

Toolkit on gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms



**Gender mainstreaming
in practice**

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French edition:

*Boîte à outils sur l'approche intégrée
de l'égalité dans les mécanismes
de suivi du Conseil de l'Europe*

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Monitoring visit of the Council of Europe
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Evaluation visit of the Council of Europe Monitoring Group of the Anti-Doping Convention (T-DO), Belgium, 2023.

Introduction

The Council of Europe defined gender mainstreaming in 1998, as: “The (re) organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making.”¹ Gender mainstreaming was established as a concept a few years earlier, in 1995, during the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (China) as the main global strategy to ensure the incorporation of a gender equality perspective in all areas of societal development.

Gender mainstreaming is used in combination with specific measures for the advancement of women. This is the so-called “dual approach” to gender equality, which is implemented in the Council of Europe and in most international organisations and member states.

Gender mainstreaming entails analysing a given project, policy, measure, or sector, to detect any differences in impact or lived experience for women and men (or non-binary persons) and using the result of the analysis to revise the project, policy, measure or sector, so that it promotes gender equality. Gender mainstreaming promotes the development of effective policies targeted at putting an end to gender inequalities by evaluating the causes behind them. Gender mainstreaming requires integrating a gender equality perspective into the entire policymaking or project cycle (defining, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluating stages).²

Gender mainstreaming is also an entry point to a broader intersectional perspective, taking into account the different situations and personal characteristics of women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity.

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1. Council of Europe, Gender mainstreaming, Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices, Final report of activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming (EG-S-MS) (1998): <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680596135>
 2. European Institute for Gender Equality, EIGE (2017): https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/eiges-methods-and-tools?language_content_entity=en

Gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms

Gender mainstreaming is a commitment for the whole of the Council of Europe (CoE), in line with its successive [gender equality strategies](#). The 2022 [external Evaluation Report of Monitoring Mechanisms](#) included Recommendation No. 6 (high importance) to “Further strengthen gender mainstreaming and consideration of equity in monitoring mechanisms”. The Gender Equality Division (GED), in its role of providing advice and support to other sectors of the CoE, was therefore mandated to produce a tool to support and improve gender mainstreaming in monitoring mechanisms (MMs), acknowledging that there are 22 Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms tackling diverse issues and through varying means, and that some are more advanced than others in gender mainstreaming. It is also acknowledged that some of the issues tackled by MMs lend themselves more easily to gender mainstreaming than others.

Whilst the importance and necessity of having gender mainstreaming as a fundamental part of all Council of Europe monitoring bodies is emphasised, the aim of this exercise goes further. It is expected that, once gender mainstreaming becomes an integral part of what monitoring bodies do, this will both enrich their evaluation work and country visits and encourage gender mainstreaming also at member state level. By showcasing promising practices and by requesting gender-disaggregated information, monitoring bodies will indicate and demonstrate to member states the importance of gender mainstreaming.

The long-term objective of gender mainstreaming in monitoring mechanisms would be to incorporate gender equality issues into the relevant procedures and systems, rather than to include them as an additional step. This will ultimately help reach the goal of gender mainstreaming as a tool: to progress towards *de facto* gender equality in all areas.

Why gender equality matters

The starting point of gender mainstreaming should be a basic form of gender analysis – examining the status quo and considering, as far as possible, the different effects that policies, programmes and activities may have on women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity. Society does treat women and men differently – and therefore the impact of laws and policies is experienced differently, and the effects are different. An intersectional lens will make visible the further layers of complexity in those differences. This can clearly be seen in the power differential between women and men, with men still occupying most top positions in decision-making in both the private and the public sectors, for example.

Gender stereotypes still hold sway in society, with resultant harmful attitudes and behaviours impacting all areas of our lives, again both in the private and public spheres. As an example, violence against women, whether in the home, or in the place of work or education, or on the streets, has long been recognised as both a cause and an effect of this continuing gender inequality, with women who are migrants, Roma, disabled or poor, or LGBTI persons for example being further affected as a result of intersectional discrimination.



Launching Conference of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029, Strasbourg, France, May 2024.

Gender stereotypes also continue to consider women as the default primary carers in the home. This results in women coming home from their paid employment, to work a “second shift” of care and domestic work at home, where they perform substantially more labour than their partners (in a male-female arrangement) without any economic recognition, notwithstanding that these duties are vital for the functioning of households and the economy as a whole.³ This, furthermore, hinders women from applying that time and energy to other matters, such as career advancement, politics or leisure. These and other factors result in women on average receiving less pay, pensions and owning less capital and land than men.

Therefore, until we have truly achieved *de facto* gender equality, all measures, actions, policies and legislation must be devised through a gendered lens. This also includes the way that the allocation of resources, activities, authority, representation and decision-making vary based on gender.

Furthermore, throughout the process of gender mainstreaming, one must always keep intersectionality in mind, as women and men are not homogeneous groups with homogenous aims and needs, but rather have multiple identities and may face different and overlapping grounds of discrimination.

3. On average, women perform 4,4 hours of unpaid work per day and men 2,3 hours, in OECD countries (OECD statistical platform, 2024).

Terminological note

Gender shall mean the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men.*⁴

* Gender as a social construction is also relevant for non-binary persons.

Discrimination can be based on a variety of grounds, such as sex, gender, "race",⁵ colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status.⁶

An **intersectional approach** can allow for insight into the more complex forms of discrimination, exclusion and violence to which individuals may be exposed. Various grounds on which such discrimination is based may intersect, leading to unique lived experiences and vulnerabilities. In the context of gender equality policies, an intersectional approach can be used to understand, take into account, and address the interactions between gender and sex and other personal characteristics/statuses as listed above and the resulting compounded forms of discrimination. All persons may be vulnerable to these forms of discrimination, but certain groups of women and girls are particularly confronted by them and can therefore benefit particularly from an intersectional approach to gender equality policies.⁷

Development of this Toolkit

In order to develop the present Toolkit, focus groups were set up with members of the secretariats of various CoE MMs, to discuss gender mainstreaming practices, existing challenges and ways to overcome them. Together we considered measures that are currently being taken, as well as other measures that may be helpful in achieving the aim of gender mainstreaming in the particular context of CoE monitoring mechanisms. This Toolkit was consequently drafted by the Gender Equality Division and Marceline Naudi, gender equality expert, in consultation with some of the participants in the focus groups.⁸

4. Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, article 3§c.
5. Since all human beings belong to the same species, the Committee of Ministers rejects, as does the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), theories based on the existence of different "races". However, in this document, the term "race" is used in order to ensure that those persons who are generally and erroneously perceived as "belonging to another race" are not excluded from the protection provided for by the legislation.
6. Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029.
7. Ibid.
8. Further information on the methodology can be found in the annex.

Part I

Main findings of the focus group discussions

This document considers gender mainstreaming in the various steps taken in monitoring activities, whilst acknowledging the differences relating to the different procedures and working methods of monitoring bodies and the areas being monitored. The summary results of the discussions in the focus groups are grouped thematically hereunder.

General attitudes and groupthink in relation to gender equality

The importance and benefits of gender mainstreaming are well acknowledged by various bodies and at their various levels of activity. However, the effect of groupthink was noted within MMs, in that sometimes, even in the absence of obvious active resistance, there is an element of indifference and lack of support which hinders progress.⁹ The same can be true of secretariat members who appear, at times, unconcerned by the practice of gender mainstreaming. It was also noted that, where the head of the secretariat or the chair of the MM was aware of, or sympathetic to the issue of gender mainstreaming, then significant progress was registered. The presence of committed staff members in secretariats is therefore a crucial factor for the implementation of gender mainstreaming, but it leads to a potential lack of sustainability when the person(s) leave(s) the secretariat of the MM in question. For progress to be sustainable, it is therefore important to ensure continuous and shared ownership of, and commitment to, gender mainstreaming processes and outcomes.

Promising practice examples from monitoring bodies

- ▶ Trainings were organised for the secretariat of MMs that were tailored to their needs and to the topic.
- ▶ Gender mainstreaming was put on the agenda of the bureau of the MM (in addition to plenary discussions) and the Gender Equality Rapporteur (GER) was invited to participate in a bureau meeting (if they are not a member of the bureau). This helps to build an understanding of, and support for, gender mainstreaming amongst bureau members.

9. Groupthink can be defined as the practice of thinking or making decisions as a group, which can result in unchallenged, poor-quality decision-making and in participants setting aside their own personal beliefs or being prevented from questioning the status quo and adopting the opinion of the rest of the group.



Sixth meeting of the Drafting Committee on Gender Equality in Anti-Doping (GECA), Baku, Azerbaijan, June 2023.

The question of attitudes can also be relevant in relation to the content of the work of some MMs. This is visible in the early work of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), which looked at how established groups are more susceptible to corruption when there is a lack of parity and diversity (e.g., government, police).¹⁰ The importance of paying more attention to gender equality issues, for example by promoting gender balance in the police or in decision-making, was therefore stressed, as a way to ensure more transparent and democratic processes and disrupt corrupt practices or networks through the presence of newcomers.

Additionally, some areas apply gender-blind rules and procedures partly because they are very male-dominated and have processes which are based on men, or deal with a predominantly male population (e.g., prisoners). Representatives from such “male-dominated sectors” acknowledge that since the majority of their “subjects” are male, women may occasionally be given less time and attention. They indicated that they are currently working to avoid this gap by involving other stakeholders, including those specialised in gender equality, during visits, within the framework of studies or during events.

Ensuring gender balance in all bodies and activities

While gender mainstreaming is not only about gender balance, the equal participation of women and men¹¹ and ensuring diversity in participation and representation based on different grounds¹², is an issue of democracy and a commitment of the Council of Europe. Gender balance can also help in ensuring that diverse voices are heard, and that new issues are raised within bodies, policies, and projects.

10. E.g., research has shown that in countries where there is a greater participation of women in public life, there is less corruption. Decisive factors in the reduction of corruption are the participation of newcomers in decision-making (which disrupts existing practices), democratisation, as well as better governance, which are all also associated with the promotion of gender equality in decision-making, see: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/corruption-and-money-laundering>

11. According to Recommendation Rec (2003) 3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, “balanced participation of women and men is taken to mean that the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%”.

12. See terminological note on page 3.



Monitoring visit of the Council of Europe Commission against Racism and Intolerance in the Community Education Centre for Roma children "Sumnal", in Skopje, North Macedonia, October 2022.

Some MMs, in areas that are strongly gendered (i.e., where there is a “traditional” over-representation of women or of men experts, or where the substance is seen to be addressing the needs or situation of one gender only), have difficulty attaining parity in the composition of expert groups. Not having a gender balance among the members and the secretariat then makes it difficult to achieve a gender balance in monitoring visits, and an opportunity to lead by example is lost. It is therefore important to constantly remind states of the need for gender balance in relation to candidates put forward for election. Further requesting, where possible, a gender balance in the state delegations during visits, also brings home the importance placed on gender mainstreaming. Whilst this appears to be improving in some sectors, as per the information gathered during our meetings, in other sectors there is still significant room for improvement.

Promising practice examples from monitoring bodies

- ▶ Processes were initiated to promote gender balance in Council of Europe delegations going on monitoring visits (rapporteurs and secretariat).
- ▶ Reminders to states and, where relevant, to the MM members on the need to achieve or maintain a gender balance within all Council of Europe bodies were included within calls for appointments or elections of members to any given committee or to its bureau.
- ▶ Gender equality was included as an area of knowledge in the terms of reference for members of committees, experts or speakers, as relevant.

Efforts to achieve gender balance should also be applied to other work and events carried out by MMs, such as round tables, conferences and seminars, in relation to speakers, as well as the use of consultants/ experts in co-operation projects, etc. These measures are already taken into consideration by some monitoring mechanisms represented in the focus group meetings held, and generally appear to be having positive results. They could therefore be shared and taken up by others.



Training organised for Gender Equality Rapporteurs by the Council of Europe Gender Equality Division, Strasbourg, France, November 2022.

Gender Equality Rapporteurs

Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GERs) are appointed among the members of intergovernmental structures of the Council of Europe to promote gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures. The appointment of a GER is compulsory for Council of Europe steering committees, but not for monitoring mechanisms.

Whereas, pursuant to general guidance and practice, 90% of the monitoring bodies have appointed GERs, not all have done so, and not all GERs play an active part in the work of monitoring bodies or in ensuring that the work includes a gender equality perspective. It emerged from the focus groups that it is important to ensure that one or more active and trained Gender Equality Rapporteurs are among the members of the monitoring body, since this also appears to have an effect on increasing general interest in the area.

Promising practice examples from monitoring bodies

- ▶ Including an active role for GERs, such as giving regular reports (at least once per year) in plenary meetings, which helps to better engage the MM members.
- ▶ Including the GER in the bureau or seeking their input in view of bureau meetings.
- ▶ Nominating several GERs within a MM and creating a group of GERs and possibilities for them to meet and work as a team.
- ▶ Designating a focal point within the secretariats of MMs, who could also serve as a support person to GERs to provide them with information about past activities, liaise with other sectors, etc.
- ▶ Encouraging GERs to take the [HELP course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming](#).
- ▶ Encouraging GERs to participate in training provided annually by the Gender Equality Division.

The Gender Equality Division has been organising specific training for GERs annually since 2016. Although the majority of GERs of MMs have participated in such meetings, more than a quarter of them have not. Such trainings not only help to build capacity on gender mainstreaming, but also provide a forum for discussion and exchange among GERs.

In addition, since March 2024, a practical and short (2,5 hours) [Online HELP course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming](#) which particularly caters for staff and experts of the Council of Europe (but which is open for all) is freely available on the Council of Europe [HELP Platform](#). GERs and staff members of the Council of Europe are encouraged to take this course.

Gender analysis and intersectionality

The starting point for gender mainstreaming is a basic gender analysis which evaluates the status quo, considering the way policies, activities etc. may affect differently women and men in all their diversity.

One of the MMs working in an area where gender mainstreaming was not developed carried out a gender analysis which started by examining all relevant legal texts in the area (including the relevant convention) to identify gender equality gaps and issues. The drafting committee on gender equality of the MM in question also carried out a survey looking at the gendered composition of relevant bodies and jobs in the area at the national level, followed by targeted interviews with decision-makers and stakeholders. The findings were documented, analysed, and provided a very useful needs assessment that will be used for recommendations to States parties as well as for guidelines for use in the monitoring process.



Monitoring visit of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Albania, 2022.

Promising practice examples from monitoring bodies

- ▶ Screening of existing legal and institutional texts (e.g., relevant treaty, explanatory report, standards developed such as recommendations), to map references to gender equality issues, including women's rights, identifying potential gaps, and possibly revise them to include relevant references.
- ▶ Interviewing stakeholders, including ultimate beneficiaries of policies and of monitoring processes to help include a gender equality perspective.
- ▶ Mapping the gendered composition of different stakeholders working in the area, including at decision-making level.
- ▶ Including considerations of intersectionality in activities and analysis.

Intersectionality and multiple discrimination were also considered more generally in some MMs. Such an approach is used to a greater or lesser extent according to the sector, and is very important for ensuring a genuine impact of standards and policies on the ground. An intersectional approach is also consistent with the CoE commitment to “mainstreamed perspectives” aimed at designing better policies and at more effectively protecting the rights of groups in particularly vulnerable situations. In addition to gender mainstreaming, the other mainstreamed perspectives in the CoE are youth, children's rights, rights of persons with disabilities, and Roma and Traveller issues. All these perspectives as well as other grounds of discrimination such as sex, gender, “race”,¹³ colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status, should be considered to ensure an intersectional approach.

Content of monitoring questionnaires and reports

It was noted, during focus group discussions, that the integration of a gender equality perspective in monitoring work and notably, in questionnaires and reports, can be facilitated by the inclusion of relevant provisions in the legal texts being monitored. However, even where the convention or other text does not contain any reference to gender equality, a gender equality perspective should be integrated, whenever relevant, as any legal text that deals with people will have a gendered impact.

Comprehensively integrating gender equality issues throughout monitoring questionnaires whenever relevant (e.g., asking for sex-disaggregated data and gendered information in relevant questions) was also discussed. Some MMs do this, whilst others add a note at the start of the questionnaire indicating that gender issues should be considered in all the responses. Discussions in the focus groups, as well as the 2022 external Evaluation Report of Monitoring Mechanisms, highlighted that a simple note on gender mainstreaming in the introduction of a questionnaire usually does not ensure the provision of gendered information by recipients. Rather, the issue should be integrated throughout questions, as relevant.

13. See footnote 5 supra.



Monitoring visit of the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in a central prison, 2017.

Photographer: Sandro Weltin

Promising practice examples from monitoring bodies

- ▶ Systematically integrating gender equality issues in questionnaires sent to national authorities. This includes requests for sex-disaggregated data, a “chapeau” stating that all replies given should be gender-sensitive, and specific key questions related to gender throughout the questionnaire.
- ▶ Including a chapter, within monitoring reports, on the gender equality-related aspects of the issues being monitored (though gender equality issues are also integrated in all sections), as relevant.
- ▶ Including gender equality issues in the recommendations in country monitoring reports, in annual general reports or in general recommendations addressed to all states, as relevant.

Most of the MMs participating in the focus groups regularly ask for sex-disaggregated statistics, which however are not always provided by parties, necessitating additional work to try to obtain them. Focus group discussions revealed the importance of clearly and consistently requesting this data, and how this is part of the ‘trickle-down’ effect, increasing awareness within (states) parties.

The importance for monitoring reports themselves to integrate gender equality issues also emerged from the discussions. This is done regularly by some MMs, including in recommendations to authorities, but not by all, and not systematically.

Another aspect of importance in relation to the implementation of a gender mainstreaming perspective is the use of gender-sensitive language and illustrations in any communication, whether internally, with national authorities or with the broader public. This would be part of ‘leading by example’ – if we are careful that our language is inclusive, then others will reply in the same vein. Guidance on this topic is provided in the March 2024 Council of Europe [Guidelines on Language as a driver for inclusivity](#).¹⁴

14. The Guidelines are also available for the [French language](#).



Monitoring visit of the Council of Europe Commission against Racism and Intolerance in a mobile office (Solidarity Bus) assisting migrants in Paris, France, November 2021.

Internal rules and workings of monitoring mechanisms

More generally, gender equality considerations should be part of the operational guidelines and internal workings of monitoring mechanisms. Rules of procedure and guidance notes or instructions on the modus operandi of the MMs should include references to gender equality issues beyond the issues of parity in the composition of MMs or visiting delegations.

This would help ensure that gender mainstreaming is embedded in all aspects of everyday practice of MMs, including nomination procedures, the use of external experts, instructions related to the drafting of questionnaires, the preparation of visits or communication. The checklist included in this document could help when revising existing operational guidelines to include a gender equality perspective.

Ways Forward

An important take-away from the focus group meetings held with secretariats of MMs was that responsibility for gender mainstreaming needs to be owned and carried by all – secretariat and MM members alike – rather than (just) by the “fighters for women’s rights”. To this end, it was felt that better awareness and use of the available training options is required, and, where necessary, further training should be offered on the importance and benefits of gender mainstreaming. Any such training should include the issues of intersectionality and multiple discrimination.

The [online HELP course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming](#) launched in March 2024, which particularly targets CoE staff and experts, can be very useful in ensuring consistent and essential knowledge about gender equality concepts, standards and gender mainstreaming methods.

One suggestion to ameliorate intersectionality considerations was that the different monitoring bodies could share information, possibly through MMs or sectorial network, to increase awareness of the differing vulnerabilities of persons. Specific issues with a strong gender equality component found during monitoring visits could be shared amongst MMs which could investigate the issues under their specific mandate.

It is clear that some areas of monitoring lend themselves more easily to gender mainstreaming than others. However, even in the more “male-dominated areas” of monitoring, representatives were often able to demonstrate how gender equality issues were addressed by other international organisations, thereby indicating that this could also be done within the CoE. That said, the absence of gender equality or gender mainstreaming from the stated or presumed remit of the convention/standards may be wrongly seen by some as a reason to dismiss proposals to include considerations of gender and gender equality in reports, recommendations etc. The Council of Europe’s overall mission to promote gender equality, as part of the broader human rights agenda, and how this mission indeed applies also to the various specific monitoring mandates, should therefore be better conveyed throughout hierarchical levels, and better understood by the members of all the monitoring bodies.



Coordinated visit of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Norway, 2021.

Part II

Checklist of possible gender mainstreaming actions in Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms

Integrating gender equality issues in all activities of monitoring mechanisms (MMs) requires a systematic approach that takes into account the different stages of monitoring work. The aim is to ensure that, throughout monitoring activities, due account is taken of the different situations and needs of women and men, in all their diversity.

Monitoring of issues and conventions also involves various general activities and tasks which, whilst basic to the monitoring, are not, strictly speaking, a direct part of the monitoring process. In these too, gender mainstreaming needs to be considered.

Not all points hereunder may be equally important or relevant for each MM. However, secretariats of MMs are invited to consider, choose or adapt those that can apply in their specific context. The different suggestions can also be used to revise existing operational guidelines of MMs as relevant.

Gender mainstreaming in relation to processes, composition and general activities of monitoring mechanisms

— Be aware of and apply existing commitments and standards:

- ✓ **Keep in mind the relevant rules of your monitoring body** and the content of relevant legal instruments (e.g. the convention being monitored) in relation to gender equality or gender mainstreaming.
- ✓ If needed, **propose a revision of the existing rules and operational guidelines of your monitoring body**, to include a gender equality perspective.
- ✓ **Keep in mind other legal or policy instruments in this respect** (Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029, Committee of Ministers recommendations on gender equality, Reykjavik Declaration, etc.). These other instruments are important and need to be taken into account by the MM. One way of doing this is to regularly inform the members, and in particular the Gender Equality Rapporteur, about these instruments.¹⁵
- ✓ **Ensure that the Council of Europe's overall mandate for human rights, including gender equality** is well understood by the monitoring bodies, as well as how this applies to their specific remit.
- ✓ **Heads of secretariats need to be well informed**, committed to gender mainstreaming, and able to guide their teams accordingly. Being able to actively engage the members of the monitoring bodies in gender mainstreaming activities helps to increase interest and make progress.

— Ensure gender balance in the composition of monitoring mechanisms:

- ✓ **Propose a revision of the internal rules or any other relevant document related to the composition of the monitoring mechanism**, to include a reference to the need for gender balance in the composition of the monitoring mechanisms and in other aspects related to representation (for example the use of external experts, delegations for monitoring visits, panels during events or working groups), as relevant.
- ✓ **Aim as much as possible to achieve a gender-balanced representation of women and men** in the monitoring body and its bureau, as relevant (a minimum of 40% of women, and of men, according to CoE standards).
- ✓ **Gather data regularly (at least annually) on the gender composition of the monitoring mechanism**, share this data with parties whilst encouraging them to help achieve or maintain a gender balance.

15. Module 2 of the [HELP course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming](#) includes an overview of international standards on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

- ✓ **Include gender equality aspects in the rules of procedure** and the rules regarding the elections of members of the monitoring bodies as relevant in future revisions – and remind parties about the need for gender balance in the candidates they put forward.
- ✓ **Ensure gender balance in relation to experts in co-operation projects**, where these exist.
- ✓ When organising a meeting or event, **avoid single-sex panels or events** and ensure relevant gender equality issues are considered in the programme.
- ✓ Generally, **be aware of groupthink** (particularly as a barrier to gender equality) – where people appear to be in agreement, which stops others from speaking up – and ensure that all opinions are considered and tackled.

■ **Nominate and support Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GERs):**

- ✓ **Make sure at least one GER is appointed** within the sector.
- ✓ **Nominate a secretariat member as a focal point on gender mainstreaming, a possible support person for the GER** and to liaise with the Gender Equality Division (GED), and inform the GER and the GED about this nomination.
- ✓ **Provide newly elected GERs** with information about their role and previous gender equality-related work in the area.
- ✓ **Encourage GERs** to participate in trainings and to play an active role in their committee (e.g. by asking them to report regularly to the plenary on issues related to their function as GER).

■ **Ensure awareness and knowledge on gender equality and gender mainstreaming:**

- ✓ **Ensure internal gender equality awareness and knowledge**, notably by encouraging members of the secretariat, GERs and members of committees to take the short [online HELP course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming](#).
- ✓ Encourage the secretariat to implement the Council of Europe [Guidelines on language as a driver for inclusivity](#).¹⁶
- ✓ **Look at previous gender mainstreaming activities of your sector**, including using the CoE [webpage on gender mainstreaming](#).
- ✓ **Research the gender equality-related work of academia** or other international body or of civil society organisations on your topic.
- ✓ **Contact the GED to find information about committees** or GERs working on similar issues or to identify potential experts or organisations who could help to improve knowledge.¹⁷

16. The Guidelines are also available for the [French language](#).

17. The GED has set up a [pool of experts on gender equality and violence against women](#), that can be used by all sectors of the CoE.

- ✓ **Organise tailored training for the secretariat** (looking at what you already do, and what you need, to enable you to do more).
- ✓ **Carry out a basic gender analysis** about gender equality issues in relation to your topic (if necessary, seek the support of an expert). Distribute the document to the secretariat and to members – this will help to get the committee and the secretariat on board, since responsibility for gender mainstreaming is shared by all. Keep intersectionality in mind.
- ✓ **Gather relevant standards**, gender-related information and sex-disaggregated data and produce a general factsheet on gender mainstreaming in your area.
- ✓ **Include gender equality expertise** as necessary knowledge in the terms of reference of experts for co-operation activities where they exist or in the drafting of studies or other tasks, as relevant.
- ✓ **Organise a capacity building activity**, an information session for staff and members and/or a conference (e.g., when the membership of the monitoring body is substantially renewed), on the gender equality-related aspects of the area, including the benefits of gender mainstreaming.

■ **Ensure the integration of an intersectional perspective:**

- ✓ **Use information and expertise of other monitoring bodies** to enable better intersectionality – share information between monitoring bodies, possibly through an existing network, or through one purposely set up, including to facilitate an intersectional approach.
- ✓ Research (including through sources outside the Council of Europe) **the linkages between your area of work and the specific situation and needs of women and men from different groups** (based on a variety of grounds, such as sex, gender, “race”,¹⁸ colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status) and acknowledge these differences – since our society treats men and women differently and considers them as a homogenous category. An analysis of the situation based on one gender will often not work the same way for everyone.
- ✓ Include considerations of intersectionality and multiple discrimination **when organising trainings or hiring experts.**

¹⁸. See footnote 5 supra.

— Ensure gender-sensitive communication: ¹⁹

- ✓ **Include a reference to gender-sensitive communication** in instructions, memos or terms of reference related to communication about the work of the monitoring mechanism.
- ✓ **Review the material produced by your sector** including documents, speeches, publications and presentations, to ensure the use of gender-sensitive and inclusive language and communication. Raise awareness among the committee members about this, in order to ensure ownership.
- ✓ **Review the images in your communication material** (including webpages) to ensure gender-balanced, non-stereotypical and diverse representation of women and men in all their diversity, and gender-sensitive and inclusive communication.
- ✓ **Include a section on gender equality on your webpage.**

Gender mainstreaming in monitoring activities

— Include gender equality issues in monitoring questionnaires:

Work on questionnaires tends to occur only at the start of monitoring work, or at the start of new reporting cycles. Nonetheless, it is important to keep gender mainstreaming in mind at all times.



Interview of the Romania authorities during a visit of the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism, September 2022, Bucharest.

¹⁹ For more information, please see Module 3 of the [Online HELP course on gender equality and gender mainstreaming](#) and the [Council of Europe Guidelines on Language as a driver for inclusivity/ Lignes directrices pour l'utilisation d'un langage vecteur d'inclusivité](#).

- ✓ **Include a reference to gender mainstreaming in internal guidelines** related to the drafting of monitoring questionnaires.
- ✓ **Add a chapeau** stating that gender equality considerations should be included in reply to all questions and **include gender equality considerations in separate questions**, as relevant.
- ✓ **Identify gender equality issues** relevant to the theme being monitored and integrate them in the monitoring questionnaires and in the different reporting cycles.
- ✓ **Clearly and consistently request sex-disaggregated data and gender-related information** from national authorities.

■ Mainstream gender equality considerations in relation to monitoring visits:

Monitoring visits are an important opportunity for advocating the cause of gender mainstreaming with national authorities and to promote CoE standards and commitments in this area. It is therefore very important to prepare well for them, keeping gender equality and mainstreaming in mind throughout the whole process.

Preparation of monitoring visits:

- ✓ **Include instructions** regarding gender mainstreaming in any internal memo or instructions regarding monitoring visits.
- ✓ **Review previous monitoring reports and reports from NGOs**, to gather information on any relevant gender equality issues identified.
- ✓ If no information is available, **research the work of specialised organisations** or other international organisations or ask an expert to prepare a report on gender equality issues in the area.
- ✓ Where relevant, **liaise with the secretariats of other monitoring bodies** about their findings which may be helpful in relation to the gender equality-related considerations of the monitoring visit, including in the selection of interlocutors.
- ✓ **Make efforts to ensure gender balance** in the composition of the teams going on monitoring visits (including members of the secretariat and experts).
- ✓ **Include gender equality knowledge or expertise** in the terms of reference of external experts, as relevant.
- ✓ **Brief external experts on the need for gender mainstreaming** and the promotion of gender equality in preparation for monitoring visits, as relevant.
- ✓ Ensure that there is **at least one expert with gender equality knowledge** in the delegation.
- ✓ Encourage **national authorities/NGOs to include gender balance in their delegations**, if possible.



Third evaluation visit of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings to Austria, meeting with representatives of the Human Rights Office of the City of Vienna, December 2023.

- ✓ Stress the need for visited countries to **prepare and present data and information disaggregated by sex and other relevant aspects**: e.g., age, minority, language, citizenship.
- ✓ **Consider consultations**, during the visits, with (gender) equality bodies, national civil society groups working on gender equality and/or women's NGOs and gender equality experts in the field monitored.

During monitoring visits:

- ✓ **Liase with line ministries responsible for gender equality** and the national body responsible for gender equality issues, as relevant.
- ✓ **Ensure that women's and men's voices in their diversity are heard**, reaching out especially to those who are in vulnerable situations and/or to their representative organisations.
- ✓ If necessary, particularly regarding sensitive issues, and considering cultural sensitivities, **organise same-sex hearings or interviews**.
- ✓ **Communicate in a gender-sensitive way** about the visit.

— Include gender equality issues in monitoring reports and recommendations:

- ✓ **Include instructions** regarding gender mainstreaming in relevant internal memos or instructions regarding monitoring reports.
- ✓ **Include gender equality aspects in a specific section**, as relevant, and throughout monitoring reports and in summaries.
- ✓ **Ensure that the way that gender equality impacts the legal obligations monitored is included**, by acknowledging the differing needs and situations of persons in relevant sections of the report.

- ✓ Ensure that the way that **(public) services impact the target population in a gendered manner** is clearly included.
- ✓ **Use testimonies from women and men and from people of different backgrounds and origins** (in terms for example of sex, age, social origin, disability, gender diversity, migrant status, minorities, religion) in the monitoring reports, where relevant.
- ✓ Refer to relevant **gender equality-related findings from reports of other monitoring bodies** and include them in your report.
- ✓ **Use sex-disaggregated data throughout the report**, whenever possible and where available.
- ✓ Include **gender equality issues in recommendations** to parties.
- ✓ **Use gender-sensitive language and communication** in the reports.
- ✓ **Include gender equality aspects in communicating about the reports.**

Annex: Methodology used to develop this Toolkit

In 2022, the [external Evaluation Report of Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms](#) strongly recommended to improve gender mainstreaming in monitoring activities. The Gender Equality Division (GED) has been providing tools, training and targeted support to all Council of Europe sectors, including monitoring mechanisms (MMs), since 2016. In 2023, in response to the external Evaluation Report, the GED decided to explore in greater depth the gender mainstreaming support which could usefully be provided to MMs. The present Toolkit was developed in the framework of this exercise.

Marceline Naudi, gender equality expert and former president and member of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), was engaged to support this initiative. During preliminary discussions with the GED, it was agreed that consultations through focus groups would be organised to develop this Toolkit. The focus groups were composed of representatives of secretariats of different monitoring mechanisms, including those in which gender mainstreaming was more advanced. This allowed to identify promising practices, as well as challenges and barriers and the possible ways to overcome them.

Individuals from the secretariats of different MMs were selected by the GED, based on their experience of gender equality issues and mainstreaming, and were invited to attend the focus group meetings. Three such meetings as well as written consultations were held. They included the following participants:

Laura-Maria ALEXANDROIU (ECRI)

Hugh CHETWYND (CPT)

Gerald DUNN (formerly GRECO)

Johan FRIESTEDT (ECRI)

Maxime HUOT (FCNM & ECRML)

Liene KOZLOVSKA (CAHAMA)

Carolina Lasén-Díaz (formerly GREVIO)

Veronika METS (MONEYVAL)

Petya NESTOROVA (GRETA)

Catherine O'BAOILL (CPT)

Gioia SCAPPUCCI (Lanzarote Convention)

Amaya UBEDA (Social Charter)

All three meetings were also attended by Caterina Bolognese, Head of the Gender Equality Division, Cécile Gréboval, Programme Manager for Gender Mainstreaming, and Marceline Naudi as external expert.

The overall aim was to consider gender mainstreaming, how it was currently being implemented within the MMs, and the ways that MMs can learn from one another. This included considerations around the actual practice of the monitoring bodies in relation to monitoring processes as such, as well as other work and roles within the secretariats.

This work was organised through two focus groups composed of staff members in secretariats of MMs, followed by a third consultation with a smaller selection of the previous focus group attendees, to consider key issues that had emerged from the initial discussions. Feedback from the consultation groups on the initial ideas put forward was gathered and salient points were drawn out. These points were then compared to a checklist which had been previously drafted by the GED, allowing for a final draft of a tool to be prepared. Certain focus group members also provided written input to the draft Toolkit.

Gender mainstreaming is a commitment for the whole of the Council of Europe. The 2022 external evaluation of monitoring mechanisms recommended to further strengthen gender mainstreaming in their work. The 22 monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe tackle diverse issues through a variety of structures and processes. The purpose of this Toolkit is to support the full range of these monitoring mechanisms in their gender mainstreaming efforts.

Once gender mainstreaming becomes an integral part of what monitoring bodies do, the evaluation work and country visits of monitoring bodies should benefit, as would gender mainstreaming more generally at member state level. The long-term objective is to incorporate gender equality into monitoring procedures and systems, rather than to think of it as a separate issue. This will further the ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming: to progress towards *de facto* gender equality in all areas.

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