

PREVENTING AND COMBATTING SEXISM AT LOCAL LEVEL IN GEORGIA

A guide for women and men in local politics



Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
of the Council of Europe

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PREVENTING AND COMBATTING SEXISM AT LOCAL LEVEL IN GEORGIA

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men in local politics

Original:

Preventing and combatting sexism at local level in Georgia: A guide for women and men in local politics (English version)

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Cover design and layout: YUSTON

Illustrations: Good Way

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Acknowledgements

This guide for women and men in local politics on *Preventing and combatting sexism at local level in Georgia* was developed in the framework of the project “Strengthening participatory democracy and human rights at local level in Georgia”, implemented within the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2020 – 2023.¹

This guide is a response to Congress report on Fighting sexist violence against women in politics at local and regional level and its Resolution 459 (2020) which call on the Congress Secretariat to develop toolkits, guidelines and campaigns to raise awareness and support women local elected representatives and candidates to stand up against sexism and other forms of gender-based discrimination and violence, as well as to counteract sexist behaviour and violence from other politicians and the media.²

It is the adaptation to the Georgian context of the guide on *Preventing and combatting sexism at local level in Ukraine*, developed in the framework of the project “Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine”, implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities within the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018 – 2022.

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Foreword

Equal participation for women and men in politics and at all levels of decision-making has been widely acknowledged as essential to more prosperous and stable societies. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges gender equality and strong institutions as two of its 17 goals.

A particularly significant area where equal participation should be pursued is local government because it is often an entry point for women into politics and local decision-makers are at the forefront of responding to citizen needs with policy solutions that might be later adopted at the national level. However, many obstacles hinder the active involvement of women in local politics. Sexist discourse, attitudes and violence against female candidates and local elected representatives is an important obstacle to the participation of women and the advancement of their political careers.

Recognising the negative impacts of sexism in achieving equality between women and men, the Council of Europe has made preventing and combatting gender stereotypes and sexism its first strategic objective in its current Gender Equality Strategy. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is working towards balanced representation of women and men, including through its Recommendation and Report³ on preventing and combatting sexist violence in politics and encouraging local and regional authorities to take appropriate measures in their institutions and administration.

Preventing and combatting sexism requires a concerted effort on the part of local and regional elected representatives with the support of public administration at all levels, law enforcement bodies, and civil society. Effective structures, mechanisms and policies need to be put in place to promote equality within public institutions.

In the spirit of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the right of citizens to participate in the affairs of a local authority, the guide aims to equip local decision-makers and candidates in Georgia with the knowledge necessary to recognise and address sexism in their institutions, thereby enhancing women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels.

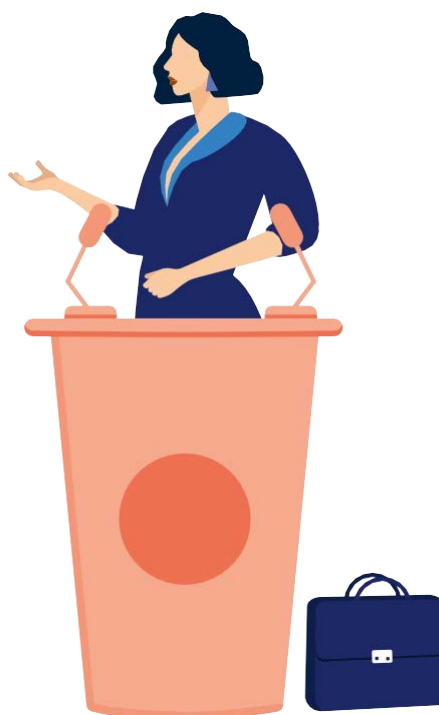


Andreas Kiefer
Secretary General
Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
of the Council of Europe

Introduction

Women who seek and hold local elected office are pioneers in advancing human rights in an area still heavily dominated by men. Among the many barriers they face, sexism plays a major role in limiting their ability to fully and freely exercise their civic duties.

This guide provides practical advice to both local authorities and national associations of local and regional authorities, and to possible targets of sexist violence (including sexist speech and sexual harassment) and gender-based discrimination such as female candidates and local office holders. It offers guidance on how to recognise, prevent and combat sexism through practical measures before, during and after elections. The guide includes examples of good practices on awareness raising, codes of conduct and regulations to be adopted by municipalities inter alia, as well as some examples of sanctions against perpetrators and remedies for those targeted by sexist behaviour. It also provides a general overview of the concrete measures intended to address the underlying causes of sexism by enhancing gender equality in local government.



Sexism is defined by the Council of Europe as “any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice, or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline”.⁴ Widespread and prevalent in all sectors and all societies, sexism is rooted in historically unequal power relations between men and women which lead to discrimination and prevent the full advancement of women in society.⁵

Sexist attacks targeting representatives of local and regional authorities and civil servants and sexist behaviour within and among these authorities is a major barrier to elected women’s effective participation in local government (note: this guide does not address sexist policy or behaviours that local bodies may enact towards their citizens). Local government is a particularly important area where this problem should be addressed because of the impact local decision-makers have on the daily lives of citizens in key areas such as housing, security, transport, and the economy.

Local government is often an arena for policy innovation and problem-solving, where policymakers identify and pilot test solutions before they are introduced at a national

scale. Local politics is also often a gateway for women to enter politics. Barriers such as sexism against female candidates and local office holders can deter women from entering or advancing in their political careers. Women's equal participation and representation at this level of public decision-making is vital to ensure that the needs and issues of the entire population are adequately addressed as well as to localise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁶

This practical guide aimed at combatting sexism and promoting gender equality in local government has five concrete objectives:



To advance political and human rights and achieve SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls);



To enable local authorities and national associations of local and regional authorities to address a key problem, create tolerant and supportive workspaces and advance gender equality in society;



To empower local elected women to be effective in their roles by eliminating a major obstacle;



To contribute to creating a secure and empowering environment for aspiring women to compete for local elected office; and



To advance popular perceptions of legitimacy, representativity and effectiveness of local government.

Women in local government: laws, policy and current statistics



Political empowerment of women and enforcement of gender parity at the highest levels of governance continues to be one of the most important challenges for achieving gender equality in Georgia. This is one of the commitments undertaken by Georgia in the context of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5 - Gender equality, Target 5.5: Ensure equal opportunities for representation at all levels of decision-making in political and public life).

The legislative framework of Georgia guarantees equality of women and men in all spheres of life and the country has ratified all key international treaties on gender equality and women's rights. Nevertheless, institutional mechanisms to comply with these obligations require reinforcement.

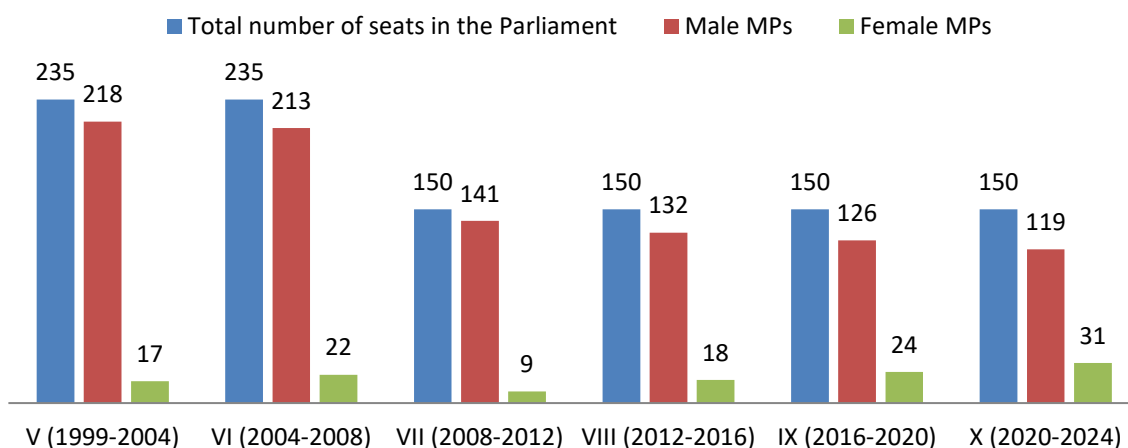
According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Georgia ranks 111th out of 192 countries in terms of representation of women in national parliaments.⁷ Georgia ranks 61st out of 189 countries covered by UNDP's 2020 Human Development Report and 74th out of 153 on the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Index of political empowerment.⁸

Following the 2020 electoral reform, compulsory gender quotas⁹ for national and local elections were introduced. Despite significant progress during the last parliamentary

elections in October 2020 when number of elected female members of Parliament increased from 14.8% to 20.7%, political representation remains low and Georgia remains below the European average - 28.5%.¹⁰

Women's representation in the Parliament of Georgia (1999 - Present)

source: *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)*



Low political participation is also reflected at local level. Following the 2017 local elections, and as of August 2021, the number of women in *Sakrebulo* (Council) has slightly increased to 13.4% compared to 2010 (11.1 %) and 2014 (11.6 %).¹¹ There are no women mayors in any of the five self-governing cities, and there is only one woman mayor in 64 municipalities. The highest number of women representation in *Sakrebulo* is in Kharagauli (28.6%), Tsalenjikha (26.7%) and Khoni (25.0%), while the lowest is in Keda (4.2%), Khulo (3.6%) and Abasha (3.1%).¹²

GEORGIA'S LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY



International & regional commitments

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2015-2030¹³

SDG5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (BPfA) of the 4th World Conference for Women (1995)

- Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making
- Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership
- Create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies
- Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects
- Generate and disseminate gender disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation

Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)

The Istanbul Convention is the first international treaty which explicitly addresses all forms of violence against women and recognises that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men.

Furthermore, the Istanbul Convention defines "gender" as socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men. State parties of the Convention have an obligation to take the necessary legislative and

other measures to adopt and implement State-wide effective, comprehensive and co-ordinated policies encompassing all relevant measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention and offer a holistic response to violence

Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on preventing and combating sexism

First document to provide the definition of Sexism as “any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice, or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline”.

It recommends the member states to prevent and combat sexism and its manifestations in the public and private spheres, and encourage relevant stakeholders to implement appropriate legislation, policies and programmes.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe Recommendation 449 (2020) and Report On Fighting sexist violence against women in politics at local and regional level

Through the recommendation the Congress calls on local and regional authorities to take a strong stand as political leaders against sexist attacks targeting women, introduce or revise codes of conduct explicitly prohibiting sexist behaviour and speech in their assemblies. It also invites them to be vigilant during election periods with regard to sexist attacks against women and to monitor candidate nomination procedures for inequalities. Furthermore, invites the governments of the member States to provide support and resources to local and regional level authorities.¹⁴

EU-Georgia Association Agreement (2014)

Ensure gender equality and equal opportunities between men and women in multiple sectors.



Constitution of Georgia

Article 11 guarantees the right to equality. All persons are equal before the law and any discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, origin, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other views, social affiliation, property or titular status, place of residence, or on any other grounds shall be prohibited.

The constitution ensures that the State shall provide equal rights and opportunities for men and women, as well as shall take special measures to ensure the essential equality of men and women and to eliminate inequality.

Law on Gender Equality (2010)

The law stipulates that the State shall support and ensure equal rights for men and women in political, economic, social and cultural life. It guarantees equal enjoyment of rights without discrimination in various spheres of public life, including equal voting rights, as well to be elected to a representative body. The law provides for gender equality and mainstreaming in government policies, prescribes the duties of central and local authorities, as well as foresees the creation of institutional mechanisms to enhance gender equality.

At central level, Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council,¹⁵ as well as Interagency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence¹⁶ of the Human Rights Council of the Government of Georgia was established as per article 12 of the Law on Gender Equality. At local level, Gender Equality Councils were created within the municipalities and Gender Focal Points were appointed in accordance with the article 13 of the Law on Gender Equality.

Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (2014)

The law defines various forms of discrimination, including harassment and sexual harassment and applies to all public and private institutions.¹⁷ It also requires all institutions to bring their activity, legal acts and internal regulations, if any, into conformity with this law and other anti-discrimination legislation. Based on this law, the Public Defender of Georgia is designated as an independent anti-discrimination mechanism.

Law on Elimination of Violence against Women and/or Domestic Violence, and the Protection and Support of Victims of Such Violence (2006)

The act defines the characteristic of violence against women and/or domestic violence occurring in public or private life, the legal and organisational basis for the detection and prevention of violence, as well as guarantees of social and legal protection and assistance to victims.

Election Code of Georgia (2011)

Following 2020 electoral reform, compulsory gender quotas¹⁸ as a temporary measure were introduced for the parliamentary elections of Georgia to be held before 2032, as well as for the general municipal elections to be held before 2028.¹⁹

National Human Rights Strategy 2014-2020 and Human Rights Action Plan 2018-2020

The National Human Rights Strategy identifies 23 priority areas for action on a legislative, institutional and practical level, including the promotion of gender equality, protection of women's rights and prevention of domestic violence, as well as the consequences resulting from such violence. The action plan, among other issues, further sets an objective for women empowerment and promotion of women's political participation, through capacity building of potential female candidates, as well as development of study programmes on gender equality.²⁰

The 2018-2020 National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security"

The National Action Plan constitutes a whole of government approach to integrating gender perspectives in the security sector and in decision-making processes, using a gender lens in peace negotiations, protecting the rights of women and girls and promoting their meaningful participation in conflict prevention and resolution.²¹

Recognising sexism in local government



Sexist behaviour²² in local government can be direct or indirect, including written, verbal, physical, electronic or other forms of expression. Sexist behaviour and sexual harassment may be physical and/or psychological and can involve obvious and active actions such as physical assault or openly discriminatory comments, or passive and subtle actions such as persistent teasing or regularly “forgetting” to include female councillors in meetings and decision-making processes. These actions may be single incidents or repeated behaviours over a period of time. Sexual harassment is defined by the person targeted by the behaviour, not the person engaging in that behaviour – claiming “it was a joke” or “I didn’t mean to offend” does not excuse the behaviour. Sexist comments do not need to be targeted at an individual to be harmful. For example, a male council member who makes a derogatory statement about women’s inferiority could be recognised as committing an act of harassment against female council members because it contributes to a hostile work environment for women in the council.

In the context of local government, the perpetrators of sexist speech and sexual harassment can include fellow council members, members of council staff and administrative staff, other elected officials and staff from other levels of government. It can also include constituents and community members. Perpetrators may include both men and women and may be known to the target or not. Social media can be a vector for encouraging sexism aimed at women in local government, when users express derogatory comments, ridicule, etc. in these spaces.

Sexism is a widespread phenomenon in Georgia and has its strong roots in long existing and constantly perpetuated gender stereotypes and roles across all spheres of life. It occurs offline and/or online and is frequently targeting female politicians at all levels

of governance. Certain inequitable perceptions of women in public life and women's leadership continue to persist. According to a study on public perception and attitudes, nearly 4 in 10 surveyed men disagreed that when a woman is equally qualified as a man, she can do the same work equally well.²³

Most of the sexist content occurs on social media platforms; however, sexist reporting which perpetuates gender stereotypes also exists in mass media.²⁴ Therefore, mass media and social networks play a negative role in the proliferation of sexism against female politicians. In the 2020 parliamentary elections, anti-gender equality discourse intensified significantly and the number of attacks on women politicians increased. Discriminatory, gender-biased and sexist language was used against female politicians during this period.²⁵ Terminology ranged between ordinary words used with a sexist connotation and abusive, derogatory vocabulary.²⁶ Slut-shaming is one of the common narratives used to insult women for not conforming to gender norms and stereotyped expectations of behaviour, appearance or clothing. Remarks about intellectual abilities, experience and competences are also used to ridicule women.²⁷

There have been numerous instances where local public officials in Georgia used discriminatory phraseology and sexist comments towards female politicians, as well as women actively involved in public life. The content of the comments mostly had sexual connotation or refer to existing gender roles.²⁸

"Sexism" is not explicitly defined within the legal framework of Georgia. Despite the fact that sexism falls and is interpreted under the scope of the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, explicit existence of the term could contribute to a better understanding of what sexism is. Some of the major challenges for combating sexism in Georgia is lack of sensitivity regarding this phenomenon and awareness of its negative impact on achieving gender equality, insufficient institutional responses to the instances of sexism, including lack of public condemnation from public figures, politicians and authorities, as well as lack of accountability of those using sexist hate speech.

The negative impacts of sexism in local government include diminishing an elected woman's ability to express an opinion or influence public policy by isolating her, not taking her opinions seriously or overtly disbelieving her because of her gender. Women targeted by sexism or working in sexist environments may lose out on opportunities to advance their political careers (media coverage, training, leadership of influential committees, etc.) and may even decide to drop out or not run for a second term of office. The impacts are not limited to the targeted individuals themselves. Witnesses of sexism and sexual harassment both within local government structures and in the community may be afraid to express support or intervene for fear of personal backlash. They may become divided and conflicted amongst themselves, resulting in expensive and distracting mediation or litigation processes and less effective governance overall.

Examples of sexist and harassing behaviour

Spreading malicious rumours, gossip or innuendo

Persistently criticising, demeaning or ridiculing a person

Undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work

Excluding or isolating someone

Physical threats or assault

Calling someone derogatory names

Teasing or joking about a person

Making aggressive or threatening gestures

Displaying offensive posters, cartoons, images or other visuals

Verbal threats or abuse

Playing pranks, vandalising or hiding personal belongings or work equipment

Unwelcome invitations or requests

Unwelcome physical contact

Publicly ridiculing or disciplining

Blocking applications for leaves, training or promotion

KEY DEFINITIONS

Sexism

Any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline, with the purpose or effect of: i. violating the inherent dignity or rights of a person or a group of persons; or ii. resulting in physical, sexual, psychological or socio-economic harm or suffering to a person or a group of persons; or iii. creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; or iv. constituting a barrier to the autonomy and full realisation of human rights by a person or a group of persons; or v. maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Sexual harassment

Unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour of sexual nature which is intended to cause or causes violation of dignity of a person or creates hostile, degrading, offensive environment.

Violence against women

Physical, mental or sexual abuse of women on the grounds of sex occurring in public or private life, and which cause or may cause economic damage to women, including threat of committing such actions, coercion of women, or unauthorised deprivation of liberty of women.

Indirect discrimination

A situation where a provision, criterion or practice, neutral in form but discriminatory in substance, equally treats persons who are in inherently unequal situation, unless such situation serves the statutory purpose of maintaining public order and morals, has an objective and reasonable justification, and is necessary in a democratic society, and the means of achieving that purpose are appropriate.

Direct discrimination

Treatment or creating the conditions when one person is treated less favourably than another person in a comparable situation based on any grounds, unless such treatment or creating such conditions serves the statutory purpose of maintaining public order and morals, has an objective and reasonable justification, and is necessary in a democratic society, and the means of achieving that purpose are appropriate.

Incitement to discrimination

Any action carried out for the purpose of forcing, encouraging, or supporting a person to discriminate against a third person.

Harassment

Persecution, coercion and / or unwanted behaviour towards a person based on any grounds, which is intended to cause or cause violation of dignity of a person and to creating a hostile, degrading or offensive environment.

The definition of sexism is taken from Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 27 March 2019, available at <https://bit.ly/32qv2bL>; all other definitions derive from Georgian legislation.

Combatting sexism through practical measures



Solutions for ending sexism require engaging diverse groups of people as well as leveraging processes and institutions. This section presents the main areas of action where practical measures can actively contribute to combatting sexism in local government. It begins by looking at how different stakeholders can take appropriate action. This includes discussions of how local government authorities can make better-informed decisions through data and research and how they can improve co-operation with civil society. This section also looks at methods for enhancing capacity of candidates and aspirants as well as how working with men (including young men) can strengthen outcomes. It discusses standards and transparency measures that help local governments enhance their responsiveness to issues of sexism and offers ideas on how networking and engaging new technology facilitates solutions.

Next, Section IV considers ways in which state processes and institutions can be adapted to improve their ability to respond to and prevent sexism and discrimination at the local level. The section begins with codes of conduct and ethical guidelines for local authorities and progressively examines possible institutional solutions from local to regional to national levels. It closes with an overview of possible sanctions and remedies, and a note on resource planning.

All interventions discussed here can be targeted at different phases of the electoral cycle (pre-, during and post-election) or can be overarching across the electoral cycle as a whole.

Entry points for a multi-stakeholder strategy to combat sexism

Ending sexism in local government requires the involvement of many different actors working in multiple areas. This section presents how core actors (local government authorities) can improve the quality and impact of their actions in combatting sexism. It reviews how local government can work with other key groups, including civil society, to enhance responses. Other target groups, such as male counterparts in local bodies and female candidates and aspirants, can also be supported to better contribute to a constructive environment.

Improving informed decision-making

Evidence-based approaches help organisations ensure that their policies, practices, events and decision-making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation.²⁹ Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) and other documentation and research (surveys, data collection, etc.) are essential tools for local and regional councils to identify the nature of the issue in their institutions and set a baseline to measure improvement. Local government authorities can introduce these measures at multiple levels, generally for their institutions and more specifically around significant policies and procedures.

Data collection should be consistent and ongoing for local authorities and should always be gender disaggregated. Some data such as reporting on sexism during campaigning and polling would be specific to electoral periods. All data, documentation and assessments should be conducted in a timely fashion to ensure that their results can meaningfully feed into decision-making processes.

These findings may guide local authorities in improving internal processes and structures as well as being useful for reducing sexist practices among external actors, such as political parties. EIA are commonly used to assess new or proposed changes to policy. Evidence-based approaches have the added value of creating a written record of equality considerations taken into account and enhancing institutional transparency.

EXAMPLES

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) and disaggregated statistics



Ukraine

The “Gender Portrait of the Zhytomyr City Council” analyses and uses infographics to present gender-disaggregated data of the city council, such as the number of women and men among deputies, among heads and deputies of departments, specialists in structural units, etc., as well as their age and level of education.³⁰ The page on the official Zhytomyr City Council website “Equal opportunities” presents gender statistics as well as relevant legislation, information on combatting domestic violence, projects on gender equality and anti-discrimination.³¹



Georgia

The Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia in co-operation with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) designed an information portal, which enables users to obtain gender statistics, processed by the CEC. The gender statistics portal records information on unified voters' list, electoral subjects, observers and media representatives, as well as on the composition of the Election Administration.³²



Georgia

The statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) launched the Gender Statistics Portal³³ in 2018. The portal groups the gender disaggregated data through infographics and interactive data visualization and provides gender statistics in the fields of demography, healthcare, education, employment and unemployment, social security, agriculture, governance, business sector, households, income generation, and ICT.



United Kingdom

For over a decade, dozens of local authorities across the UK have used EIA to meet their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).³⁴ This Act requires all public authorities to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to sex and gender as well as other protected characteristics. While each locality adopts its own procedures, in general EIA in the UK involve a screening evaluation to come to a decision about whether and why further analysis is - or is not - required. If further analysis is required, a full assessment questionnaire is completed and the report is made public. EIA questions may include gender analysis of the proposed policy, referral to relevant public data, consultation with community actors, data collection and evidence. Resulting recommendations are based on whether the proposed policy will meet the council's responsibilities in relation to equality and human rights. Examples of EIA forms, guidance and reports can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/33oP71q>

Setting targets and tracking progress through co-operation with civil society organisations

Accurate data and documentation allow local authorities to set targets for improvement over time. Setting ambitious yet realistic targets for decreasing the prevalence of sexism and increasing gender equality within local elected bodies establishes a tangible roadmap to improvement. Targets should be based on solid data and developed collaboratively in consultation with multiple stakeholders, both state and non-state depending on the context.

To ensure compliance, unmet targets can be set to automatic policy changes, for example failure to meet a target could automatically trigger budget increases on spending for equality measures. Collaboration between local bodies and civil society organisations (CSOs) can be especially helpful in this. CSOs may contribute testimony, research and documentation to track progress against targets. They may also enhance awareness raising about local authority targets and progress, which promotes confidence and perceived legitimacy by the population.

EXAMPLES

Collaboration to set targets and track progress on combatting sexism



Georgia

“Gender Barometer” is a project which aims to expose sexist hate speech and gender stereotypes against women politicians and representatives of various public institutions.³⁵ Within the project, sexist hate speech used against female politicians on social media are monitored and evaluated throughout the pre-election campaign in Georgia. Furthermore, multimedia materials,

such as a short video and quiz about sexism, are produced to raise awareness on this issue. This project is implemented by the CSOs “Media Development Foundation” and “Sapari”, with the financial support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Swedish Government.

Available at: <https://genderbarometer.ge/>



France

A French example in the area of education could be adapted to other areas of local authority. In France, the Hubertine Auclert Centre publishes analyses of sexist representations in school textbooks (history, mathematics, and French language). An evaluation grid is available as well as a practical guide for textbooks to be used as tools for equality. In November 2017, the Centre launched its website on stopping cyber-sexism. Working with specialised organisations to evaluate local government policy and resources is useful to set targets and track progress.

Equipping candidates and aspirants to navigate local politics

Sexism is a deterrent for many women that are considering entering local politics. To overcome this, aspirants and candidates must understand the recourse available to them and trust that officials will protect them by sanctioning harmful behaviours both online and offline. This may include

offering targeted information sessions, public service announcements and briefings during campaign periods. Strategic communications by official actors involved is also helpful, including statements of policy and intent by electoral bodies, police and security actors, local authorities and political parties.

Mentoring programmes facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experience, perspectives and skills within local government by providing an opportunity for elected women at all levels to learn from each other to progress in their own careers. Similar to networking strategies, mentoring and sponsorship programmes pair emerging women leaders with both men and women with longer experience in their field. This strategy helps combat sexism by equipping newly elected women with the tools and resources needed to exercise their duties free of harassment.

EXAMPLES

Capacity building for candidates and aspirants



Georgia

In 2016, the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia adopted the Gender Equality Policy for the first time in history. The policy determines the approach of the administration to gender equality, and focuses on ensuring equal participation of women and men in the elections, through strengthening the capacities of the Election Administration, the establishment of institutional practice, the development of programmes, as well as the engagement of relevant stakeholders.³⁶

The Central Election Commission (CEC) and its training center have incorporated a gender perspective in several study programmes, such as “Elections and young voters”, “Electoral development school”, as well as the semester course “Election law of Georgia.”³⁷ Moreover, the CEC has carried out a number of capacity building trainings for potential female candidates of different political parties within a specialised study programme and allocated grants amounting to GEL 175,830 for nine local non-governmental organisations to encourage women’s engagement in electoral processes.³⁸



Georgia

The campaign “PolitikaShe”, established by the initiative group “Women of Georgia”, aims at ensuring women’s political rights and achieving gender balance in governmental institutions of all levels. Within the campaign, storytelling and visual content (i.e. videos, photos) are produced, where among other issues, female politicians and activists share their experiences

on instances of sexist hate speech, as well as their insight on women's political participation.

Available at: <https://womenofgeorgia.ge/en/home/>;
<https://www.facebook.com/womenofgeorgia>.



Ukraine

There are several active leadership schools for women in politics that focus on empowering women leaders from different areas and sectors through new knowledge and skills to pursue career development, increase women's leadership roles in political parties, government agencies and NGOs, and improve women's participation in community decision making. Notable examples are: the Academy of Women's Leadership under the DOBRE Programme (2017-2021), the Union of Women of Ukraine's School of Women's Political Leadership, the Centre for Gender Culture's Women's Leadership Studio, and others. In 2019, Leadership Schools for Women Candidates for Local Council Deputies were organised in 15 oblasts with support from the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The schools include training in strategic planning, project management, developing communication skills as a tool for organisational development, and training in debate skills.³⁹



Portugal

The 'From Women to Women' programme in Portugal aimed to increase young women's participation in politics. Older women active in politics provided twelve months of mentoring to 30 young women aged 16-30, who also took part in training activities on gender equality, democracy, political systems, and other topics, and visits to political institutions. Young women belonging to minority ethnic and cultural groups were particularly encouraged to apply.⁴⁰

Working with men to combat sexism and promote gender equality

Constructive engagement with men (including young men) must be a part of any solution to combat sexism. Male counterparts in local government can learn to better understand what constitutes harmful sexist behaviours, avoid engaging in them and promote gender equality instead. Capacity-building activities can promote collaborative design and implementation of policies to sanction sexist behaviour and sexual harassment.

Practical measures to engage with men to cease contributing to cultures of sexism in local government include training, dialogue initiatives and mentoring programmes designed to raise awareness of personal bias and sexist behaviour and identify strategies to overcome them. These may be organized by specialised third-party actors (CSOs, etc.) or directly by the local bodies themselves. Similarly, local elected representatives (women and men) who

want to contribute to improved policy responses may benefit from targeted training or comparative studies of responses in other regions or countries.

Beyond training and education, strategies to promote men's engagement against sexism and for equality may include party pacts and personal commitments, incentive programmes, recognition and training in skills to intervene and respond in harmful situations. Mentoring programmes can also be used in different ways, for example by mentoring incoming male representatives on how to actively contribute to gender equal and sexism-free local government. "Reverse mentoring" is another strategy whereby women active in local politics provide gender sensitivity training to regional or national level officials.

EXAMPLES

Working with men to combat sexism and promote equality



Global – Barbershop Initiative (HeForShe)

Barbershop events encourage men and boys to become actively engaged in promoting gender equality by better understanding how gender inequality limits the ability of individuals, businesses, and communities to reach their full human, economic and social potential. Barbershop events provide men with tools to address this inequality and become agents of change. The Barbershop Initiative offers a range of tools in three areas: 1. Leadership sessions 2. Workshops 3. Increasing engagement. These resources are targeted at audiences of men across a range of levels, starting with the highest levels of leadership. Toolkits and resources are available free online at <https://www.heforshe.org/en/barbershop>

Caribbean states

Parliamentarians have identified the following good practices:



In legislative and oversight functions

- Assessing legislation and budgets through an intersectional gender lens to consider the potential impacts on diverse groups;
- Advocating for laws and initiatives that will positively impact women and help build the political will to pass them;
- Consulting with women's groups to seek feedback on proposed legislative initiatives (not just those explicitly related to gender equality) and integrating the results into decision-making.



In meetings (including committees, plenary, and in the constituency)

- Chairing meetings in a way that encourages equitable participation by all members (e.g. inviting those who have not spoken to contribute);
- Listening respectfully when each member of the group is speaking.



In the media and online

- Leveraging social media as a tool to keep informed about the work of gender equality advocates and joining discussions on pertinent topics;
- Challenging gender stereotypes and bias when they emerge on online platforms or through interview questions.



In everyday life

- Learning about key gender equality issues and sharing knowledge with others;
- Encouraging other men to become allies;
- Using gender-sensitive language (i.e. communication that demonstrates respect for women and does not make them invisible) and draw attention to harmful uses of language in day-to-day conversations. <https://www.parlamerica.org/en/gender-equality.aspx>

Setting standards and introducing transparency measures

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe identified transparency and open government as priorities in preventing corruption and promoting public ethics.⁴¹ The principles of open government are directly connected to the government's willingness to address sexism and promote gender equality. Specifically, open government increases the availability of information about governmental activities, supports civic participation, promotes government integrity and leverages new technologies for transparency and accountability. These actions contribute to closing gender gaps on information, access and participation and allow women and gender advocates to have a greater say in how government services are provided and to hold officials accountable.⁴²

These are equally important measures for preventing and combatting sexism in local and regional bodies. Local and regional bodies should publish key documents and information, promote public consultation processes, and support the monitoring and implementation of transparency measures around issues relating to sexism and sexual harassment within the institutions and surrounding women's political participation. Standards of behaviour may be agreed upon and formally established to prevent harmful sexist incidents from occurring within the institutions. Training may be offered to promote widespread understanding and awareness of new standards of behaviour.



Global – The Open Government Partnership

78 countries (including Georgia) and a growing number of local governments—representing more than two billion people—along with thousands of civil society organisations are members of the Open Government Partnership (OGP). In April 2020, the OGP launched a new phase focused on local government, called “OGP Local”. At all levels of government OGP recommends the following actions to promote gender equality and end sexism:

- Proactively invite and positively encourage women’s organisations, gender networks, and leaders to participate in government multi-stakeholder forum;
- Work with gender advocates to conduct an analysis of government action plans to identify where people of different genders have disproportionate levels of access or potential benefit, and then use that analysis to mainstream gender considerations into specific OGP commitments; and
- Consider a new commitment that uses open government to address a specific gap in women and girl’s services or policy needs.

Many more examples of open government recommendations for promoting gender equality can be found at <https://bit.ly/35zy04l>

Also see: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ogp-local/>



Canada

Canada has chosen to explicitly integrate gender in its open government action plan. For the first time ever, the Government of Canada undertook a gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) assessment of its open government plan in order to examine how various intersecting identity factors might impact the effectiveness of Canada’s open government work. Based on this review and feedback from a multi-stakeholder process and feminist and inclusive peer review, the Government of Canada produced its 10 National Action Plan Commitments for 2018-2020. Available at <https://bit.ly/2FER3KQ>

Leveraging regional and national gender equality networks

Gender equality networks are powerful tools for women in local government to gain fresh ideas and perspectives both about overcoming shared problems (such as sexism) as well as improving policy solutions for their constituencies. Such networks provide a fora for advice and career support, build confidence and help people gain different perspectives. There are many examples of networks for local elected women worldwide, ranging from national associations that bring together women at specific levels of government (for example, national networks of women mayors) to networks spanning global regions or groupings (for example, the Forum of Women Mayors in South East Europe,⁴³ the Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network,⁴⁴ the Federation of Canadian Municipalities⁴⁵ and the Network for Locally Elected Women of Africa - REFELA, in its French acronym).⁴⁶

EXAMPLES

Gender equality networks



Georgia

The Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia is planning to establish a platform for inter-party co-operation for the empowerment and support of women politicians at the central and local levels. In particular, the platform will aim to establish a format of co-operation and solidarity among women politicians to ensure their support at all levels of the elective body; to ensure a pre-election environment free from violence; facilitate media coverage free from gender stereotypes; as well as raise awareness of specific challenges that women candidates are encountering.⁴⁷



Georgia

The Coalition for Equality established in 2014 is an informal alliance of eleven non-governmental organizations.⁴⁸ The coalition aims at enhancing the mandate and competences of anti-discrimination mechanisms, as well as at supporting the effective fight against discrimination, including all forms of gender-based discrimination. Available at: www.equalitycoalition.ge



Georgia

The platform “No to Phobia”, established in 2014, unites 13 NGOs with the purpose of supporting close co-operation for identifying and elimination

discriminatory expressions and hate speech, including sexist speech, in Georgian politics and media. Furthermore, the platform focuses on raising public awareness of dangers of hate speech and tolerance. Available at: www.notophobia.ge

Integrating new technologies

Although social media and other new technologies can transmit and amplify harmful sexist messages, they are equally potent as tools for educating and awareness-raising. Webinars, online rallies and Q&A sessions can offer women in local politics the opportunity to both share experiences on a peer-to-peer basis as well as to reach out to the public and raise awareness of the harmful effects of sexism against women in politics. Podcasting is another useful tool. Podcasts can be used to offer more in-depth information on challenges and opportunities. Podcasts can also be used to focus on more targeted audiences such as local women councillors/ aspirants and male politicians. In Georgia, podcasts and other multimedia materials are created on various issues of gender equality; one such example is “Feminstream”.⁴⁹ “FeminStream”, which is a joint project of the Women’s Fund and an independent group of feminists aired on Radio Liberty, focuses on a range of crosscutting themes to gender equality, such as labour rights, women participation in decision-making, sexual and reproductive rights, sexuality, feminism and culture, gender and intersectionality, environmental justice, etc.

EXAMPLES

Leveraging new technologies to end sexism in government



Ukraine

The Gender Museum located in Kharkiv, offers a broad range of interactive materials on its website to promote accessibility. Museum online resources include content on landmarks in the history of gender equality in the country as well as information about International Women’s Day, the fight against sexism, surveys and public information materials.⁵⁰



Europe

The Council of Europe’s online Human Rights Channel presents a range of helpful information on how to end sexism. Accessible in multiple languages, the resources available include information on understanding sexism, videos, statistics, examples and recommendations. It also includes an interactive quiz to test users’ knowledge and personal perceptions around sexism. Available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-channel/stop-sexism>



Many podcasting examples to promote women's political participation and reduce sexism exist in other parts of the world, for example the Canadian "No Second Chances"⁵¹ podcast follows the political journeys of 12 female ministers, and helps listeners understand how gender played a role in both low and high points of their careers. "The 23%: Conversations with Women in Government" is a podcast that talks to women leaders about what motivated them to run for office, lessons they've learned along the way and the policy battles they're facing ahead.⁵²

Institutional channels for combatting sexism within local government

The law of Georgia on Gender Equality (2010) and the Law of Georgia on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (2014) as well as the other national policies listed in table above provide a basic framework for combatting gender-based discrimination, including sexism in local government. Applying this framework in practice is an ongoing challenge and opportunity for enhancing local governance. Determining the responsibilities and institutional authorities for combatting sexism in local government is critical to effective implementation. Responsibility can be assigned to one or more institutional actors, in addition to the measures for political parties, discussed above.

Codes of conduct and ethical guidelines

Local government codes of conduct establish consistent standards of behaviour for members of local councils in how they conduct themselves with their elected colleagues, with staff and with the public. Written codes of conduct help ensure that members of local government share a common basis for acceptable conduct. They enhance public confidence in institutions and elected officials.

Local council codes typically represent an additional set of rules to supplement existing regional or national legislation or policy. Some global jurisdictions (such as the Province of Ontario, Canada⁵³) require local governments to establish codes of conduct for local elected officials and certain boards. They may also mandate these codes to include specific matters, including sexism and discrimination. Local government codes of conduct may also be introduced because the issues related to responsible conduct of individual elected officials fall outside the mandates of existing offices responsible for government oversight. Alternately, they may be adopted as a first line of action in a broader hierarchy of government oversight.

Codes of conduct should include clauses to ensure women and men's equal participation by specifying guiding principles and specific practices that cons-

titute prohibited sexist and discriminatory behaviour. These should include non-criminal sexual harassment, intimidation, bullying (including cyber bullying and social bullying), hate speech and disrespectful behaviours. Including these behaviours in codes of conduct is essential because they provide a basis to sanction perpetrators and they boost public awareness and multiparty unity on the topic.

Codes of conduct may also contain rules following a finding of misconduct. Codes may include rules regarding enforcement, or they may reference other governing policy. In some cases, codes of conduct may be supplemented by by-laws that establish local-level accountability officer positions to handle complaints and enforcement. Complaints of violation of codes of conduct may be made by members of the public, staff as well as other members of the local council. Codes of conduct may accommodate both formal and informal complaints.

EXAMPLES

Codes of conduct and ethical guidelines



Europe

The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life establishes a formal commitment by local and regional governments to use their powers and partnerships to achieve greater equality for their people. To assist in the implementation of these commitments, each signatory authority undertakes to draw up an Equality Action Plan, which sets out its priorities, actions and resources and undertakes to engage with all of the institutions and organisations in its territory, in order to promote the achievement of real equality in practice. As of August 2021, 21 Georgian municipalities are parties to the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life.

Available at: www.charter-equality.eu



Canada

Provincial governments provide various resources to assist local governments to develop their codes of conduct. These include model documents and companion guides, reports on best practices across the province or between other provinces and links to other helpful material.

Model Code of Conduct: <https://bit.ly/2GZNSOM>

Companion guide to developing code of conduct: <https://bit.ly/2Rm2euR>

Local government ethics resources: <https://bit.ly/2FrU3e1>



Georgia

In 2017 Government of Georgia approved General Rules of Ethics and Conduct in a Public Institution, according to which a public servant shall avoid committing any form of discrimination, as well as refrain from using hate speech in public and/or making discriminatory comments. Moreover, the rules provide for the prohibition of sexual harassment and ensuring equality, through the creation of equal opportunities and refraining from stereotypes.⁵⁴ One of the recourses where a person can report on violation of ethical norms is through the online portal Mkhileba.gov.ge run by the Bureau of Civil Service of Georgia. A number of Georgian municipalities, such as Baghdati and Vani, have adopted codes of conduct for civil servants which echo the abovementioned rules, incorporating equality and non-discrimination and the prohibition of sexual harassment.⁵⁵



Georgia

The Code of Ethics of the Member of the Parliament of Georgia explicitly mentions that sexist and discriminatory speeches, appeals and actions, as well as any other use of hate speech are inadmissible for any member of Parliament. Compliance with ethical norms is monitored by the Ethics Council of the Parliament of Georgia comprising of majority and minority MPs.⁵⁶

Accountability Officers and Ethics Standards Boards

Enforcement of codes of conduct may be overseen by accountability officers or ethics standards boards. These officials must ensure that all parts of codes of conduct are equally protected, which may require supplemental training regarding gender provisions in cases where these are newly introduced.

Globally, there are various types of accountability officer roles that may enforce gender provisions at the local level. These are usually established under local by-law and may include:⁵⁷

- *a municipal Ombudsperson*. The municipal Ombudsperson's function is to investigate, in an independent manner, decisions and recommendations made and acts of the administration of a municipality, local boards and certain municipal corporations. The municipal Ombudsperson is a separate office from the national or regional Ombudsperson, who may also have a role with respect to local government;

- *a closed meeting investigator*. A local government (municipality or other) may appoint an investigator to investigate, in an independent manner, complaints about closed meetings. Should the local government not appoint an investigator, the Ombudsperson at the next jurisdiction level would be expected to serve in that role;
- *an Integrity Commissioner*. Integrity Commissioners report to local councils. Their role is to independently apply the code of conduct and associated procedures, rules and policies governing ethical behaviour of local government members. They may issue periodic watchdog reports or investigate specific complaints. If a Commissioner's inquiry into an ethics complaint finds a violation of the code of conduct, the local council may impose a penalty at their discretion.

In contrast to creating an individual role to oversee ethics, many countries establish Local Government Standards Panels or Boards to administer justice and resolve complaints relatively quickly and to provide the local government sector with guidance and benchmarks about acceptable standards of behaviour.⁵⁸ Under this model, local councils choose to elect an independent standards board on a periodic basis (annual or other) that is representative of political representation as well as of local diversity (sex, race, religion, etc.).

Standards Boards have the authority to make binding decisions to resolve allegations of minor misconduct and to deal with complaints about council members having allegedly committed a breach of one or more of the provisions of their code of conduct. To be effective, they must establish clear procedures for filing complaints, both for internal and external actors. Standards boards may have the authority to apply sanctions and temporarily or permanently suspend council members who are found guilty of non-criminal sexual harassment and other prohibited behaviours. Appeals to local standards boards may be made to higher authorities, such as the Ombudsperson.

EXAMPLES

Accountability officers and ethics boards



Austria

In 2011 an advisory board on anti-sexism to the Austrian Advertising Council was installed including qualified gender experts in order to counteract gender-discriminatory advertising and to raise awareness of the advertising industry for a non-discriminatory portrayal of the sexes.

Out of 278 complaints received in 2012, more than half dealt with "gender discriminatory advertising" (53.41%). The anti-sexism Advisory Board reviewed these complaints and provided its opinion to the Council. In 13 cases (7.39%), the Council called for immediately stopping the campaign. Similar models can be applied for local government.



Canada

The Integrity Commissioner for the city of Vaughn, Ontario filed a Code of Conduct Complaint Investigation Report to the city council following receipt of a complaint with allegations of sexual assault, harassment and reprisal by a deputy mayor and a councillor (2017). Referencing the provisions of the municipal code of conduct that protect against sexual harassment, the report documented the investigation and recommended sanctions (reprimand and suspension of remuneration for 90 days), corrective actions (apology to the complainant and the city) and the suspension or removal of some procedural powers. Ultimately, the deputy mayor and councillor resigned.⁵⁹



Georgia

The Charter of Journalistic Ethics is the only independent self-regulatory body, which among other functions, studies the facts of violation of professional standards by journalists, as well as engages in educational activities to increase the professionalism of journalists. The 11 provisions provided by its statute are in accordance with international journalistic standards and determine main professional principles of all the members of the Charter. Article 7 specifically refers to non-discrimination by stating that the journalists “shall take all efforts to avoid discrimination of any person by race, gender, sexual orientation, language, religious, political and other opinion, national or social origin or any other feature”.

In 2017, the Charter adopted Guidelines on the Coverage of Gender Issues.⁶⁰ Through the guidelines, the Charter underlines the vital role of media in shaping and reinforcing gender roles and stereotypes, as well as in the mitigation of such practices. Therefore, the guidelines are based on several core principles, such as eradication of strongly rooted gender stereotypes and gender roles, tackling and responding to use of sexist language, as well as ensuring gender balance in their work. According to the guidelines, special emphasis should be made on broadcasting and coverage of gender related matters and relevant legal and policy developments, identification of use of gender stereotypes by public figures and politicians, violence against women, sexual harassment, as well as women representation in elections.

Strengthening national associations of local and regional authorities to respond

Associations of local and regional authorities give voice to the needs of local government at a national or regional level and promote local needs. These associations can play important roles in responding to sexism and harassment in local government in several ways. They can collect appropriate data,

monitor progress, raise awareness, advocate for improvements, educate local councils about solutions at the council level and set standards for their members. Associations of local and regional authorities may require capacity building support directly to achieve some of these goals.

EXAMPLES

Strengthening local government associations' response to sexism



Georgia

The National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) was established in 2004 as a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and European Commission. NALAG aims to promote local democracy and decentralisation, and to develop the local self-governance system and its institutions.

In 2018, NALAG created a gender equality platform. The platform aims at promoting equality between women and men at the local level and serves as a co-ordination mechanism to ensure gender equality within local self-government bodies. NALAG organised the first National Conference of Local Authorities on Gender Equality in 2018.⁶¹

In 2020, NALAG adopted its first ever Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2025 and its Action Plan, which aims to support municipalities and strengthen local gender equality policies and institutional frameworks.⁶² Furthermore, NALAG elaborated a detailed guide to facilitate the development of municipal action plans for gender equality,⁶³ and is conducting series of training courses for municipalities on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.⁶⁴

Available at: www.nala.ge



Australia

Local Government Managers Australia, Queensland (LGMA Queensland, founded in 1957) supports local government advocacy, collaborative learning and professional development. The LGMA offers an in-depth Framework for Action to Promote Gender Balance in Senior Management in Local Government. The Framework is an internal guidance document outlining the vision, strategic priorities and mechanisms to assist in integrating gender awareness through local government organisational cultures and management, as well as within the LGMA itself. It includes guidelines on implementation, monitoring, reporting and review. Available at <https://bit.ly/2Fr0xK8>

Responses through the National Office of the Ombudsperson

The Public Defender of Georgia (PDO) is a constitutional institution, which supervises the protection of human rights and freedoms within its jurisdiction on the territory of Georgia.⁶⁵ It identifies the violations of human rights and contributes to the restoration of the violated rights and freedoms.⁶⁶ The Public Defender studies the cases of human rights violations both on the basis of the received applications and on his own initiative. As part of its mandate, the Public Defender presents annual reports to the Parliament of Georgia on all human rights issues.⁶⁷

The Public Defender of Georgia serves as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). In 2014, it was designated as the national institution to ensure the implementation, promotion and protection of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Furthermore, the Public Defender of Georgia is an Independent Anti-Discrimination Mechanism and is a non-judicial legal remedy for the alleged victims of all forms of discrimination. Moreover, in 2016 the Public Defender of Georgia set up the Femicide Monitoring Mechanism to analyse cases of gender-based murders and attempted murder-suicides, identify gaps of victim protection mechanisms, and issue recommendations.

The Public Defender's Office has headquarters in Tbilisi and nine regional offices. The PDO has the long-standing practice of holding consultations with the representatives of the local authorities in order to present its findings and recommendations. In 2019 and 2020, the representatives of the central and regional offices of the PDO held numerous meetings and conducted trainings with the representatives of local authorities primarily to discuss women's rights, gender equality, sexual harassment and other types of gender discrimination, women's involvement and participation in decision-making, etc.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the Public Defender of Georgia offers several e-courses related to gender equality, prevention of sexual harassment and principles of women empowerment.⁶⁹

EXAMPLES

Ombudsperson actions to stop sexism and sexual harassment



Georgia

In 2020, the Public Defender of Georgia considered 113 complaints on alleged facts of discrimination. The majority of the cases (18%) concerned alleged facts of gender-based discrimination.⁷⁰ The Public Defender has also identified multiple instances of sexism and gender stereotypes, especially against female politicians. The Public Defender consistently notes that sexism is used

against female politicians as a weapon within a political debate, and that the opposition against them goes beyond professional criticism and aims at humiliating and insulting them.⁷¹



Croatia

Croatia has a dedicated Ombudswoman for Gender Equality who acts in an independent manner, monitors the enforcement of the Gender Equality Law and other regulations on gender equality and reports to the Croatian Parliament at least once a year. One initiative of this office was working with the Croatian radio and television (HRT). The HRT training centre, in co-operation with the Office of the Gender Equality Ombudsperson, introduced training programmes for editors and journalists on the elimination of stereotypes and of content that presents men and women in a sexist, offensive or degrading manner in the media.

Sanctions, enforcement and remedies

The term and definition of “sexism” is not explicitly mentioned within the legal framework of Georgia. However, sexism falls under the scope of Article 2 (5) of the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (hereinafter, Anti-Discrimination Law), according to which any action aimed at coercing, inciting or facilitating discrimination is prohibited. The interpretation of this provision and the established case law⁷² of the Public Defender of Georgia demonstrate that sexism is considered as incitement to discrimination under Georgian legislation.

The scope of the Anti-Discrimination Law extends to any form of discrimination based on any ground, including sexism, perpetrated by public and private persons/institutions in diverse spheres of life, including labour and pre-contractual relations; social protection and healthcare conditions, education, and supply of goods and services.⁷³ The Public Defender of Georgia, alongside with the national courts, is a mechanism for legal remedy for alleged victims of discrimination. The Georgian law does not set a deadline to file a complaint before the Public Defender of Georgia; however, the Public Defender cannot receive complaints on alleged facts of sexism that occurred before May 2014 (i.e. prior to the enactment of the Anti-Discrimination Law).

To eradicate and prevent sexism, the Public Defender can study alleged individual facts of sexism based on complaints and/or by its own initiative. Subsequently, pursuant to Article 6 (2-c), the Public Defender may issue general proposals to the relevant institution or private individual/company on

the issues of preventing and combating discrimination. The practice also shows that the Public Defender of Georgia actively issues official public statements condemning sexist and discriminatory speech.

As regards to sexual harassment, it is defined under the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, which covers sexual harassment that may occur in all spheres of life, including public places. Moreover, the definition is included in the Labour Code of Georgia, which also prescribes the mandate of the Labour Inspectorate of Georgia to cases of alleged discrimination, including sexual harassment. Furthermore, sexual harassment which occurs in public places is considered as an administrative offence according to Article 1661 of the Code of Administrative Offences of Georgia. In such cases, the Ministry of Internal Affairs also represents one of the legal remedies, along with the Public Defender of Georgia. Therefore, alleged victims have several legal remedies against sexual harassment, namely, courts and/or the Public Defender of Georgia (in all spheres), the Labour Inspectorate of Georgia (labour relations) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (in public places). Sanctions are prescribed on cases of sexual harassment which occurs in public places in accordance with Article 1661 of the Code of Administrative Offences of Georgia. Moreover, the Labour Inspectorate of Georgia has the authority to sanction those employers who violate the non-discrimination clause as per Article 78 of the Labour Code of Georgia.

It is noteworthy that the Public Defender of Georgia, in co-operation with the Council of Europe, has developed an interactive online map on the services available for victims of discrimination. The interactive map enables individuals to search for state services as well as CSOs which provide assistance on cases of discrimination.⁷⁴

Remedies for individuals targeted by sexist behaviour vary from fairly simple corrective measures to criminal justice, depending on the severity of the problem. This guide does not discuss criminal violations.

Globally speaking, several principles should be taken into consideration when developing appropriate sanctions and appeals processes. Sanctions for violations of prohibited behaviours should be commensurate with the severity of the violation, up to and including suspension of council members. More minor violations may be sanctioned with measures such as public apologies, public censure, fines or required training or service. For sanctions to be effective, there must be a clear set of guidelines on appropriate behaviour and identification of specific behaviours defined as sexist. These may be set in local government regulations or internal code of conduct. Sanctions must be mutually agreed upon by the signatories of the code of conduct. Appropriate institutions should also be involved in ensuring enforcement, including the office of the Ombudsperson and/or local ethics boards or accountability officers where they exist.

In addition to any sanctions levied against the perpetrator, in any given country the local or national accountability infrastructure (e.g. office of the

Ombudsperson or a local ethics board) may provide a remedy or compensation to the person targeted. Recourse may be in the form of financial compensation such as general damages for the loss of the right to be free from discrimination and violations to personal dignity. It can also include special damages to compensate the target of the sexist behaviour for money, opportunities or other losses that took place because of the discriminatory or harassing behaviour.

Non-financial remedies are also options for victims of sexist discrimination. These could benefit the individual person through actions such as protections against further action by the perpetrator and public apologies. It can also involve public interest remedies, which are designed to have an impact on the broader community, including other people who could have been affected by the discrimination. These remedies can raise awareness or educate about the issue in order to promote a better understanding of the problem of sexism and discrimination and prevent it from happening in the future. Examples of public interest remedies for sexist behaviour in local government include changing internal policy to afford better protections, developing/improving internal human rights complaint procedures, introducing educational programmes or posting ethics codes publicly in the local government offices.

EXAMPLES

Transparent procedures for enforcing codes of conduct



Canada

Transparent and accessible complaints procedures aid in effective enforcement of codes of conduct. The City of Barrie set forward clear procedures on filing complaints about violations of codes of conduct and publishes them on their website, summarised as follows:

Informal Complaints

Any individual who has identified or witnessed behaviour or activity by a member that appears to be in contravention of the Code may address their concerns in the following manner:

- Advise the member that their behaviour or activity contravenes the Code;
- Encourage the member to stop the prohibited behaviour or activity;
- If applicable, confirm to the member your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with his or her response to the concern identified;
- Keep a written record of the incidents including dates, times, locations, other persons present, and any other relevant information, including steps taken to resolve the matter;
- If not satisfied with the response received through the informal

process, an individual may proceed with a formal complaint through the Integrity Commissioner.

Formal Complaints

Any individual who has identified or witnessed behaviour or activity by a member that appears to be in contravention of the Code may address their concerns through the formal complaint process:

- All formal complaints must be made using the City's Complaints Form / Affidavit.
- The complaint must include an explanation as to why the issue raised may be a contravention of the Code and any evidence in support of the allegation must be included with the Complaints Form/Affidavit; Complaints must include information on witnesses as well as the specific details of the case and be filed with the Integrity Commissioner.

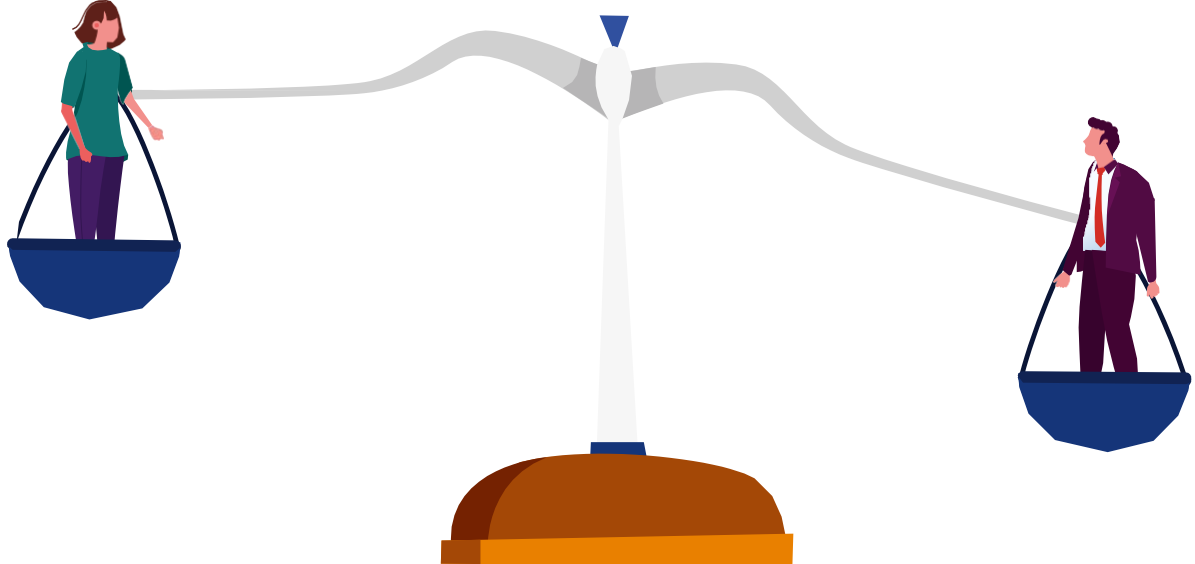
The Integrity Commissioner will determine whether the matter is a complaint with respect to non-compliance with the Code and/or a violation of other codes including a Criminal Matter or a violation of codes on Discrimination or Harassment.

Available at <https://bit.ly/327zBb2>

■ Ensuring adequate resources

In order to offer effective remedies as well as to advance the other measures suggested in this guide, local governments should ensure adequate funding to support the measures described above. Strong institutional responses to sexism within local government require dedicated funds and human resources. For example, staffing of accountability positions, training and awareness-raising, processes to develop and adopt codes of conduct and investigation and reporting cannot be adequately implemented unless sufficient and consistent resources are allocated to them.

Promoting gender equality in local level government through concrete measures



Although the focus of this guide is to identify specific strategies for combatting sexism in local government, it is equally important to address the root causes of sexism by promoting greater gender equality in local government. This final section provides a brief overview of some key measures for promoting gender equality in local government.

Adopting Temporary Special Measures (TSM) for local government

Temporary Special Measures (TSM) are “aimed at accelerating the improvement of the position of women with a view to achieving substantive equality with men, and to effect the structural, social and cultural changes necessary to correct past and current forms and effects of discrimination against women, as well as to provide them with compensation for inequalities and harm suffered.”⁷⁵

Gender quotas (the most well-known form of TSM) have been proven effective at increasing women’s representation in elected bodies, worldwide. Gender quotas can be either legislated or voluntary. There are two forms of legislated quotas: candidate quotas and reserved seats. As the name implies, candidate quotas guarantee more equitable gender balance among candidates but do not ensure that the target will be met. Reserved seat quotas set aside a designated proportion of seats for the under-represented sex, thereby guaranteeing a minimum level of representation.

Prior to the introduction of compulsory gender quotas in Georgia, to ensure gender balance and political representation of women, in 2011 the Law on “Political Associations of Citizens” prescribed additional financial benefits of 10 % for those political parties in which the opposite sex is represented by at least 20% among every 10 candidates in their lists. In 2013, the additional financial benefits were increased to 30%, if at least 30% of the first, second and subsequent top ten candidates of the political parties were of the opposite sex. However, these provisions did not contribute significantly to increased political participation of women.⁷⁶

After a long process of campaigning and advocating, the Parliament of Georgia has voted in favour of compulsory gender quotas in 2020.⁷⁷ Political party lists for parliamentary elections to be held before 2024 shall be determined by the political party itself in a manner that one in every four candidates in the submitted list is of the opposite sex. As for parliamentary elections to be held after 2024 but before 2032, as well as for general municipal elections to be held before 2028, it shall be determined in such manner that one in every three candidates in the submitted list is of the opposite sex. The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of Georgia will not register political parties which fail to comply with the established quota rule. Parliamentary Elections of Georgia in October 2020 was held in accordance with the newly introduced compulsory quotas.

Quotas are only one kind of TSM that can be adopted to enhance women’s representation. Other approaches include:

- special media and advocacy campaigning;
- capacity development programmes for women candidates and elected officials;
- campaign financing support for women running for office;
- voluntary party quotas.

Other structural reforms and policies

In addition to legislative changes to electoral laws and systems, there are many initiatives that can be taken at the local level to enhance gender equality and accordingly, combat sexism. These include measures taken directly by local governments as well as measures by national or regional bodies to govern local authorities. Briefly, these include:



Introduce term limits. Term limits for councillors promote turnover and open new space for women to compete. Term limit proposals can be implemented with significant lead time, to allow sitting members to achieve their policy goals.



Promote gender equal workspaces for local councillors. This may include instituting parental leave programmes, providing childcare or covering the costs of childcare for local councillors, allowing remote attendance of

meetings and enhancing the use of technology in workplace accommodation and reviewing meeting times (avoiding evening meetings) in order to allow members with family care duties to attend.



Adopt policies on gender equality in leadership roles. Local councils may adapt policies to promote gender equality through council activities, including ensuring balance on any committees and equal representation in leadership roles.



Proactive recruitment. Local authorities should publicly promote gender balanced recruitment ahead of election periods, to encourage equal representation. This may include targeted awareness raising and information sessions.



Gender focal point. Identifying a gender focus point or diversity committee within local government can be a mechanism to advance monitoring and new initiatives.

In Georgia, the establishment of Gender Focal Points within the municipalities is foreseen under Article 13 of the Law on Gender Equality. Gender Focal Points are appointed by mayors in all municipalities of Georgia.⁷⁸ Their duties include co-operation with the Gender Equality Council of the municipality, studying issues related to gender equality, as well as planning and co-ordination of relevant activities. Apart from Gender Focal Points, which is linked to the executive branch of local self-government, the Law on Gender Equality also prescribes the creation of Gender Equality Councils in Sakrebulo (Council). The main objectives of the Gender Equality Councils are consistent, systematic work on gender issues within the municipality and co-ordination with the Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council. Both local level mechanisms aim at strengthening gender equality at local level; however, concerns remain regarding their capacity, sensitivity and genuine involvement in decision-making processes.⁷⁹



Training. Regular training activities for local councillors, online and in-person, can help improve the ability to recognise and combat sexism as well as to become better equipped to develop responsive local policy that advances equality in the community as well as in the institution.



Use gender-inclusive language in public documents. The European Union defines gender-inclusive language as “a generic term covering the use of non-sexist language, inclusive language or gender-fair language. The purpose of gender-neutral language is to avoid word choices which may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm. Using gender-fair and inclusive language also helps reduce gender stereotyping, promotes social change and contributes to achieving gender equality.”⁸⁰ The principle of gender-inclusive language should be applied to public documents as well as internal policy and communication at all levels of government. An example of a way to achieve this is in Greece where the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) developed a Guide on gender-

inclusive language in public documents. Similarly, following a survey carried by an NGO, Cyprus produced a booklet/ guide aimed at overcoming language sexism in public service documents. The information was subsequently shared in workshops organised by Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality and the national mechanism for women's rights.⁸¹

For further examples, refer to:

Gender in Local Government: A Sourcebook for Trainers (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2008)

Available at https://www.un.org/womenwatch/directory/pdf/Source_BK_9-May.pdf

Manual for Gender Equality at The Local Level (OSCE, 2015).

Available at <https://www.osce.org/bih/216636>

Conclusion



Ending sexism in local government requires a concerted effort on the part of local elected representatives in partnership with civil society, law enforcement and regional and national authorities. Starting with reliable data, clear targets and shared understanding of the scope and nature of the problem, local authorities can adopt a range of strategies to address the existence of sexism and promote gender equality in local politics.

Local and regional authorities can demonstrate their commitment to ending sexism by developing adequate structures and policies to combat sexism and promote equality within their institutions. Allocating sufficient resources and staffing structures of accountability ensures that these commitments are applied and enforced. By dedicating themselves to transparent practices and creating gender-inclusive institutional cultures, local governments build public trust and are more able to successfully fulfil their roles.

Notes

- ¹ Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2020 - 2023, <https://rm.coe.int/16809c3f62>.
- ² Council of Europe, Resolution 459 (2020) "Fighting sexist violence against women in politics at local and regional level", <https://rm.coe.int/1680a061c3>.
- ³ Council of Europe, Recommendation 449 (2020) "Fighting sexist violence against women in politics at local and regional level", <https://rm.coe.int/1680a061c3>.
- ⁴ Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on preventing and combating sexism. <https://rm.coe.int/168093b26a>.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ iKnow Politics. e-Discussion on Women's Participation in Local Government, February - March 2018. <https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/discuss/e-discussions/womens-participation-local-government>.
- ⁷ Inter-Parliamentary Union. <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=6&year=2021>.
- ⁸ United National Development Programme, Human Development Report 2020, p. 353, <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>, see also, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/GEO#>; World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2020, p.167. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf.
- ⁹ Introduction of gender quotas, as a temporary measure, was ruled as constitutional by the Constitutional Court of Georgia, see: Decision No 3/3/1525 of the Constitutional Court of Georgia, 25 September 2020, available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5003418?publication=0>.
- ¹⁰ OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, "Gender Balance Report". Percentage of women in national parliaments, situation as of 1 February 2019, <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/special-representatives/gender-issues/report-17/3868-2019-annual-session-report-by-the-special-representative-on-gender-issues-eng/file>.
- ¹¹ Central Election Commission of Georgia, "Gender Statistics of the Mayoral Elections of 2017", http://cesko.ge/statistic/themes/files/en/November%2012%202017%20II%20Round_Gender%20Statistics.pdf.
- ¹² International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), "Women's Political Representation and Existing Legislative Barriers", 2018, p. 13; <https://www.isfed.ge/geo/angarishebi/kalta-politikuri-tsarmomadgenloba-darasebuli-sakanonmdablo-barierebi>.
- ¹³ Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.
- ¹⁴ Council of Europe, Fighting sexist violence against women in politics at local and regional level, Report CG-FORUM(2020)02-04final, <https://rm.coe.int/1680a061c3>.
- ¹⁵ Members of the Permanent Parliamentary Gender Equality Council include both men and women members of Parliament. The Council supports the identification of the main directions of the state policy in the field of gender equality, ensures the creation and development of the legal framework, reviews and approves relevant strategies, controls activities of the bodies which are accountable before the Parliament of Georgia, as well as raises awareness of gender equality. See: Statute of the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Gender Equality, article 2, available in Georgian: <https://web-api.parliament.ge/storage/files/shares/Gender/genderuli-debuleba.pdf>.
- ¹⁶ The Interagency Commission comprises of 22 state agencies, including ministries, the General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, the Agency of State Care and Victims of Trafficking, the Civil Service Bureau and the National Statistics Office. It facilitates the effective implementation of the duties and functions assigned to state bodies and coordinates their activities.
- ¹⁷ Article 3 of the Law on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination.
- ¹⁸ Introduction of gender quotas, as a temporary measure, was ruled as constitutional by the Constitutional Court of Georgia, see: Decision No 3/3/1525 of the Constitutional Court of Georgia, 25 September 2020, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5003418?publication=0>.
- ¹⁹ Articles 203 of the Election Code of Georgia.
- ²⁰ Action Plan on Human Rights Objectives 12.5.1. & 12.5.2; <http://myrights.gov.ge/en/plan/Human%20Rights%20Action%20Plan%20for%202018-2020?sphere=752&goal=757&task=812>.
- ²¹ The 2018-2020 National Action Plan of Georgia for the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, p. .2, available at: <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2018/the%202018-2020%20national%20action%20plan%20of%20georgia%20eng.pdf?la=en&vs=853>.

²² The following is adapted from the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Stop Harassment: A Guide for CUPE Locals, 14 August 2018. <https://cupe.ca/stop-harassment-guide-cupe-locals-1>.

²³ UNDP, "Men, Women, and Gender Relations in Georgia: Public Perceptions and Attitudes", Tbilisi 2020, [ENG], p. 5, available at: https://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/library/democratic_governance/gender-survey-report.html.

²⁴ During the period of August-November 2020, the total of 308 cases of sexist hate speech/ gender stereotyping were detected on social media, see: UNDP, "Election monitoring report: Sexism and gender stereotypes in social media, p. 11, available at: <https://bit.ly/36o6lcm>.

²⁵ UNDP, "Election monitoring report: Sexism and gender stereotypes in social media", p. 23, available at: <https://bit.ly/36o6lcm>; Public Defender of Georgia, Annual Report 2020 on "The Situation in Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia", p. 186.

²⁶ UNDP, "Election monitoring report: Sexism and gender stereotypes in social media", 2020, p. 10.

²⁷ UNDP, "Election monitoring report: Sexism and stereotypes in social media", 2020, p.22.

²⁸ Public Defender of Georgia, "Special report 2020 on the Fight against Discrimination, its Prevention, and the Situation of Equality", p. 45-46, available at: <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2021050611590027208.pdf>; see also, "Special report 2019 on the Fight against Discrimination, its Prevention, and the Situation of Equality", p. 32-33, available at: <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2020030416283364211.pdf>; also, "Special report 2018 on the Fight against Discrimination, its Prevention, and the Situation of Equality", pp. 17-18, available at <http://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019042317142950340.pdf>.

²⁹ See the Equality Impact Assessment Guidance and Template developed by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/documents/equality-impact-assessment-guidance-template-pdf/>.

³⁰ Zhytomyr City Council. <http://zt-rada.gov.ua/files/upload/sitefiles/img1531136603.jpg>.

³¹ Zhytomyr City Council. [http://zt-rada.gov.ua/?3506\[0\]=254](http://zt-rada.gov.ua/?3506[0]=254).

³² Available at: <https://genderstatistics.cec.gov.ge/en>; <https://cesko.ge/eng/list/show/122037-genderuli-portalis-prezentatsia>.

³³ Available at: <http://geostat.ge/gender/index.php?lang=ka>.

³⁴ Equality Act 2010, 11:1. On 19 November 2012 the former Prime Minister, David Cameron, spoke at the Confederation of British Industry's annual conference and announced that government departments would no longer be required to carry out EIAs. They are still used voluntarily in many regions.

³⁵ UNDP, "Election monitoring report: Sexism and gender stereotypes in social media", p. 5, available at: <https://bit.ly/36o6lcm>.

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³⁷ Central Election Commission, Annual Report 2019, p. 80, available in Georgian: <http://electionreforms.ge/geo/attachment/10/angarishebi>.

³⁸ Central Election Commission, Annual Report 2020, p. 50, available at: <http://electionreforms.ge/res/docs/20210525174121AnnualReport-20202.pdf>.

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⁴³ Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) (2019). <http://www.nalas.eu/Event/Details/Forum19>.

⁴⁴ Commonwealth Women in Local Government network (2020). <https://www.clgf.org.uk/what-we-do/women-in-local-government/>.

⁴⁵ Federation of Canadian Municipalities. <https://fcm.ca/en/programs/women-in-local-government>

⁴⁶ United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa). <https://www.uclga.org/>

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⁴⁸ Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF); Social Justice Center (Formerly Human Rights Education and Monitoring Centre - EMC); Rights Georgia; Union Sapari; Georgian Young Law-yers' Association (GYLA); Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG); Partnership for Human Rights (PHR); Georgian Democracy Initiative (GDI); Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI); Human Rights Center (HRIDC); Equality Movement.

⁴⁹ A joint project of the Women's Fund and an independent group of feminists, aired on Radio Liberty, recordings available in Georgian: <https://womenfundgeorgia.org/ka/Feminstream/Topics>.

⁵⁰ Gender Museum. <https://www.genderculturecentre.org/muzey-zhinochoi-ta-gendernoi-istorii-gendermuseum/>.

⁵¹ No Second Chances podcast. <https://nosecondchances.ca/the-podcast/>.

⁵² Governing podcast. <https://www.governing.com/23-percent-podcast>.

⁵³ The Ontario Municipal Councillor's Guide (2018). <https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-municipal-councillors-guide-2018/2-accountability-and-transparency>.

⁵⁴ Ordinance of the Government of Georgia N 200 "On defining General Rules of Ethics and Conduct in a Public Institution", articles 11(3), 14, 15, available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3645402?publication=0>.

⁵⁵ Code of Conduct of the Municipality of Baghdati, articles 14 and 15, available in Georgian:

<https://www.baghdati.gov.ge/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/baghdathis-munitsipalitatis-etikis-kodeqsi-bolo-varianti-gvantsa.pdf>; Code of Conduct of the Municipality of Vani, articles 14 and 15, available in Georgian:

<https://vani.gov.ge/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%AF%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%9B%E1%83%9D%E1%83%AE%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%94%E1%83%97%E1%83%90-%E1%83%94%E1%83%97%E1%83%98%E1%83%99%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%99%E1%83%9D%E1%83%93%E1%83%94%E1%83%A5%E1%83%A1%E1%83%98.pdf>.

⁵⁶ The Code of Ethics of the Member of Parliament of Georgia, Articles 3(n) and 4(2), available at: <https://web-api.parliament.ge/storage/files/shares/komisia/etikis-sabcho/ENG-etikis-kodeqsi.pdf>.

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⁵⁹ Integrity Commissioner Code of Conduct Complaint Investigation Report #011717(F) in Respect of Deputy Mayor Michael Di Biase. https://www.vaughan.ca/council/minutes_agendas/AgendaItems/SPCW0523_17_1.pdf.

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⁶¹ Available at: <http://nala.ge/post/203183--atea-s-genderuli-platforma-tvitmartvelobebesi-qalta-da-mamakactatanasworobis-sakitxebis-koordinacias-ganaxorciebs->.

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⁶³ Information available on social media page of NALAG:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=TheNationalAssociationofLocalAuthoritiesofGeorgia&set=a.4059290050793044>

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<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=TheNationalAssociationofLocalAuthoritiesofGeorgia&set=a.4111297432258972>;

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=TheNationalAssociationofLocalAuthoritiesofGeorgia&set=a.4074412485947467>.

⁶⁵ Article 35(1), Constitution of Georgia.

⁶⁶ Article 3(1) and 3(2) of the Organic Law of Georgia on the Public Defender.

⁶⁷ All reports of the Public Defender of Georgia on "The Situation in Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia" are available at <http://ombudsman.ge/eng/saparlamento-angarishebi>.

⁶⁸ In 2020, the Regional Offices of the PDO held 618 meetings with the local population and local organisations; In 2019, the PDO organised 286 trainings and 711 informational meetings, as stated in the Public Defender of Georgia "2020 Report on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia", p. 9 and "2019 Report on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia", pp. 311, 364 and 406 (Georgian version).

⁶⁹ Available at: <https://ombudsman.ge/geo/elektronuli-kursebi>.

⁷⁰ Public Defender of Georgia, “Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on Combating and Preventing Discrimination and the State of Equality”, 2020, pp. 52-53. Georgian version: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2021050611590027208.pdf>.

⁷¹ Public Defender of Georgia, “Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on Combating and Preventing Discrimination and the State of Equality”, 2020, p.46. Georgian version: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2021050611590027208.pdf>.

⁷² Legal decision on sexist advertisement of a Beverage producing company: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019040915292943098.pdf>; Legal decision on sexist advertisement of a TV and publishing Company: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019040915474482553.pdf>. Legal decision on sexist advertisement content of a Commercial bank: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019040915540327420.pdf>; also, number of public statements on sexist advertisements; Recommendation of 20 June 2020 against Georgian politician, available at: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2020072909462162001.pdf>.

⁷³ Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, article 2(10-a).

⁷⁴ Available at: <http://map.ombudsman.ge/ka/>.

⁷⁵ General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on temporary special measures. [https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/General%20recommendation%2025%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/General%20recommendation%2025%20(English).pdf)

⁷⁶ International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), “Women’s Political Representation and Existing Legislative Barriers”, 2018, pp. 5-6, available at: <https://www.isfed.ge/geo/angarishebi/kalta-politikuri-tsarmomadgenloba-da-arsebuli-sakanonmdeblo-barrierebi>; see also: “Strengthening the involvement of women in the political life of Georgia”, 2013, pp. 16-17, available at: <http://sapari.ge/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/qalta-chartulobis-gazliereba.pdf>.

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Preventing and combatting sexism in local politics is essential for guaranteeing equal participation for women and men and ensuring that their perspectives are represented in local policies.

This guide presents concrete measures for combatting sexism at local level and ensuring that women play an active and meaningful role in the decision-making process. It is intended for use by local authorities and their national associations as well as possible targets of sexist violence and gender-based discrimination such as female candidates and local office holders.

Combatting sexism in local government requires a concerted effort from all levels of governance in partnership with law enforcement bodies and civil society. Practical steps such as collecting reliable data, raising awareness, and building capacities can create a shared understanding of the scope and nature of the problem. Altogether, clear targets and commitment on the part of public authorities, accompanied by sufficient resources for ensuring accountability will lead to transparent structures, a gender-inclusive institutional culture and greater equality.

ENG

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