staff members of key messages and clear guidelines on equality and non-discrimination policies and practices, namely in all interactions with users and the public; this ensures that no perpetuation of stereotypes takes place.
- Continuous training for staff from those at the highest levels to front-office and in direct contact with citizens, particularly those working on drafting, implementing and monitoring policy; such training should be complemented with guidance materials to assist staff in implementing equality mainstreaming throughout all stages of an initiative they may undertake, and with making links to other mainstreamed perspectives including gender mainstreaming both in content and in process.
- Training and awareness raising activities for strategic audiences, including on gender equality perspectives: depending on the focus of the equality mainstreaming initiatives, they can include staff of the criminal justice system (including police, prosecutors, judges, and post-conviction services), professionals of education systems (including teachers, school staff and non-formal educators), media and journalists, children and youth, and civil society organisations, especially those representing individuals or groups at risk of discrimination.²²

¹⁹ Under the [Union of Equality](#) agenda, the European Commission adopted a set of strategies guiding member states on their own national policies in these fields, namely the [LGBTIQ+ equality strategy 2026 - 2030](#), the [Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030](#) and the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion, and participation 2020-2030, as well as the gender equality strategy 2026-2030 and the [Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030](#).

²⁰ [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2007\)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms](#)

²¹ [Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results](#), UN Women, (2022).

²² Some examples can be found at the [Compendium of good practices in equality mainstreaming. The use of equality duties](#)

- Public information: improvement of the reach-out procedures for basic services (health centres, schools, housing services, employment centres, etc.) by ensuring that information about public and private services and social rights is available and accessible, and enables people at risk of discrimination to effectively access them.

All public authorities should also ensure inclusive internal policies and methodologies that promote equality and non-discrimination, including on recruitment, performance assessments and career development mechanisms.²³

Changes in processes and procedures should also be promoted within private sector organisations in order to integrate the equality perspective in their policies and practices.²⁴

4. Leadership and coordination

Once the decision is taken for which individuals and group(s) and area(s) to prioritise equality mainstreaming efforts in a specific moment, political will should be mobilised at the relevant level. If possible, equality mechanisms should be coordinated at a high political level, namely under the direct responsibility of the director general, cabinet minister, prime minister or president. Furthermore, co-ordination should be ensured and an institutional set-up should be established (the relevant actors mobilised), preferably using the existing institutional architecture. Where needed, links between them should be strengthened. Units or focal points responsible for equality mainstreaming should be established within ministries, government departments and regional and local power structures, at the highest level of those structures, depending on the type and scope of the intervention. These institutional mechanisms should possess adequate authority, visibility, political acknowledgment, sufficient funding, and the required human resources.

Mainstreaming equality requires coordination between sectors and institutions, between relevant actor networks and between all levels of governance. It is important to build a clear leadership to have representatives of significant public sectors and other relevant stakeholders on board. The management of significant sectors and governance levels may require the establishment of a coordination structure with political support. This structure may be composed of high-level representatives from all relevant policy areas with decision-making powers. This coordination role can be performed by different types of organisations, such as a government office or regional/local authority or an interdepartmental/inter-regional committee. An equality body, NHRI or Ombudsperson could also serve as co-ordinator under the condition that their independence is respected.

The coordination structure should supervise equality mainstreaming interventions, namely ensuring that: the planned resources (human, logistic, financial) are available and used as planned; the timeline of actions is followed and adapted whenever needed; the actor networks are involved as planned, especially ensuring the participation of relevant minorities in the actions; the institutional and multilevel coordination is put in place, promoting synergies and preventing overlapping or duplication of efforts and resources.

Civil society organizations, especially those representing individuals and groups at risk of discrimination, including women facing multiple or intersecting discrimination, should be part of the coordination mechanism, and not only participating in formal consultation procedures.

[and equality impact assessment](#) (Equinet, 2021).

²³ See, for example, the [Thematic report of the ADI-ROM on how to stimulate governments to employ Roma and Travellers in governmental institutions and public administration](#) (2022), namely its recommendations.

²⁴ See the [EU Diversity and inclusion initiatives](#) that aim to promote diversity on business and trade unions. Each of the 27 EU member states have its own Diversity Charter supporting companies, public institutions and non-profit organizations in putting diversity, inclusion and solidarity at the core of their activities ([EU Platform of Diversity Charters](#)).

They should be empowered to fulfil this function. Likewise, equality bodies, NHRIs and Ombudspersons should be part of this institutional framework, while respecting their independence. [➡ PARTICIPATION ⬅]

5. Resources

Equality mainstreaming should benefit from adequate financial and human resources and the institutions/departments responsible for it should have adequately competences, powers and facilities.

Equality mainstreaming can generally be funded from the available budget of each organisation involved. Equality mainstreaming should be budgeted from the very beginning. This requires that finance ministries, along with relevant line ministries are both committed and capable to integrate key equality issues into their processes.²⁵ As in gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting, it is useful to support the understanding that equality and non-discrimination contribute to sound public finance management and to increased effectiveness and efficiency of public policy.²⁶

The budget serves as the most significant financial policy tool for an authority, playing a crucial role in ensuring that no individuals or groups are excluded, and should be prepared in a way that prevents the potential perpetuation, deepening, or exacerbation of inequality and discrimination. This can be ensured by incorporating equality concerns across all phases of the budget process²⁷ and into the underlying political documents related to finances and budgets (such as national plans and sector policies and strategies), by an explicit attention to equality perspectives in technical processes and documents (such as the annual budget call circulars and reporting), and by including equality mainstreaming in budget evaluations and audits.²⁸ Gender budgeting has been implemented by some public authorities at some level and can be a source of inspiration. Equality mainstreaming in budgeting should complement and not replace gender budgeting efforts.

Equality mainstreaming in budgeting should be supported by a wide range of stakeholders. For example, in the management of national or international funds, it is important to ensure that organisations representing individuals and groups at risk of discrimination are actively involved in monitoring committees, funding selection panels and the development of criteria for selecting initiatives.²⁹ Providing sustainable funding to these organisations is needed to ensure their continuous and effective participation in equality mainstreaming.³⁰ [➡ PARTICIPATION ⬅]

6. Implementation and evaluation

Once the equality mainstreaming policies are planned, they need to be implemented. This document will not go into detail on this step, but rather focus on the monitoring and evaluation of equality mainstreaming.

Equality data is paramount in order to build a common knowledge base on equality and discrimination, not only when defining the public problem and goal (see above), but also when monitoring and evaluating policies. The collection, analysis, dissemination and effective use

²⁵ As mentioned for gender mainstreaming in the [Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results](#) (UN Women, 2022).

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ As an example in gender mainstreaming, see the Priority checklist for the integration of the gender perspective in all phases of the budget cycle in the [Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality 2023](#) (OECD, 2023, p. 59).

²⁸ Idem.

²⁹ [Compendium of practice on Non-Discrimination/Equality Mainstreaming](#) (European Commission, 2011).

³⁰ Idem.

of disaggregated data and statistics should be encouraged and supported, as well as ensuring that the data reaches relevant policy makers and those responsible for drafting critical documents.

Relevant data disaggregated by categories (namely sex, age, disability, national or ethnic origin, language and religion, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics) can be of great use, always with due respect for the principles of confidentiality, informed consent and voluntary self-identification of the persons concerned. When gathered and handled in compliance with legal safeguards, in particular regarding data protection, equality data³¹ and statistics on discrimination help policymakers develop evidence-based strategies to combat discrimination, inequalities and exclusion and to monitor and evaluate their implementation. A mechanism should be established for the regular collection and analysis of disaggregated statistics and other relevant data.

In order to ensure that all planned actions are being effectively implemented, it is important to ensure monitoring as an ongoing process of assessing evidence related to actions and implemented policies, allowing for timely strategic decisions at any stage. Relevant stakeholders, namely stakeholders representing those at risk of discrimination, should be involved and participate in the monitoring process. [👉 PARTICIPATION 👈]

Evaluation is the performance assessment of an existing intervention to determine whether an equality policy, its allocated resources and its delivered outputs has successfully contributed to achieving the intended long-term change for its final beneficiaries. The evaluation shows *if* and *how* the intervention made the difference.³² It is important to identify, develop and adopt quantitative and qualitative indicators to capture the real situation in terms of equality. Relevant stakeholders, especially individuals and groups at risk of discrimination should be involved and participate in the evaluation process in at all its stages. [👉 PARTICIPATION 👈].

During policy implementation, it is also important to ensure that all planned actions are effectively executed. This can be achieved through collecting evidence related to those actions and policies; this allows for timely strategic decisions at any stage. Impact assessment procedures mentioned above (see section 2) may be complemented with impact evaluation procedures, the ex-post evaluation, where data is collected at the end of the intervention to analyse its real impact on individuals and groups at risk of discrimination. Equality impact evaluation has an important role in framing the design of the next generation of policy.

After the evaluation is completed, it is important to communicate the relevant findings to the stakeholders involved, as this allows them to participate meaningfully in the discussion on the evaluated policy and in the (re)designing of new/continued policies. [👉 PARTICIPATION 👈]

7. Communication strategy

Public communication is a two-way street to bridge the gap between policymakers and the administration on the one side and citizens on the other. For a healthy democracy, it is

³¹ Equality data can be collected through official statistics (population censuses, administrative registers and household surveys), but also using other methodologies such as victimisation surveys, attitudinal surveys (self-report surveys), complaints data, discrimination testing, diversity monitoring by organizations, qualitative research strategies (such as case studies, in-depth and expert interviews) ([Guidelines on improving the collection and use of equality data](#), European Commission, 2018), as well as profiting from diverse partnerships between research institutes and private polling firms, government agencies, and civil society organizations and networks²⁶ (Fuentes, M. & Shaw, A., 2023, [Expanding SOGIESC data collection through partnerships](#). UCLA School of Law/Williams Institute.) and international data (e.g. FRA surveys and monitoring reports).

³² [Quadrant Conseil](#), 2015.

essential that citizens are well-informed and able to participate fully.³³ Communicating a policy and its results contributes to the reinforcement of a positive societal perception of equality policies and its outcomes for societal cohesion and development.³⁴

Equality mainstreaming should be communicated throughout the process, from (re)drafting policies, to its implementation and final evaluation, aiming to ensure a clear understanding of the policy and its effects on stakeholders and the wider public. The communication should be tailored to different audiences and specific objectives, including targeted messages for authorities, organisations, individuals and groups which are particularly impacted by a new policy. [➡ PARTICIPATION ⬅]

It is important to have broad societal support for equality policies. To achieve this, convincing arguments for implementing equality mainstreaming should be developed and communicated effectively.³⁵ Strategic communication also helps counter false narratives and underline the importance of inclusion and justice. Effectively communicating equality policies can be achieved through public campaigns and narratives that show the added value of diversity. These efforts can complement counter-narratives, which challenge widely held stereotypes and misconceptions about minorities by presenting alternative perspectives rooted in human rights and democratic principles such as pluralism, freedom, and equality.³⁶

³³ European Commission (2006) [White Paper on a European Communication Policy](#).

³⁴ For example, presenting evidence of success of policy measures, including similar measures implemented at international level, or to ensure transparency about the rules, namely defining and explaining who should get what and why, are among measures that may increase public support to equality policies ([Delivering on equality and inclusion. Understanding drivers of effective change](#), European Commission's Joint Research Centre, 2024). A good communication should allow also to dismantle the idea that a group may be benefiting over another, preventing putting groups at risk of discrimination in a situation of competing for attention and resources.

³⁵ [Compendium of practice on Non-Discrimination/Equality Mainstreaming](#) (European Commission, 2011).

³⁶ [Study on effectiveness risks and potentials of using counter and alternative narratives in combating hate speech](#) (Justice for Prosperity Foundation, 2025).

Appendix I

Implementing equality mainstreaming

Checklist

This checklist covers some of the core tasks that may be carried out in the process of equality mainstreaming. It follows the guidance compiled in the above Guide to implementing equality mainstreaming. It is directed to policy makers at the Council of Europe and in member states at all levels of governance and sectors. It is not prescriptive, but should be treated as a guide intended to ensure that the expected outcomes are achieved when mainstreaming equality at any level or context. The professional or entity using this checklist should consider how the checklist interplays with other tools used by the organisation, including related to gender equality mainstreaming, and coordinate between or streamline tools and approaches where relevant and helpful.

1. (Re)Defining the scope of the equality policy

- ☒ Equality mainstreaming initiatives are backed and coordinated at high political level, or initiatives are taken to mobilise their support when strong political commitment is missing
- ☒ Equality mainstreaming initiatives are backed and coordinated at the different levels of the hierarchy in key institution and public services responsible for universal or sectoral policies, or initiatives are taken to mobilise their support when strong leadership backing is missing
- ☒ Available disaggregated data, including sex-disaggregated data, and information are gathered and any potential data gaps are identified
- ☒ New data and information are collected to address data gaps if needed, disaggregated by sex and other personal characteristics as possible
- ☒ Needs and policy priorities from different stakeholders are gathered
Data and information collected are analysed and discussed with relevant stakeholders
- ☒ Representatives of individuals and groups at risk of discrimination participate, alongside operational actors (public bodies) in the (re)definition of the public problem and identifying solutions
- ☒ Gender balance is ensured in consultation and dialogue with relevant stakeholders and in activities
- ☒ The public problem is (re)defined and the area and the goal of the equality mainstreaming initiative is formulated

2. Mapping

- ☒ Current political commitment with equality policies is analysed and mapped
- ☒ Equality policies already in place are mapped
- ☒ The current legal framework is mapped
- ☒ The current institutional framework is mapped
- ☒ Available policy tools and data gaps are identified
- ☒ Relevant stakeholders are mapped
- ☒ An equality impact assessment of the current state of equality in relation to the policy under review is put in place
- ☒ An equality impact assessment of the potential effects of the reviewed policy on beneficiaries—particularly individuals from groups exposed to discrimination — after implementation is put in place

3. (Re)Drafting policies

- ☒ Current (national/regional/local) strategies/plans are reviewed/improved to integrate the equality perspective in all their stages.
- ☒ Synergies between current strategies/plans are improved, particularly from an intersectional perspective and in the search for cross-cutting solutions
- ☒ The current legal framework is reviewed and action for any necessary improvement is foreseen
- ☒ An equality-focused public organisation is established and/or the functioning of an existing organisation is improved, coupled with a network of staff members responsible for coordinating integrated actions in each institution and public service responsible for universal or key sectoral policies
- ☒ This or another structure enables peer review and the exchange of good practices between staff members on equality and non-discrimination within and between public bodies
- ☒ (Positive) Measures for the promotion of equality are planned
- ☒ Internal communication about equality and non-discrimination is planned in public institutions and services responsible for universal policies
- ☒ Continuous training for staff about equality and non-discrimination (legislative framework as well as practical guidance) is planned in public organisations and linked to gender equality and gender mainstreaming
- ☒ Training and awareness raising activities for all involved in policy making are planned and linked to gender equality and gender mainstreaming,
- ☒ Public information and outreach procedures for bringing basic services to people

at risk of discrimination are planned

- ☒ Inclusive internal policies and methodologies are foreseen by public organisations
- ☒ Representatives of individuals and groups at risk of discrimination and other relevant stakeholders participate in the process of (re)drafting policies through fair outreach and consultation process, and gender balance is ensued in these processes
- ☒ Equality policies and practices are planned in the private sector
- ☒ Continuous training for staff about equality and non-discrimination is foreseen in the private sector
- ☒ Internal communication about equality and non-discrimination is planned in the private sector
- ☒ Inclusive internal policies and methodologies are foreseen and implemented in the private sector

4. Leadership and coordination

- ☒ Equality mainstreaming is adopted as a political priority
- ☒ High-level coordination (namely under the direct responsibility of the director general of the public administration, president, prime minister or cabinet minister) is implemented, including regarding other mainstreamed approaches such as gender mainstreaming
- ☒ At operational levels services, units or focal points responsible for equality mainstreaming are established at the highest level of all relevant authorities
- ☒ Adequate human resources are allocated to the equality mainstreaming coordination mechanism
- ☒ Civil society organisations, especially those representing individuals and groups at risk of discrimination, equality bodies and NHRIS are part of the coordination mechanism, and gender balance is ensured

5. Resources

- ☒ Adequate financial resources from the general budgets for different policies are used to fund equality mainstreaming initiatives
- ☒ Additional funding for equality mainstreaming initiatives is mobilised
- ☒ The equality-focused public organisation referred to in point 3 is equipped with adequate human and financial resources to ensure coordination and develop support for public services responsible for universal or sectoral equality policies
- ☒ Equality and non-discrimination concerns are incorporated across all phases of the budget procedure in complementarity with gender budgeting initiatives

- ☒ Underlying political documents related to finances and budgets (such as national plans and sector policies and strategies) incorporate equality and non-discrimination concerns in the budget procedure
- ☒ Equality mainstreaming receives explicit attention in technical processes and documents of the budget procedure (such as annual budget circulars and reports)
- ☒ Equality mainstreaming is included in budget evaluations and audits
- ☒ Organisations representing individuals and groups at risk of discrimination are actively involved in decision-making and monitoring of funding management, and gender balance is ensured
- ☒ Organisations representing individuals and groups at risk of discrimination are provided with sustainable funding

6. Implementation and evaluation

- ☒ Planned actions are implemented
- ☒ The collection, analysis, dissemination and effective use of disaggregated data and statistics, including sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics, is encouraged and supported
- ☒ A mechanism for the regular collection and analysis of disaggregated statistics and other relevant data is established
- ☒ Disaggregated data and statistics, including sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics, reach relevant policy makers and those responsible for drafting critical documents
- ☒ An evaluation process is put in place, including impact assessment procedures.
- ☒ The evaluation results are communicated to the relevant stakeholders

7. Communication strategy

- ☒ Equality mainstreaming is communicated to the relevant stakeholders throughout the process
- ☒ Arguments for implementing equality mainstreaming are communicated effectively and in a balanced and representative manner from gender equality and intersectional perspectives

Appendix II

Resources for implementing equality mainstreaming

1. Council of Europe

- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2007\)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms](#)
- [Training manual on equality data collection and analysis to prevent and address systemic discrimination](#) (2024)
- [Toolkit on gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms](#) (2024)
- [Make gender equality in law a reality in fact. Compilation of recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in the field of gender equality](#) (2022)
- [Preventing and combating intersectional discrimination in Europe: A model for change](#) (2025)
- [Gender mainstreaming and including an intersectional approach](#)

2. European Union

- [Equality data collection](#) (EC, 2025)
- [Compendium of practice on Non-Discrimination/Equality Mainstreaming](#) (EC, 2011)
- [Gender Impact Assessment. Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit](#) (EIGE, 2016)
- [Gender Equality Glossary & Thesaurus](#) (EIGE)
- [Gender Equality Index](#) (EIGE)
- [Gender budgeting](#) (EIGE, 2019)
- [Handbook on European non-discrimination law](#) (FRA, 2018)
- [Handbook for equality mainstreaming at DG MOVE – Training materials for equality mainstreaming in mobility and transport](#) (EC, 2024)

3. Other

- [Compendium of good practices in equality mainstreaming. The use of equality duties and equality impact assessment](#) (Equinet, 2021)
- [Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results](#) (UN Women, 2022)
- [Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality 2023](#) (OECD, 2023)