

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN ACTION:

A handbook for local gender
related coordinators in Ukraine



Council of Europe Project “Combating
Violence against Women in Ukraine –
Phase III” (COVAW-III)

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related coordinators in Ukraine

Adaptation of the “Handbook for Gender Equality
Rapporteurs” for use by local gender-related
coordinators in Ukraine

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Introduction

The Council of Europe has been a pioneer in advancing gender equality through comprehensive strategies and targeted recommendations. In 1998, it adopted [Recommendation No. R \(98\) 14 on gender mainstreaming](#), highlighting the importance of incorporating a gender perspective across all policy areas.

Since the 1990s, when the concept of gender mainstreaming was introduced, this strategy, together with specific actions to advance women's rights (the so-called "dual approach" to gender equality), has been an important part of the work of the Council of Europe on gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is also one of the objectives of the Council of Europe [Gender Equality Strategy for 2018-2023, and subsequent Gender Equality Strategy for 2024-2029](#).

The Council of Europe implements capacity building and co-operation projects on gender equality, including addressing and combating violence against women. To do so, it equips national authorities and local gender-related coordinators with information and tools to comply with standards in this area.

This handbook is an adaptation of the Council of Europe's Handbook for Gender Equality Rapporteurs (GERs), tailored to address the specific needs and contexts of local gender equality coordinators in Ukraine. The original GER handbook was developed as a practical tool to support Council of Europe intergovernmental and monitoring bodies as well as staff in integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of their work. By providing guidance, examples and good practices, the GER handbook aims to ensure that gender mainstreaming becomes a consistent and effective part of policymaking and implementation within the Council's framework.

This adapted version responds to the unique challenges faced at the local level in Ukraine, offering specific guidance and resources for local gender-related

coordinators. Through tailored methods such as practical tests, definitions, case studies, and examples of good practices, this handbook seeks to empower coordinators in their daily work and contribute to the realisation of gender equality in Ukraine. It aligns with the Council of Europe's overarching objective of making gender equality a reality, while addressing Ukraine's specific cultural, social, and institutional context. This Handbook bridges the gap between the Council of Europe's broader gender equality strategies and local-level implementation in Ukraine, offering an accessible and actionable resource for those working to advance gender equality in practice.

The thematic work of the different entities of the Council of Europe in relation to gender equality and gender mainstreaming is showcased on a dedicated [gender mainstreaming website](#). The Council of Europe also offers a comprehensive online course titled "[Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming](#)", available in Ukrainian and other languages. This course provides practical guidance and tools to effectively integrate a gender perspective into various policy areas. It is accessible through the Council of Europe's [HELP \(Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals\) platform](#).

Warm up: Test your knowledge on mainstreaming a gender equality perspective

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE		Correct	Incorrect
1	In 2025, approximately two out of five members of the Ukrainian parliament were women.	☐	☐
2	In July 2025, women represented half of the ministers in Ukraine.	☐	☐
3	Most men (over 90%) aged 25-34 in Ukraine participated in the labour force in 2021, prior to the 2022 expansion of the war, compared to about two-thirds of women of the same age group.	☐	☐
4	About one in 20 women in Ukraine aged 15-49 have reported experiencing violence from their partner or husband.	☐	☐
5	Women and men have equal access to resources (e.g. money, time, networks).	☐	☐
6	Public policies are neutral; they affect everybody - women and men, girls and boys - in the same way.	☐	☐
7	Gender roles are socially constructed; they change over time and differ between and within cultures.	☐	☐
8	Gender mainstreaming requires the equal participation of women and men in all programmes and activities.	☐	☐
9	Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective entails new duties and practices for local gender-related coordinators.	☐	☐
10	Gender mainstreaming should replace specific policies for the advancement of women and positive actions.	☐	☐
11	All ministries have a duty in relation to the integration of a gender equality perspective.	☐	☐
12	Data and statistics on people should be broken down by sex only if sex-disaggregated information is readily available.	☐	☐

For answers please see [pages 70-75](#)

The Basics

Obtaining formal equal rights (or *de jure* equality) is not enough to eliminate all inequalities between women and men. Despite the improvement of women's legal status in Europe, effective gender equality is still far from being a reality (*de facto* equality).

Facts and figures¹

In Europe:

- Women represent about 50% of the European population
- Men represent 68% of the members of national parliaments in August 2025 ([Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2025](#))
- Men represent 70% of national ministers in the European Union (EU), in 2025 ([European Institute for Gender Equality, 2025](#))
- Women earned 12% less on average than men in the EU in 2023 ([Eurostat, 2025](#))
- There was a 29% average gender pension gap in the EU in 2019 ([Eurostat, 2021](#))
- In 2020, women made up only 28% of news subjects and 24% of experts featured in media across Europe ([Global Media Monitoring Project, 2020](#))
- Nearly one in three women aged 18-74 in the EU (31%) has experienced physical (including threats) or sexual violence in adulthood ([Eurostat, 2024](#))

1. Figures below were drawn from the most recent versions of the source publications.

In Ukraine:

■ Women represented 21% of the members of parliament and 19% of the ministers in 2025 ([Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2025](#); [Кабінет Міністрів України | Кабінет Міністрів України, 2024](#))

■ Women's labour force participation for people aged 15-64 was 62% compared to 72% for men in 2021² ([International Labour Organization, 2025](#))

■ Women's labour force participation for people aged 25-34 was 68% compared to 93% for men in 2021 ([International Labour Organization, 2025](#))

■ Women represented 44% of those working in senior and middle management in 2021 ([International Labour Organization, 2025](#))

■ 87% of men aged 15+ in Ukraine reported having a bank account compared to 81% of women aged 15+ in 2021 ([World Bank, 2025](#))

■ The completion rate for lower secondary school in Ukraine is 85% for girls and 84% for boys in 2021 ([World Bank, 2025](#))

■ 5% of women aged 15-49 in Ukraine have reported experiencing any form of sexual violence in 2018 ([World Bank, 2025](#))

■ 18% of women aged 15-49 in Ukraine have reported experiencing physical or sexual violence from their husband or partner in 2018 ([World Bank, 2025](#))

Gender inequalities are not solely based on biological differences but are further shaped by the unequal positions of women and men in society, rooted in centuries of inequality, oppression, and discrimination against women. Gender inequalities exist in all areas of life, including decision-making, physical integrity, work, income, property, education, health, access to justice, representation, cultural norms, or roles attributed to women and men in a society. These inequalities disproportionately impact women.

In addition, when looking at gender inequalities, it is necessary to consider both the private and the public sphere. Indeed, inequalities in relation to the private sphere (unpaid domestic and care work, violence against women), and the

2. The latest data predates the expansion of the war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

different roles held by women and men in all their diversity, ultimately impact their involvement and position in the public sphere, including paid employment and equal participation in decision-making.

Gender inequalities are shaped by gender roles, which assign specific functions to women and men based on their sex and are linked to the distinction between public and private spheres. Research shows there are three main types of gender roles ([Moser 1989](#)): productive roles (e.g. labour market participation), reproductive roles (e.g. time spent on childcare), and community roles (e.g. volunteer work). Women and men are not likely to equally contribute to these different roles, and there are significant differences between their roles in terms, for example, of status or financial remuneration.

Inequalities are also reflected in the representation of women and men in society. This is true in quantitative terms, for example, as there are fewer women in the media (25% women in the news media in Europe in 2020 according to the [Global Media Monitoring Project, 2020](#)), fewer cultural productions by women in museums ([UNESCO, 2005](#)), and a limited presence of women in history books and school manuals ([National Women's History Museum, 2017](#)), etc.

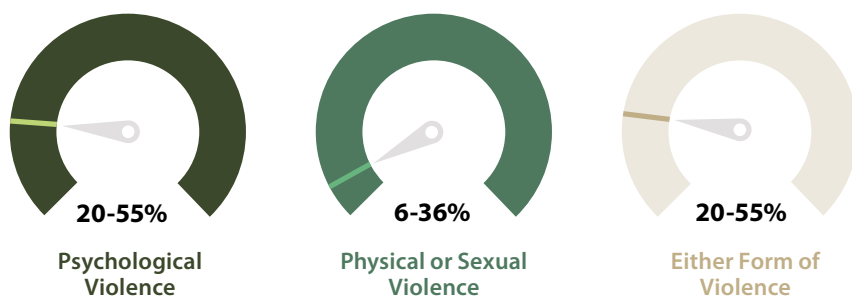
It is also true in qualitative terms: for example, women and men are described in stereotypical ways in popular culture, educational materials or advertisements, and the labour market is structured by gender (care professions dominated by women and less well-paid; while technical and management professions generally attract more men, and thus status and better payment).

The link between gender mainstreaming and violence against women

Violence against women is the most common violation of women's human rights. It impairs women's enjoyment of their fundamental rights to life, security, freedom, dignity, physical and psychological integrity. This may include physical violence, psychological violence, domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, stalking, online violence (directed at young women, women journalists, or politicians), female genital mutilation, forced marriage or human trafficking (for women, mostly for sexual exploitation). Violence against women is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination. Violence affects women in different ways, but some groups of women exposed to multiple forms of discrimination, for example migrant women, Roma women, women with disabilities, are often at a greater risk of experiencing violence or exploitation.

Estimates of the prevalence rates (both lifetime and in the previous 12 months) of violence against women are available for 30 countries in Europe based on 2021 figures ([Eurostat, 2025](#)).³ During their lifetime, between 20% and 55% of ever-partnered women have experienced psychological violence by an intimate partner, and between 6% and 36% have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner ([Eurostat, 2025](#)). Overall, between 20% and 55% have experienced some form of violence by an intimate partner ([Eurostat, 2025](#)). Since the age of 15, between 2% and 11% of women have experienced physical violence by a non-partner, between 2% and 35% experienced sexual violence, including between 1% and 13% who experienced rape ([Eurostat, 2025](#)). Between 5% and 32% of women have experienced stalking in adulthood, and between 1% and 5% have experienced stalking in the past 12 months of 2021 ([Eurostat, 2025](#)). Violence against women also affects them at work. In 2021, between 11% and 55% of ever-working women have experienced sexual harassment at work and between 2% and 11% of women have experienced sexual harassment at work in the past 12 months ([Eurostat, 2025](#)).

Range of prevalence rates of intimate partner violence against women in Europe (2021)



Source: Eurostat, 2025

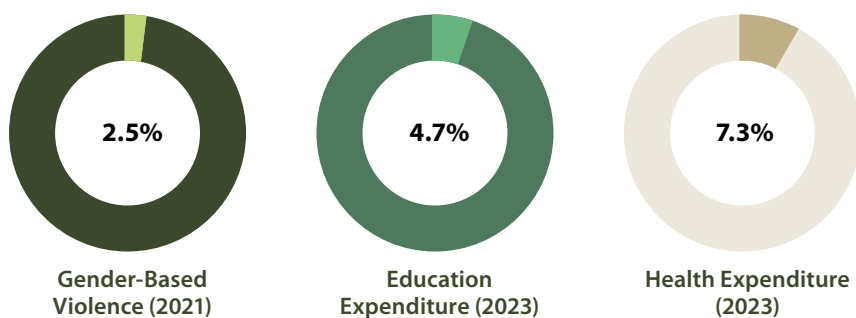
Such violence has disastrous consequences for women as individuals, impacting their physical and psychological health, limiting their participation in the labour market, or causing them to withdraw from social networks or from certain areas, for example areas that are strongly men-dominated and where sexism and harassment may be more common (including some places of power).

3. These figures are derived from survey data and should therefore be interpreted with caution, as they rely on self-reported experiences. In particular, estimates of prevalence are limited by what women choose or feel able to disclose, meaning that the true extent of violence may differ from reported rates.

Gender-based violence against women has tremendous repercussions for society (victims and their children, witnesses, families, friends, etc) as it is “both the cause and the result of unequal power relations based on perceived differences between women and men, that lead to women’s subordinate status in both the private and public spheres. This type of violence is deeply rooted in the social and cultural structures, norms and values that govern society, and is often perpetuated by a culture of denial and silence” according to the Explanatory memorandum of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ([Istanbul Convention, 2011](#)).

The economic costs of violence against women are also considerable: 366 billion euros per year in the EU, according to a [2021](#) study by the European Institute for Gender Equality. In 2021, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the EU was 14.5 trillion euros ([EU, 2025](#)), which means that the cost of violence represents about 2.5% of the total value of goods and services produced in the EU. For comparison, the EU’s general expenditure on education amounted to 4.7% of GDP ([Eurostat, 2025](#)) and on health to 7.3% of GDP in 2023 ([Eurostat, 2025](#)).

Economic impact of violence against women vs education and health expenditure in the EU as a percentage of GDP



Therefore, issues of violence against women must be addressed in the formulation of public policies in many areas, particularly those relating to legislation and justice (access to justice for victims, training) but also in the areas of health, education, media, labour law, and access to specialist services (such as helplines, shelters, or rape crisis centres). These considerations are also crucial when implementing projects or organising events (prevention of sexism and harassment).

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, commonly known as the [Istanbul Convention](#), is a comprehensive international treaty aimed at addressing all forms of violence against women. Adopted in 2011 and in force since 2014, it establishes legally binding standards for the prevention of violence, protection of victims, and prosecution of perpetrators. The convention emphasises a coordinated approach, requiring signatory states to implement measures across various sectors, including legal, education, general and specialist services, to effectively combat violence. Ratified by Ukraine on 18 July 2022, the Istanbul Convention entered into force in the country on 1 November 2022.

Historical inequalities between women and men have deeply influenced all areas of human activity and institutions, including public policies. Even today, men are often regarded (whether consciously or unconsciously) as the “default” or the “standard human being” in the policy-making process. Achieving gender equality requires strategies that challenge these entrenched gender norms and consider relevant gender differences (between women and men and within these groups) at every stage of policy development and implementation. Gender mainstreaming is such a strategy.

This handbook aims to present key definitions and principles, as well as to offer some guidance on how to mainstream gender in your daily work.

1. Defining gender

What is gender?

Gender equality is a fundamental priority for the Council of Europe, which recognises it not only as a fundamental human right but also as a cornerstone for democracy and social justice. The Council of Europe is a key promoter of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, advocating for the integration of a gender equality perspective into all policies and actions.

Gender, as defined by the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention, means:

” The socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men.

Source: Article 3, Istanbul Convention ([Council of Europe, 2011](#))

Gender relationships and roles differ across cultures and evolve over time, adapting to changing social, economic, and cultural circumstances. Sex, by contrast, refers to the biological differences between women and men, which remain the same.

The concept of gender is a social construction that shapes people's identities. In most cases the social construction of gender roles is to the detriment of women in the sense that these constructed gender roles impact more negatively the situation and opportunities of women in society. In particular, the strong stereotypes and beliefs related to the responsibilities of women as the main carers for children and other dependants affect various aspects of their lives, social characteristics, and opportunities. This includes in particular women's ability to participate in paid employment and assume leadership or decision-making positions ([UN Women](#) and [UNDP, 2023](#)).

Prevailing gender roles also shape societal perceptions of who is seen as a legitimate holder of rights, knowledge, and authority. These perceptions influence various other issues women and men are confronted with every day, such as professional choices, media presence, access to politics or justice. Gender stereotypes prevent both women and men from fully enjoying their rights and limit their opportunities and well-being. The [Council of Europe](#) has noted that "stereotyping can limit the development of the natural talents and abilities of boys and girls, women and men, their educational and professional experiences as well as life opportunities in general. Stereotypes about women both result from and are the cause of deeply engrained attitudes, values, norms, and prejudices against women. They are used to justify and maintain the historical relations of power of men over women as well as sexist attitudes which are holding back the advancement of women".

Gender is:

- a social, ideological, and cultural construction;
- learned and internalised by women and men through socialisation;
- not constant: it varies within and across cultures and over time;
- a power system with an unequal power structure between women and men in the distribution of resources, wealth, paid and unpaid work, time, decision-making, political power, enjoyment of rights and entitlements within the family and in all aspects of social, professional, and public life.

Gender interacts with other factors in a person's identity to create multiple layers of opportunities but also of potential inequalities, violence, and discrimination. These factors can be related to "sex, gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status", (Article 4§1 of the Istanbul Convention). An intersectional analysis aims at looking at how these different factors intersect and exacerbate inequalities, in order to eliminate them.

2. Gender equality

In the context of the Council of Europe's, Gender Equality Commission, the notion of gender equality most often refers to equality between women and men. It refers to a situation in which women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities, both by law and in real life. It requires that the behaviour, aspirations, wishes and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured. It also means an equal access to and distribution of resources between women and men. But gender equality can also refer to broader notions of equality in relation to gender identity (social expectations and norms attached to the feminine and the masculine and individual experience of gender) and sexual orientation (each person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional, and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different sex/gender or the same sex/gender or more than one sex/gender).

” Gender equality entails equal rights for all, as well as the same representation, visibility, empowerment, responsibility, and participation, in all spheres of public and private life. It also implies equal access to and distribution of resources between women and men. Achieving gender equality is central to the fulfilment of the Council of Europe's mission: safeguarding human rights, upholding democracy and preserving the rule of law.

(Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029).

The standards of the Council of Europe mostly address "gender equality" as equality between women and men. However, it is important to recognise that the categories of "women" and "men" are not sufficient to capture the full range of people's gendered experiences because human diversity in gender and sex

is more complex than just two categories. Some people are born with a mix of physical characteristics that don't fit neatly into "female" or "male" (this is called being intersex). Others might identify as a different gender than the one they were assigned at birth (this includes transgender and non-binary people).

Gender equality means not only thinking of women and men in binary terms, but as a complex interplay of biology, personal identity, cultural expectations, and social norms. While sex is about biological characteristics, gender is the social and cultural expression of that sex. However, these concepts are not systematically linked; someone's gender may not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender identity is how a person personally experiences and understands their gender. It is an internal sense that may or may not match societal expectations or the sex they were assigned at birth.

For example, a person may be assigned female at birth (sex) but identify as a man (gender identity). Gender performativity is how people express their gender through actions, behaviour, and appearance. This expression is influenced by their gender identity. For example, someone who identifies as a woman might express this identity through certain styles of dress or mannerisms, which some societies could interpret as "feminine", such as having long hair.

Performativity is shaped by social norms, including heteronormativity. Heteronormativity imposes expectations on how people should behave based on their gender and assumes heterosexual relationships as the norm. This can pressure individuals to perform their gender in ways that conform to these expectations, even if they do not align with their identity. Heteronormativity can constrain gender identity by enforcing a rigid binary and discouraging expressions or identities that fall outside of binary gender or heterosexual norms. This creates challenges for those whose gender identity does not fit within these limited categories.

Issues directly related to gender identity and sexual orientation are dealt with separately by the Council of Europe through the work of the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) Unit and through specific standards.

3. Intersectionality

The work of the Council of Europe in gender equality includes an intersectional perspective. Intersectionality is a concept that helps us understand how different aspects of a person's identity – such as race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, and more – interact and overlap, leading to unique experiences of privilege or oppression. While many attribute the term itself to Kimberlé Crenshaw, a legal scholar whose influential article in 1989 explained the discrimination faced specifically by black women in an organisation, the concept is much older. Intersectionality is first and foremost a political transformative movement, with strong links to Black feminism, going back at least to the Abolitionist movement in the first part of the 19th century.

In the [Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029](#), the Council of Europe stresses that 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. Anyone can be vulnerable to these forms of discrimination, but certain groups of women and girls are particularly exposed to them and thus stand to benefit in particular from an intersectional approach to gender equality policies.

(page 7)

Intersectionality can be understood as a system, whereby different systems of inequality intersect with one another. Inequalities can be experienced based on gender, i.e. women as a group may be paid less overall, although not all women will be paid less. Inequalities can be experienced based on ethnicity, i.e. a person from a minority ethnic group will be paid less overall, although here too not all people from a minority ethnic group will be paid less. Inequalities might be

‘added up’, which can be understood as women from a minority ethnic group receiving even less pay than women from the majority ethnic group or than men from a minority ethnic group, and even less than men from the majority ethnic group. Conceptually and empirically, this amounts to considering inequalities to be ‘additive’.

However, this additive approach disregards how different identities might multiply inequalities, or how a person might simultaneously be privileged or oppressed by different grounds of inequalities. Additional models, and even multiplicative ones, are likely to fail to capture the nuanced ways in which different systems of inequalities operate. Additionally, this does not answer whether identity should be understood and analysed at the individual level, or instead considered at the structural level. Identity can therefore be analysed at these two linked levels. At the individual level, it refers to how people see themselves and how they are categorised by others. At the structural level, those categories organise access to power and resources through mechanisms such as sexism or racism. Inequalities observed “by identity” are therefore not caused by identity as a personal attribute per se, but by the structural processes that act on people because they are read as members of a category. For example, not all women experience inequality in the same way, or at all, because the effects of gender intersect with other dimensions of privilege and disadvantage. A wealthy, able-bodied white woman may have extensive resources, social and human capital. Her gender still matters in several ways (such as exposure to bias or expectations around leadership) but she does not face the same structural barriers as, for instance, a working-class migrant woman in precarious employment.

Intersectionality is visible in several key areas of the Council of Europe's work, particularly in how it approaches issues of discrimination and human rights:

■ The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has integrated intersectionality into its country monitoring activities ([Council of Europe, 2022](#)). This approach highlights the unique vulnerabilities faced by individuals who experience overlapping forms of discrimination, such as Roma women. ECRI uses this perspective to create more nuanced policy recommendations, as seen in its [General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination](#) and its [General Policy Recommendation No. 9 on preventing and combating Antisemitism](#).

■ The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a [Recommendation](#) to the 46 Council of Europe member states to ensure equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls and address the specific vulnerabilities they face.

■ The Council of Europe's Youth Sector Strategy 2030 ([Council of Europe, 2020](#)) explicitly acknowledges intersectionality in its approach to gender equality and youth empowerment. This strategy seeks to address the diverse experiences of young people, considering how different aspects of their identities – such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status – interact and affect their opportunities and rights.

■ The [North-South Centre](#) of the Council of Europe has launched campaigns aimed at raising awareness about intersectional discrimination. These campaigns provide tools and insights to help activists and professionals incorporate intersectionality into their work, especially in promoting diversity and equality across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

4. Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming was introduced as a new approach to policymaking to take into account women's and men's situations and concerns, in all their diversity. It was introduced in international gender equality policy through the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the 1995 Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women. The Council of Europe subsequently played a pioneering role in developing and implementing the concept of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is also an objective of the EU, as provided by Article 8 of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU.

In 1998, the Council of Europe defined gender mainstreaming 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 policymaking.

(Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (1998) 14 - on gender mainstreaming)

Gender mainstreaming is based on the recognition that women and men have different needs and living conditions, including unequal access to and control over power and decision-making, physical integrity, economic activity, money and other resources, human rights, and justice. Gender mainstreaming therefore implies looking at the impact of any activity, and highlighting the inequalities and differences between women and men as well as among women and among men. It thus allows to identify the potential differential impact of policies/activities on

both women and men in their diversity. This leads to designing policies that are more likely to benefit girls and boys, and women and men equally.

Gender mainstreaming is not an end, but an instrument towards the goal of achieving equality between women and men. In addition, there is a wide consensus among member states and international organisations that a dual approach is necessary to effectively reach this aim:

1. specific policies and actions for the advancement of women, and
2. the promotion, monitoring, co-ordination and evaluation of a gender mainstreaming strategy in all policy and programmes.

Gender mainstreaming is not about:

■ ***“Adding women and stirring”***: ensuring the equal participation of women and men in decision-making or in different activities or projects is a necessary first step and an objective on its own. However, having more women on board does not mean that a gender mainstreaming exercise was undertaken, and it does not automatically lead to qualitative change towards gender equality in a policy or programme.

■ Including an introductory paragraph in a document stating that a gender equality perspective will be integrated or simply mentioning “women and men” in the text: the aim is rather to include a gender equality perspective at all stages and throughout the policy measures, document, or project at stake; not to make a statement of principle.

■ Speaking of ***“THE woman”*** or ***“THE man”***, which do not exist: it is necessary to take into account women’s and men’s multiple identities and personal characteristics, for example in terms of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation/identity, social or migration status or (dis)ability.

Gender mainstreaming as an instrument for better policymaking

■ Gender mainstreaming implies grounding policies on the concrete situation and needs of people. It will introduce among policy makers and the public a learning process of paying attention to the broad effects of policies on citizens’ lives, aiming at the well-being of both women and men.

Gender mainstreaming should lead to better informed policymaking and therefore better government. It challenges the assumption that policies are gender neutral – which they almost never are when they concern people – and reveals hidden assumptions about reality and values.

It leads to a fairer allocation of resources and greater transparency in the policy process.

Gender mainstreaming brings gender equality into mainstream society.

5. Clarifying gender-related concepts



Gender blind

A gender-blind perspective is one that deliberately ignores or overlooks gender as a factor in analysis, decision-making, or policy formulation. This approach assumes that all individuals are equal and should be treated the same, without considering the differences in experiences, needs, or challenges that arise from their gender. The idea is that by not focusing on gender, one can avoid bias and discrimination.

However, this perspective is often criticised because it can inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities. By not acknowledging the ways in which gender affects people's lives – such as the different social roles, expectations, and opportunities available to men, women, and non-binary individuals – a gender-blind approach can fail to address or even perpetuate gender-based disparities. In essence, it can lead to policies and practices that appear neutral but are biased towards those who already have more privilege.

An example of a gender-blind perspective in the context of Ukraine can be seen in the humanitarian response to the ongoing conflict. In situations of conflict and displacement, a gender-blind approach might focus solely on delivering aid without considering the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different genders.

For instance, if humanitarian aid distribution in Ukraine does not account for the fact that women, men, and non-binary individuals may have different needs, this could lead to unequal access to resources. Women and girls, particularly in conflict zones, may face specific challenges such as heightened risk of violence against women, limited access to reproductive health services, and greater caregiving responsibilities. A gender-blind approach that provides the same resources to everyone without addressing these specific needs could inadvertently exacerbate these challenges.

Similarly, men and boys might be disproportionately targeted for forced conscription or may face mental health challenges due to societal expectations around masculinity. If these factors are not considered, a gender-blind approach could fail to provide adequate support to these groups.

Gender neutral

A gender-neutral perspective is one that strives to avoid making distinctions or assumptions based on gender. It treats all individuals the same, regardless of their gender, aiming for equality by not giving preferential treatment to any gender. This perspective focuses on creating policies, language, and actions that do not inherently favour or discriminate against any gender.

While this approach seeks fairness, it can sometimes overlook the fact that different people may have different needs or face different challenges. As a result, gender-neutral strategies might need to be complemented with gender-sensitive measures to ensure true equality and address existing needs and disparities, otherwise they run the risk of being in fact 'gender blind'.

An example of a gender-neutral policy in Ukraine can be seen in the country's parental leave legislation. In Ukraine, both mothers and fathers are eligible for parental leave after the birth of a child. The law allows either parent to take time off work to care for their newborn, which is a gender-neutral approach because it does not assume that only mothers should take on the caregiving role.

However, this gender-neutral policy has faced challenges in practice. Despite both parents being legally entitled to parental leave, societal norms and expectations in Ukraine often place the burden of childcare on women. As a result, men are much less likely to take advantage of this leave, and women continue to bear most childcare responsibilities. This example highlights how a gender-neutral policy, while equal in theory, may not fully address the gender-specific barriers that exist in society.

This situation demonstrates the importance of considering how cultural and societal factors can impact the effectiveness of gender-neutral policies in achieving true gender equality. This policy is reflective of a broader trend where legal frameworks may be gender-neutral, but practical outcomes are influenced by deeply ingrained social norms.

Gender sensitive

A gender-sensitive policy is one that actively considers and addresses the different needs, experiences, and challenges faced by individuals based on their gender. Unlike gender-neutral policies, which aim to treat everyone the same regardless of gender, gender-sensitive policies recognise that women, men, and non-binary people may have different needs and face different barriers. The goal of gender-sensitive policies is to reduce gender disparities by acknowledging and responding to the different ways gender influences people's lives. This approach helps to create more inclusive environments where everyone could thrive, regardless of their gender.

The Cedos think tank offers 20 recommendations for integrating gender-sensitive practices into Ukraine's recovery and development at the local level ([Cedos, 2024](#)). These span governance, budgeting, security, social protection, mobility, and leisure to address the diverse needs of women and men, considering intersections such as disability, age and economic status. Gender-sensitive policy in Ukraine is integral to post-war recovery and local development, prioritising infrastructure that acknowledges diverse social needs, including those of women. Public spaces and transportation systems, for example, are designed with gender-sensitive mobility in mind, addressing the unique needs of women, who often manage caregiving responsibilities. This approach fosters safer, more accessible communities essential for recovery efforts. Furthermore, gender-sensitive governance involves promoting women's leadership in decision-making and incorporating gender-focused budgeting and planning. This includes evaluating public services to ensure they meet the needs of all genders, thereby advancing equality in everyday life.

Gender responsive

Gender responsiveness refers to outcomes that reflect an understanding of gender roles and inequalities and encourage equal participation, including equal and fair distribution of benefits. Gender responsiveness is accomplished through gender analysis, that informs inclusiveness. It moves beyond awareness of gender inequalities and moves towards a structural understanding of inequalities that can inform actions.

In Ukraine's recovery context, gender responsiveness is vital due to the significant gender-specific impact of conflict and displacement ([UN Women, 2023](#)). Women, who make up a substantial portion of the displaced population, face heightened vulnerabilities, including barriers to employment, limited social services, and increased exposure to violence. A gender-responsive approach ensures that recovery efforts consider these disparities by promoting women's leadership in rebuilding processes, expanding economic opportunities for all, and embedding safety measures tailored to the unique needs of women and marginalised groups. Moreover, a gender-responsive framework directly addresses structural inequalities exacerbated by the conflict, such as limited access to healthcare, support for survivors of violence against women, and the unique needs of women-headed households. By prioritising gender-responsive planning, recovery initiatives can foster lasting, inclusive resilience, preventing the re-entrenchment of pre-existing inequalities and promoting a more equitable social foundation.

Gender transformative

Gender-transformative approaches represent a shift away from individual-focused interventions and toward systemic change in gender dynamics and power relations. Rather than simply equipping women with skills or opportunities, these approaches actively seek to dismantle and reconstruct the societal structures that perpetuate gender inequalities. They recognise that deeply ingrained norms and stereotypes around gender play a crucial role in reinforcing hierarchies that marginalise women and other minoritised groups.

By focusing on challenging and altering gender norms, gender-transformative strategies foster environments that question traditional roles and the distribution of power. This might include, for example, creating spaces where men are engaged as allies in gender equality efforts, addressing unconscious biases, and reshaping institutional policies that disproportionately affect women. These approaches contribute to structural shifts by encouraging collective engagement in transforming norms, thus fostering sustainable equality at multiple levels of society.

The goal of gender-transformative approaches is not merely to improve the position of women in each context but to create societies where equality is foundational and intersectional. This requires moving beyond addressing symptoms of inequality to tackling the systemic roots, ensuring that progress toward gender equality is enduring and impactful. By disrupting power imbalances and fostering inclusive attitudes, gender-transformative efforts promote meaningful change that benefits society.

A gender-transformative approach can bring about change across different sectors by actively challenging norms and redistributing roles. In schools, for instance, this could involve training teachers to counter unconscious bias in classroom interactions and ensuring girls and boys have equal encouragement to pursue science, technology, and leadership pathways. In workplaces, it could mean restructuring promotion processes to make them transparent, introducing equal pay audits, and designing parental leave schemes that encourage men to take on caregiving responsibilities. In politics and governance, it could involve setting gender-balanced quotas for leadership positions or redesigning consultation processes so that women's voices, particularly those from marginalised groups, are central to decision-making. In healthcare, it could mean moving away from a one-size-fits-all model to account for how gender norms shape health risks, access, and outcomes. These examples illustrate how gender-transformative approaches go beyond inclusion to reshape the underlying rules, expectations, and power dynamics, creating societies where equality is embedded in both institutions and daily life.

Gender budgeting

Gender budgeting is a strategic approach to public financial management that integrates a gender perspective throughout the budgeting process. This approach examines the different needs, experiences, and priorities of women and men, and ensures that public funds are allocated in a way that promotes gender equality.

Rather than creating separate budgets for different gender groups, gender budgeting seeks to adapt existing resources to address disparities. This involves analysing how budget allocations impact women and men differently, identifying areas where inequalities persist, and ensuring that fiscal decisions are designed to rectify these disparities. For instance, a healthcare budget might allocate more resources to maternal health services or to addressing conditions disproportionately affecting women, while also ensuring access to services that benefit men.

A core component of gender budgeting is the use of gender analysis. This entails assessing the effects of public spending and revenue policies on women and men to understand their differentiated impacts. For example, it examines how policies such as tax breaks or subsidies might benefit one group more, or whether infrastructure projects adequately consider the needs of all community members. Through this process, governments can uncover hidden inequalities and develop more targeted interventions.

An inclusive approach is integral to gender budgeting. It involves engaging diverse stakeholders, including women's organisations, civil society, and gender equality advocates, in the budget process. Such participation ensures that the perspectives of under-represented and/or minoritised groups are incorporated, making the process more transparent and accountable. Additionally, gender budgeting emphasises equity not only in public spending but also in revenue collection. For example, tax policies can be scrutinised to ensure that they do not disproportionately burden specific groups, particularly women, who may already face economic disadvantages.

Examples of integrating a gender equality perspective

Integrating a gender equality perspective in the regulation on occupational safety in Finland

A good example of the importance of integrating a gender equality perspective in preparatory work was the reform of the Finnish legislation on occupational safety and health at the beginning of the 21st century. In Finland, as in most countries, the labour market is strongly segregated by sex, and work and working conditions differ between women and men. The committee on occupational safety and health legislation analysed these facts and figures and discovered that changes in workplace legislation inevitably had different consequences for women and men.

While preparing a legislative proposal, the committee therefore modified its approach, from one that focused on accidents in the workplace, towards one that focused more broadly on investigating hazards in the workplace. In this way, the act better responded to the typical risks found in women-dominated sectors (for example, harassment, workload, and fatigue). As a result of the gender-sensitive preparatory work, the concept of occupational safety was broadened, and the act now better serves the occupational safety needs of both women and men.

Integrating a Gender Equality Perspective in Ukraine's Post-Conflict Recovery

A powerful example of the significance of integrating gender equality into policy development in Ukraine is its approach to post-conflict recovery, particularly through the [State Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men until 2030](#). Ukraine, like many countries, faces distinct challenges due to gender inequalities, especially exacerbated during times of conflict. Women and men are affected differently by war, with women disproportionately bearing the brunt of social and economic hardships.

Recognising this, the Ukrainian government, in partnership with the Council of Europe, revised its strategy to incorporate a gender equality perspective throughout the recovery process. Instead of focusing solely on rebuilding physical infrastructure, the government shifted its approach to include socio-economic recovery, human development, and the participation of women at all levels of decision-making. Special attention was given to the challenges faced by women, such as access to justice, violence related to hostilities, and their role in peacebuilding. The strategy ensures that women's contributions are not overlooked, and their specific needs, such as access to healthcare, social services, and economic opportunities, are addressed. This holistic approach has broadened the scope of recovery efforts, making them more inclusive and effective in building a sustainable future for women and men in Ukraine ([UN Women, 2023](#)).

The role of local gender-related coordinators

1. Introductory remarks on the wording of Ukrainian legislation

The Ukrainian legislation on gender equality uses highly bureaucratic language and avoids using the term “gender”. [Law No. 2866-IV](#) is titled “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men in Ukraine”. There is no definition of “gender” throughout Law No. 2866-IV, and the term “gender” is not mentioned in it. Gender as a social construct thus remains invisible, while “sex” is given emphasis.

The legislation includes terms such as “discrimination on the basis of sex” (not gender-based discrimination (Art. 1), “violence on the basis of sex” (not “gender-based violence against women”) and statistical data “grouped by sex” (not gender-disaggregated data”) (Art. 5). Nonetheless, several gender-related terms are mentioned, including “gender equality” (about 20 times), “gender legal expertise” (7 times, mainly in Art. 4), “gender policy” (once in Art. 8), “gender studies” (once in Art. 12), “gender culture” and “gender issues” (Art. 13). However, it is important to note that the emphasis remains on “sex” rather than “gender”.

The individuals informally referred to as “local gender-related coordinators” or “local gender coordinators” (or LGRC) in Art.13 of Law No. 2866-IV are “authorised persons (coordinators) on issues of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, preventing and countering sex-based violence in executive and local self-government bodies”. Notably, the term “gender” does not appear in their official job title. While this Handbook uses the term ‘LGRC’, it is important to understand that, according to the law, there is no formal “gender equality infrastructure”, there are only “bodies, institutions and organisations empowered to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men” (Art. 7).

2. Gender equality infrastructure

Among the “bodies, institutions and organisations empowered to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men” (Art. 7 of the No. 2866-IV), the law specifies:

- Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine – the Ukrainian Parliament (see also Art. 8);

- The Human Rights Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine – Ombudsperson (see also Art. 9);

- Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (CMU) – the Government (see also Art. 10);

- A specially authorised central body of the executive power in matters pertaining to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men (see also Art. 11) – which is the Ministry of Social Policy (MoSP) – see also [CMU Regulation No. 423](#) dated 17 June 2015;

- Bodies of the executive power and bodies of local self-government, within them – authorised persons (coordinators) on issues of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men; (referred to as LGRCs);

- Public associations (NGOs).

The post of Government Commissioner on gender policy has also been introduced within the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine – see also [CMU Regulations No. 390](#) dated 7 June 2017.

This role has served as a powerful catalyst for numerous legislative initiatives that have significantly changed national legislation and eliminated a number of gender-discriminatory provisions.

3. Roles and responsibilities of local gender-related coordinators (LGRCS)

Art. 13 of the Law No. 2866-IV (amended by the No. 2229-VIII dated 7 December 2017), defines the responsibilities (in Ukrainian “повноваження”) of LGRCs (literally – “authorised persons (coordinators) in matters of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, prevention and counteraction of sex-

based violence in executive power bodies and local self-government bodies” in Ukrainian – “уповноважених осіб (координаторів) з питань забезпечення рівних прав та можливостей жінок і чоловіків, запобігання та протидії насильству за ознакою статі в органах виконавчої влади та органах місцевого самоврядування”) as follows: local gender-related coordinators are authorised to organise the work of relevant local government (oblast/rayon) and local self-government bodies (town, village, community, etc) as follows:

- taking into account the principle of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the relevant area;
- analysing the state of gender equality and assessing the need for affirmative actions to address gender gaps (including asymmetries and imbalances) within a specific territory or industry;
- coordinating measures of prevention and combating sex-based violence, monitoring the implementation of such measures at the local level;
- cooperation with NGOs, summarising the information received from them on gender equality and sex-based violence, and joint development of ways to eliminate sex-based discrimination;
- conducting ongoing awareness raising campaigns and ensuring media coverage to promote the elimination of all forms of sex-based discrimination;
- adopting measures aimed at fostering a gender-conscious culture among the population;
- addressing complaints/petitions related to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men as well as instances of sex-based discrimination, (“організація прийому громадян”) analysing the root causes of such issues, and reporting them to law enforcement agencies in compliance with legal requirements;
- providing gender-related training for employees to develop the skills needed for the implementation of functions and tasks, as well as offering support and protection to affected individuals;
- taking measures to eliminate manifestations of sex-based discrimination.

Therefore, the aim of this Handbook is to raise awareness on gender issues relevant to LGRCs and to support professionals in their daily work. It can complement the

“Methodological recommendations” for LGRCs issued in September 2023 by MoSP, which recommends that LGRCs:

■ apply a gender-specific approach in drafting laws and policies (local regulations, normative acts, policy papers, in particular, regional and local development of programmes/projects, etc.), by utilising gender legal expertise (approved by order of the MoSP (dated 7 February 2020 No. 86);

■ apply a gender-specific approach in implementing:

- ▶ humanitarian activities, post-war reconstruction and development;
- ▶ equal access of different groups of women and men to social security and protection systems;
- ▶ administrative, social, medical, educational, cultural services, physical culture and sports;
- ▶ employment and labour;
- ▶ legal aid;
- ▶ natural resources, physical environment, transportation, information and communication, information and communication technologies and systems, as well as to other facilities and services in both urban and rural areas.

■ implement affirmative actions (“special temporary measures to address the legal or actual inequalities in opportunities for women and men”), including establishing quotas and preferences for employing women in high-paying jobs, appointing them to managerial positions or supervisory boards, and organising training programmes for women who return from parental leave, among others;

■ ensure gender parity (equal representation of women and men) in the composition of delegations, consultative, advisory and other auxiliary bodies, services and commissions established under the authority;

■ apply a gender-specific approach in the budget process;

■ apply a gender perspective in tender procedures (in tenders for projects financed from local budgets);

■ incorporate provisions into collective agreements and contracts to ensure equal rights and opportunities for both women and men in labour relations (approved by order of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine dated 29 January 2020 No. 56);

■ conduct periodic gender audits;

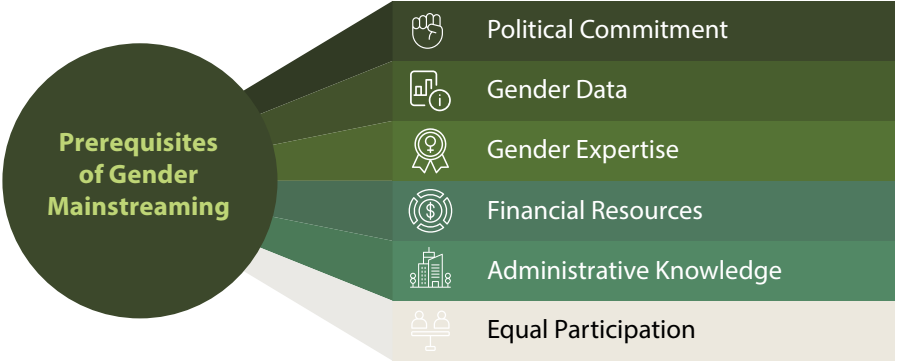
■ develop gender non-discriminatory internal rules, procedures and personnel policies, including creating conditions that allow both women and men to balance professional and family responsibilities, ensuring equal pay for equal work, equal access to compensation and assistance, addressing issues such as sexual harassment, mobbing, and sexism in the workplace.

It is recommended to take the results of gender audits into account when developing internal rules, procedures, and personnel policies within the authority. Additionally, activities aimed at reducing gender inequality should be incorporated into the requirements for tenders related to projects financed by local budgets, particularly those aimed at regulating social relations, as well as in international technical assistance projects implemented in the relevant territory.

It is also recommended to initiate the collection and analysis of sex/gender disaggregated data for individuals in vulnerable situations, such as those facing difficult life circumstances, internally displaced persons, participants in hostilities, veterans; people with disabilities, belonging to low-mobility groups, minorities, victims of violence against women and domestic violence, sexual violence related to armed conflict, etc). The results of such an analysis are recommended to be reflected in the “gender portrait of the region or city” and to be used to inform socio-economic development programmes.

4. Prerequisites of gender mainstreaming and how to address challenges

The prerequisites of gender mainstreaming describe the ideal situation, which is often not the reality. The table below gives examples and suggestions to address such challenges.

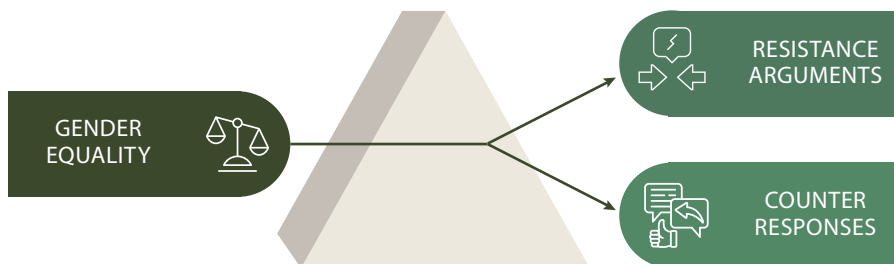


Prerequisites	Description	What you can do in case of difficulties
1. Political commitment and leadership	The success of gender mainstreaming largely depends on the commitment of political leaders and decision-makers at all levels. This commitment should be reflected in clear policies, dedicated resources, and the consistent implementation of gender equality principles.	Advocate for strong political support by presenting evidence on the benefits of gender equality. Encourage local leaders to publicly commit to gender mainstreaming. Give examples of successful gender mainstreaming in programmes or policies.
2. Gender-sensitive/sex-disaggregated data and statistics	The availability of sex- or gender-disaggregated data is crucial for understanding the different needs and experiences of women and men. These data inform policymaking and helps identify areas where gender inequalities persist.	Use this handbook to find such data and ensure relevant persons are aware of sources of sex- or gender-disaggregated data. The links provided in Chapter 1 provide a good starting point to find such data. See also the recommendations made below under 'argument 1'. Use data to develop gender-sensitive indicators and set measurable targets for gender equality. Consult gender equality experts, services and/or organisations working in your area or the area of gender equality of interest. Advocate for the inclusion of gender analysis in all stages of policy development and programme implementation.
3. Some gender equality expertise and knowledge of the area where gender mainstreaming is being implemented	All stakeholders, including government officials, staff, and community members, need to have the necessary knowledge and skills to implement gender mainstreaming effectively.	Consult gender equality experts and/or relevant services or non-governmental organisations. Organise regular training sessions on gender equality and mainstreaming for staff and key stakeholders. Participate in available training and encourage the participation of others in such training.

4. Necessary funds and human resources	Adequate financial and human resources are essential to support gender mainstreaming activities. This includes allocating funds specifically for gender-related initiatives and ensuring that staff are equipped to carry out these tasks.	Advocate for the inclusion of gender considerations in budgeting processes (gender-responsive budgeting). Ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to gender mainstreaming activities. Work with financial departments to track and report on gender-related expenditures.
5. Knowledge of the functioning/ procedures of the administration	Effective institutional mechanisms, such as gender units, gender focal points, and monitoring systems, are necessary to coordinate and oversee gender mainstreaming activities.	Establish or strengthen gender units within local government bodies to coordinate gender mainstreaming efforts. Develop clear roles and responsibilities for LGRCs and other stakeholders involved in gender equality work. Implement monitoring and reporting systems to track progress on gender mainstreaming initiatives.
6. Equal presence and contribution of women and men	Achieving equal presence and contribution of women and men is a fundamental prerequisite for successful gender mainstreaming. This means ensuring that women and men have equal opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, contribute to policy development, and access resources. An equal presence fosters diverse perspectives, which enhances the quality and effectiveness of policies and programmes. It also ensures that the needs and interests of both women and men are adequately represented and addressed.	Advocate for the inclusion of women in leadership positions and decision-making bodies at all levels of local government. Actively involve both women and men in public consultations, community meetings, and policy discussions. Regularly assess the gender balance in various roles, from entry-level positions to leadership, and take corrective actions if disparities are found.

5. Dealing with resistance: questions and answers

As an LGRC, you may face resistance. The following table provides answers to arguments that are often used when gender equality issues are at stake.



ARGUMENT	ANSWER
Argument 1: <i>"There is no information regarding the respective situation of women and men, so I cannot do anything."</i>	While it may seem challenging, sex- or gender-disaggregated statistics are available across many sectors in Ukraine. Local Gender-Related Coordinators can access data through national statistical offices, government reports, and various local studies. Additionally, if specific data are not available in the area you are focusing on, this highlights a gap that can be raised with relevant authorities. Advocating for the collection of such data is a crucial step in promoting gender equality. Data collection and analysis can also be initiated at the local level. Relevant qualitative information can also be found in reports submitted by Ukraine to the United Nations CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), as well as in the concluding observations and recommendations provided by CEDAW. Furthermore, NGOs, UN agencies such as UN Women or the ILO, the World Bank, the State Statistics Service of Ukraine (Derzhstat) and academic institutions often carry out studies that provide valuable insights into gender issues. You can refer to this handbook for sources of data and guidance on how to effectively use this information in your work.

Argument 2: <i>"We have reached gender equality; this is not an issue in my community or organisation."</i>	Despite progress, gender equality is far from being fully achieved in most areas of society. Structural inequalities persist in various sectors, including political representation, economic opportunities, and social services. For example, global data show that women remain underrepresented in decision-making positions and often face a gender pay gap. In Ukraine, similar challenges exist, reflecting the need for ongoing efforts to address these inequalities. Legal and policy documents at the national, European, and international level recognise these inequalities and outline commitments to address them. For instance, Ukraine's national constitution, its commitments under the Council of Europe standards, and international frameworks like the CEDAW Convention all affirm the importance of pursuing gender equality. As LGRCs, it is crucial to acknowledge these existing inequalities and to continue advocating for measures that promote gender equality.
Argument 3: <i>"We have a woman mayor/director/ chair, so there is no problem with gender equality."</i>	While it is encouraging to see some women in leadership positions, this does not necessarily mean that gender equality has been achieved. Women are still generally underrepresented in decision-making roles across political, economic, and social spheres. Gender equality is not only about having women in prominent positions but also about ensuring that the policies and decisions made at all levels reflect a gender-sensitive perspective. Achieving true gender equality requires a systemic approach that goes beyond individual successes. It involves changing attitudes, behaviours, and structures within organisations and society at large. Both women and men need to be actively involved in this process, and as LGRCs, your role is to promote these systemic changes to ensure that gender equality is embedded in all aspects of governance and public life.
Argument 4: <i>"Our public policies, laws, and projects are gender-neutral and thus benefit all people equally. We don't discriminate against women."</i>	Gender-neutral policies often fail to account for the different situations and needs of women and men. In many areas of life – such as access to resources, healthcare, employment, and unpaid care work – women and men experience different challenges. For example, a policy aimed at reducing hospital stays might inadvertently increase the burden of unpaid care work on women, who traditionally take on more caregiving responsibilities. It is essential to recognise that women and men are affected differently by policies due to these varying situations, roles, and responsibilities. Therefore, public policies, laws, and projects need to be designed with these differences in mind to avoid perpetuating gender inequalities. As an LGRC, your task is to ensure that all policies are assessed for their impact on everyone and to advocate for adjustments where necessary to promote true equality.

Argument 5: <i>"Gender quotas/parity systems are not democratic. They limit the choice of the electorate, and women will be chosen only because of their gender."</i>	Gender quotas and parity systems are legal and encouraged under various international standards, including Council of Europe standards, the CEDAW Convention and European Union directives. These measures are designed to address the historical and structural barriers that have prevented women from entering decision-making roles. Quotas do not undermine democracy; rather, they enhance it by ensuring that all voices are represented. The argument that only qualifications should matter overlooks the fact that many qualified women are excluded due to systemic biases and unequal opportunities. Quotas help to level the playing field, allowing for a more diverse and representative governance structure. As LGRCs, it is important to advocate for these measures as necessary tools to correct imbalances and ensure that women have equal opportunities to contribute to public life.
Argument 6: <i>"It's not discrimination; women just don't want to be involved in politics or decision-making."</i>	The lack of women in politics or decision-making roles is often due to structural barriers rather than a lack of interest. These barriers include limited access to resources, social networks, and opportunities, as well as the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. Additionally, women often face higher levels of scrutiny, sexism, and even harassment, which can discourage them from participating in public life. To address this, it is important to create an environment that supports women's involvement in decision-making. This includes transparent nomination processes, flexible working conditions, and measures to prevent harassment and discrimination. By actively encouraging and supporting women's participation, LGRCs can help break down these barriers and promote a more inclusive and equitable society.
Argument 7: <i>"This is our culture, and gender equality is an idea imposed on us by foreign donors and international organisations. We cannot go against our traditional beliefs and values."</i>	Gender equality is not an external imposition, but a fundamental human right recognised by international conventions, including those that Ukraine has committed to, such as the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW. These commitments make it clear that cultural traditions cannot be used to justify discrimination or violence against women. Moreover, gender equality benefits both women and men by creating more just equitable, and prosperous societies. It is important to differentiate between harmful practices that perpetuate inequalities and traditions that can be preserved in a way that respects human rights. As LGRCs, your role is to promote these values within the context of your local culture, ensuring that progress towards gender equality is seen as beneficial and in alignment with broader societal goals.

Argument 8: <i>"Gender equality policies are too costly and take resources away from more important issues."</i>	Investing in gender equality is not a cost but an investment in the future of the entire community. Gender equality leads to economic growth, poverty reduction, and better governance outcomes. For example, when women participate fully in the labour market, productivity increases, and economies grow. Additionally, gender-sensitive policies can prevent costly social issues, such as violence against women or poor health outcomes, which are expensive to address once they occur. Allocating resources to gender equality initiatives often results in better overall resource efficiency, as it ensures that the needs of the entire population are met, not just a portion of it. As an LGRC, it is important to highlight the long-term benefits of gender equality policies and advocate for their integration into broader development strategies.
Argument 9: <i>"Men are also disadvantaged in many areas, so why focus only on women?"</i>	Gender equality is about addressing the needs of everyone, including men, women, and non-binary individuals. While it is true that some men can face disadvantages in certain areas, such as in education or health, the goal of gender mainstreaming is to address all forms of gender inequalities. However, historically, women have been more systematically disadvantaged in key areas such as political representation, economic opportunities, and access to resources. Focusing on women's issues does not mean ignoring the challenges faced by men; rather, it involves creating policies that recognise and address the specific needs of different groups. LGRCs should work to ensure that all policies are inclusive and equitable, benefiting the entire community.
Argument 10: <i>"Gender equality will disrupt traditional family structures and roles."</i>	Gender equality does not aim to disrupt families but to empower all members to live fulfilling lives, free from violence, discrimination and limitation based on gender. In fact, promoting gender equality within families can lead to stronger, more supportive family units where women and men share responsibilities and decision-making roles. For example, when men are encouraged to take on caregiving roles, it can lead to more balanced relationships and allow both partners to pursue their careers and personal goals. Gender equality in families also benefits children, who learn the value of equality and respect for everyone. As an LGRC, you can help communities see that gender equality enhances, rather than diminishes, the strength of family structures by promoting mutual respect and shared responsibilities.

Argument 11:

"Women are already protected by the law, so additional gender-focused policies are unnecessary."

While legal protections for women are essential, laws alone are not enough to achieve true gender equality. Legal frameworks provide the foundation, but the implementation and enforcement of these laws are where challenges often arise. Additionally, many gender inequalities are deeply rooted in social norms and cultural practices that laws alone cannot address.

Gender-focused policies are necessary to ensure that legal protections are translated into real-world changes. These policies can help address systemic barriers, such as unequal access to education, employment, and healthcare, that laws may not fully cover. As an LGRC, your role is to ensure that gender equality is not only enshrined in law but also realised in practice through targeted policies and programmes.

Argument 12:

"Gender mainstreaming is just a trend; it will fade away."

Gender mainstreaming is not a passing trend; it is a critical approach recognised globally as essential for achieving sustainable development and social justice. International agreements, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the CEDAW Convention, have all emphasised the importance of integrating gender perspectives into all areas of policy and practice.

The persistence of gender inequalities across the world highlights the need for ongoing efforts to mainstream gender. This approach is about creating lasting change, ensuring that the needs and rights of all individuals are considered in every aspect of public policy and governance. As an LGRC, it is important to communicate that gender mainstreaming is a long-term strategy for creating a more equitable and just society, not a temporary initiative.

6. Gender mainstreaming step-by-step

New activity proposal? Identifying priorities? Assisting in the promotion, implementation, follow-up, and evaluation of national measures? Whatever the context, it is essential to apply a gender and intersectional lens, considering how various factors such as age, disability, or migratory status may intersect with gender to shape different outcomes. Hereunder you will find practical support to implement a step-by-step gender impact assessment.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT: PUT ON YOUR GENDER GLASSES

To find out if gender matters in your work, answer the four following questions to undertake a gender impact assessment. Ensure that your analysis incorporates an intersectional perspective, considering how other factors such as age, disability, or migratory status may influence the impact of your project/programme on different groups.



Gender Impact Assessment



QUESTION 1:

Do you see a possible link between the impact and goal of your work and gender inequalities in society?

To be able to answer this question, you will have to establish which gender inequalities and discrimination patterns exist regarding the issue of the country, region, or municipality, where the activity will take place.

Make an inventory of possible social, cultural, and material differences between women and men/girls and boys for the issue you are seeking to address. Find out about the situation of women and men/girls and boys in the given area (e.g., in terms of participation, access to resources and to institutions). Collect and analyse facts and figures: which sex-disaggregated statistics, research results, qualitative surveys are available on the topic?

Additionally, adopt an **intersectional approach** by considering how other factors, such as ethnicity, class, age, disability, migratory status, or level of education intersect with gender to create unique experiences and challenges. Look at the work of other institutions and gender equality experts, including non-governmental (women's) organisations and whether good practices and experiences are available from other countries.

The most common gender inequalities in society are:

- Inequalities in **power** (access to political, economic, and social decision-making, representation).
- Differences in access to **resources** (inequalities in employment, material, and financial means, but also time, information and contacts).
- Differences in legal/social/financial and employment **status** (e.g. do women have the same rights as men regarding ownership of properties, inheritance, networks etc.).
- Violence against women.
- Intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities.

There are two possible answers to question 1:

YES - Your gender analysis shows that there are gender inequalities in the area you want to act upon. If this is the case, these inequalities will ALWAYS affect the desired impact of your policy/project and there is a link. To ensure the success of your policy/project, it is crucial to address these inequalities by integrating measures that account for the different needs and circumstances of women and men. Consider not only gender but also how intersecting factors such as age, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic status may exacerbate these inequalities.

→ **GO TO QUESTION 2**

NO - No gender specific actions are needed in this instance; but monitoring is essential. If a possible link appears at a later stage, undertake a new gender analysis, and take remedial actions if needed. Note that **it is uncommon to conclude that no gender-specific actions are necessary**. In most cases, gender inequalities are deeply embedded in various sectors – be it economics, healthcare, education, or governance - even if they are not immediately apparent. While it is possible that a specific project or policy area may not require immediate gender interventions, the complexities of gender roles and systemic inequalities mean that such instances are rare. Therefore, it is critical to monitor outcomes continuously because gender disparities may surface as the project progresses or as external conditions evolve. Additionally, remain attentive to intersectional factors, such as age, disability, migratory status, or socio-economic background, which may intersect with gender to create disparities over time. These factors often influence outcomes in subtle but significant ways, making ongoing analysis and flexibility essential.

QUESTION 2:

Will reaching your policy/project objective(s) affect women and men in different ways?

YES - Your gender analysis has shown gender inequalities in the area you want to address. Make an inventory of possible different (intended or unintended) effects of the policy/project on women and men/girls and boys. It is always helpful to look at earlier projects/programmes on the same topic, to organise hearings or to discuss the issue with colleagues, gender equality experts (for example the Council of Europe Gender Equality Division) or women's NGOs. Additionally, consider involving a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure that intersectional factors such as age, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic status are accounted for. This could include consultations with representatives of marginalised groups

or communities disproportionately affected by the issue. Drawing on these perspectives will help identify nuanced effects of the policy/project and ensure more equitable outcomes for all.

————→ **GO TO QUESTION 3**

NO - No gender specific actions are needed in this instance; but monitoring is essential. If a possible link appears at a later stage, undertake a new gender analysis, and take remedial actions if needed. Note that **it is rare to conclude that no gender-specific actions are needed**. Gender inequalities are deeply embedded in most social, economic, and political systems, even if they are not immediately visible. These inequalities often manifest in unequal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power, which means that reaching your policy or project objectives is likely to affect women and men differently. While there may be some cases where gender differences are minimal, it is essential to carefully scrutinise all aspects of the project and continue monitoring to ensure that any potential disparities are identified and addressed. If gender disparities emerge during implementation, a new gender analysis should be conducted, and remedial actions taken to correct course. Additionally, consider the possibility of **unintended consequences** of the policy or project that may perpetuate or exacerbate inequalities. For example, a seemingly neutral initiative might inadvertently exclude certain groups if underlying disparities are not accounted for. Ensuring inclusive and regular consultation with stakeholders, including those from marginalised groups, can help detect and mitigate such risks.

QUESTION 3:

Will this cause inequalities in society?

YES - If your policy/project's activities will cause or deepen existing gender inequalities in society, immediate action is required to revise the policy/project design. Identify the specific mechanisms or aspects of the initiative that may contribute to these inequalities and develop targeted measures to mitigate or eliminate these effects. Consult with gender equality experts, stakeholders, and representatives from affected groups to ensure that all potential impacts are fully understood and addressed. Apply a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach to redesign activities, ensuring they actively contribute to reducing inequalities rather than exacerbating them. Incorporate ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of your revised approach and adjust as necessary to achieve equitable outcomes.

————→ **GO TO QUESTION 4**

NO - No gender specific actions are needed in this instance; but monitoring is essential. If a possible link appears at a later stage, undertake a new gender analysis, and take remedial actions if needed. Note that **it is rare to conclude that no gender-specific actions are needed**. Gender inequalities are prevalent in nearly all aspects of society, even if they are not immediately obvious. Projects and policies interact with deeply embedded social structures, which often result in unequal outcomes for women and men. Moreover, inequalities can be amplified when gender intersects with other factors such as age, ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic status. Even if no immediate gender disparities are apparent, the complex and dynamic nature of social inequalities means that such cases are exceptional. Therefore, ongoing monitoring is crucial to ensure that any emerging gender or intersectional disparities can be detected early.

There are occasions where activities that you undertake will lead to inequalities between women and men in **the policy/project itself**. This is the case when the policy/project aims at addressing an unequal situation in a particular domain in society. However, the result of the policy/project should be to contribute to the elimination of existing gender inequalities in that particular domain.

QUESTION 4:

How can these inequalities be solved?

1. What?
2. Who?
3. How?

In this phase you look at which mitigation measures should be taken (=What?); which actors are relevant to bring about the mitigation measures (=Who?); and what you will change in the intended policies measures or activities (=How?).

EXAMPLES OF GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

EXAMPLE 1

In a country, despite years of specific measures and positive action by the national government, the percentage of women professors is still very low: around 19%. Universities continue to predominantly select men as professors. The old boys' networks seem difficult to break. The government decides to take more rigorous action and introduces a subsidy scheme that supports universities in appointing more women professors. The money can only be spent on projects targeting women candidates. There is a great deal of protest by some men in the media. They feel discriminated against because they have fewer chances of being selected.

Let's do a gender impact assessment of this measure:

Question 1: *Is there a link between the goal of the measure (subsidy scheme) and gender inequalities in society?*

Answer: yes.

The percentage of women in decision-making positions in academia is much lower than that of men. In addition, the fact that there are more women than men as students makes it difficult to believe that there are not enough qualified women to become professors.

Question 2: *Will the effects of the subsidy scheme affect women and men in a different way?*

Answer: yes.

Women will have more chances to be selected. Men less so.

Question 3: *Does this lead to inequalities?*

Answer: in the project itself: yes. But in society: no.

Women are clearly underrepresented in senior positions in universities. Diverse European and international policy instruments including as Article 157 §4 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and Article 4 of the CEDAW Convention encourage or permit member states to take temporary measures to support the underrepresented sex.

Question 4: In conclusion, there is no need to act differently, no changes need to be made to the subsidy scheme. The intention of the subsidy scheme is to correct existing and lasting inequalities between women and men in this area.

EXAMPLE 2

In the wake of the ongoing conflict, Ukraine faces the challenge of rebuilding its economy. Historically, women have been disproportionately affected by conflict in various ways, including increased responsibilities in care work, economic vulnerability, and exposure to violence against women. As part of Ukraine's recovery strategy, the government plans to introduce an economic recovery programme aimed at creating new jobs and restoring infrastructure. This initiative will target both urban and rural areas, with a focus on sectors like construction, manufacturing, and logistics – industries traditionally dominated by men.

The government is keen to ensure that women are also included in this recovery process and is considering a policy to implement gender-responsive employment programmes that promote women's participation in these men-dominated industries, along with support for traditionally women-dominated sectors, such as healthcare and education.

Let's do a gender impact assessment of this measure:

Question 1: *Is there a link between the goal of the economic recovery programme and gender inequalities in society?*

Answer: yes.

Women in Ukraine, like in many other countries, face structural barriers in accessing economic opportunities, particularly in men-dominated industries such as construction and logistics. While they are overrepresented in sectors like healthcare and education, these industries tend to be undervalued and offer fewer economic rewards. Additionally, women are more likely to shoulder the burden of unpaid care work, which limits their ability to fully participate in the workforce. Thus, the economic recovery programme, if not designed with a gender perspective, risks exacerbating these existing inequalities by funneling resources into industries where women are underrepresented.

Question 2: *Will the effects of the economic recovery programme affect women and men in a different way?*

Answer: yes.

Without targeted efforts to include women, the programme could benefit men disproportionately. Employment in the recovery sectors (such as construction) is likely to attract more men, given historical patterns of job segregation. On the other hand, women – who are already burdened with unpaid care responsibilities – may not be able to access these new opportunities unless support systems (like childcare) are put in place. Thus, men would likely benefit more economically from the programme, while women might be excluded from the recovery process, further exacerbating gender disparities.

Question 3: *Will this lead to inequalities?*

Answer: yes, without intervention.

The programme could reinforce existing gender inequalities if it focuses solely on sectors traditionally dominated by men without considering the barriers women face. This would reinforce the gender gap in economic participation, resulting in unequal recovery benefits. However, introducing gender-responsive policies – such as training programmes for women in non-traditional sectors, supporting women-led businesses, and addressing care work responsibilities – can help mitigate this risk.

Question 4: In conclusion, an intervention is needed to ensure gender equality is streamlined in the recovery process. The government could take a gender-sensitive approach to ensure that women and men benefit equally from the economic recovery programme. This could include: targeted training and recruitment efforts to increase women's participation in traditionally men-dominated industries; support for women-led businesses and industries with a predominantly female workforce, such as healthcare and education; investment in childcare and care infrastructure to enable women to participate in the labour market more effectively; monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the gendered impact of the programme and ensure that women are not left behind in the recovery process. By adopting a gender-responsive approach to the economic recovery, Ukraine can ensure that the benefits of rebuilding are shared equally between women and men, contributing to a more equitable and resilient society. This strategy aligns with international best practices and frameworks, such as CEDAW, which encourage states to take temporary measures to address gender disparities.

EXAMPLE 3

Historically, men are overrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) careers, while women are more likely to study and work in fields like humanities, social sciences, and caregiving professions. The government's goal is to boost STEM education to improve its global competitiveness. However, without a gender-sensitive approach, the reform may unintentionally exacerbate existing gender disparities by disproportionately benefiting students and professionals who are men. To address this, the government is considering an educational reform that incorporates gender-responsive educational policies to ensure equal access and participation for both girls and boys in STEM fields.

Let's do a gender impact assessment of this measure:

Question 1: *Is there a link between the goal of the educational reform and gender inequalities in society?*

Answer: yes.

There are clear gender inequalities in education and career choices, particularly in the STEM fields. Men are overrepresented in these high-paying, technical careers, while women tend to pursue careers in humanities and caregiving, which are often undervalued and lower-paid. If the educational reform focuses heavily on STEM without addressing these gender-based disparities, it risks reinforcing the gender gap in these high-opportunity fields, thereby perpetuating societal inequalities.

Question 2: *Will the effects of the educational reform affect women and men in a different way?*

Answer: yes.

If the reform does not take gender into account, boys and men will likely benefit more from the increased focus on STEM education, as they already dominate these fields. Meanwhile, girls and women may continue to face societal and structural barriers – such as stereotypes about their abilities in maths and science – that discourage them from pursuing STEM careers. Therefore, without intervention, the reform could further entrench gender roles, leaving women at a disadvantage in accessing high-paying, in-demand STEM jobs.

Question 3: *Will this lead to inequalities?*

Answer: yes, without intervention.

The reform could inadvertently widen the gender gap in education and future career opportunities if it does not address the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields. However, this can be mitigated by implementing gender-responsive educational policies that actively encourage and support girls to pursue STEM education, such as scholarships, mentorship programmes, and public awareness campaigns to break down gender stereotypes in STEM.

Question 4: Intervention is necessary to avoid deepening gender inequalities. The educational reform could include specific measures to promote gender equality in STEM education, such as: targeted outreach and support programmes for girls in STEM subjects, such as after-school clubs, summer camps, and mentorship from women professionals in STEM; scholarships and financial incentives for girls pursuing degrees in STEM; teacher training to address and challenge gender stereotypes in the classroom; awareness campaigns to promote STEM careers to girls and showcase women role models in these fields; continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure that girls and boys are benefiting equally from the reforms.

By ensuring that education reform policies actively address gender inequalities, it can help close the gender gap in STEM fields and promote equal opportunities for all students. This will contribute to a more diverse and competitive workforce, while also aligning with international frameworks that promote gender equality in education, such as CEDAW and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 5).

EXAMPLE 4

Domestic violence remains a significant issue, particularly affecting women. Although a country has made strides in improving its legal framework through the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the introduction of the Law on Prevention and Combating Domestic Violence, the implementation of these measures still faces challenges. Many women, especially in rural areas, struggle to access justice or support services due to lack of resources, societal norms, and inadequate enforcement of laws. The government plans to launch a national anti-violence campaign aimed at raising awareness, improving access to services, and strengthening law enforcement responses to domestic violence. However, there are concerns that the campaign may not be sufficiently tailored to address gender-specific barriers faced by women, such as social stigma or economic dependency, which could limit its effectiveness in reducing violence against women.

Let's do a gender impact assessment of this measure:

Question 1: *Is there a link between the goal of the campaign and gender inequalities in society?*

Answer: yes.

There is a direct link between the goal of the campaign and gender inequalities in society, particularly around domestic violence. Domestic violence is overwhelmingly gendered, with women being the primary victims. The existing social norms, economic inequalities, and lack of legal protection for women make them more vulnerable to violence and limit their ability to seek help. By addressing these inequalities, the campaign can significantly contribute to reducing domestic violence.

Question 2: *Will the effects of the campaign affect women and men in a different way?*

Answer: yes.

Women and men will be affected differently by the campaign. Women are more likely to benefit from improved access to support services and protection from violence, but only if the campaign successfully addresses the gender-specific barriers they face, such as fear of social ostracisation or financial dependence on abusive partners. On the other hand, men, especially in rural areas, might resist the campaign's messages due to entrenched patriarchal norms that view domestic violence as a private matter. The campaign will need to address these cultural attitudes to be effective.

Question 3: *Will this lead to inequalities?*

Answer: No, but careful implementation is needed.

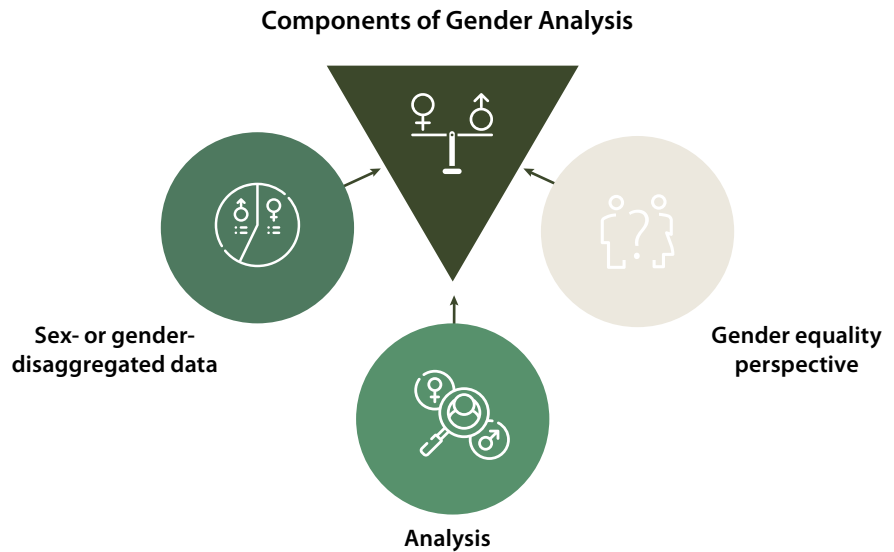
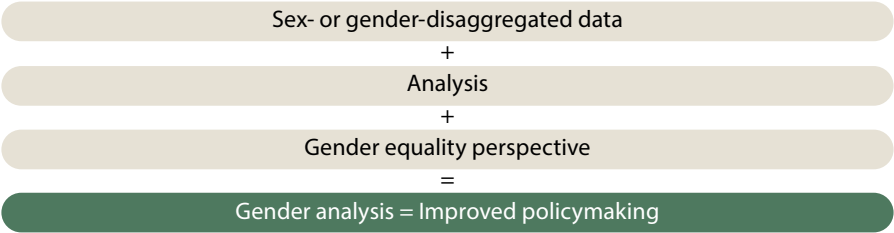
The campaign itself is unlikely to cause inequalities, as its goal is to reduce domestic violence, which disproportionately affects women. However, without a gender-sensitive approach, the campaign might not be as effective as it could be. For example, if it fails to consider the unique needs of women – such as access to shelters, financial support, or legal aid – the campaign may not fully empower women to escape abusive situations. Therefore, targeted actions to address these needs are crucial to avoid perpetuating inequalities.

Question 4: Intervention is required to ensure gender-sensitive implementation. The campaign could incorporate gender-specific measures to effectively combat domestic violence, such as: expanding support services (e.g., shelters, hotlines, legal aid) that are accessible to women in rural areas; public awareness campaigns that challenge cultural norms and patriarchal attitudes towards domestic violence, particularly targeting men to promote behavioural change; training for law enforcement and judicial officials to ensure they understand the gendered nature of domestic violence and enforce the law effectively; economic empowerment programmes for women, to provide them with the financial independence needed to leave abusive relationships; monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the campaign is having a positive impact on reducing domestic violence and gender inequalities.

A gender-responsive approach to the anti-violence campaign will help address the root causes of domestic violence and provide women with the necessary support to break free from abusive situations. This strategy aligns with international commitments, such as the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW, which call for gender-sensitive policies to combat violence against women. By integrating these measures, a country can create a more inclusive and effective approach to domestic violence prevention.

GENDER ANALYSIS

A gender analysis is based on the following three components:



Step 1: Collect facts and figures

To conduct a gender analysis, the first step involves collecting facts and figures, with a strong emphasis on gathering data disaggregated by sex or gender and possibly, other characteristics including age. This step is essential because disaggregated data helps reveal differences in the experiences, needs, and opportunities of women, men, and other gender groups.

In official statistics, sex-disaggregated data is often used to categorise individuals based on biological attributes (female or male). However, it is also possible to

find gender-disaggregated indicators that measure outcomes based on social categories (women and men). When conducting a gender analysis, it is important to note the difference between data categorised by sex and by gender – terms often conflated.

However, when discussing gender statistics, we move beyond simple categorisation to an analysis that examines gendered power relations, social structures, and inequalities. Gender statistics are crucial for understanding how gender norms and power imbalances impact access to resources, opportunities, and rights. Being precise in our terminology helps to ensure clarity in analysing and addressing gendered inequalities.

Start by identifying credible sources for sex- or gender-disaggregated data. This includes national statistics offices, international organisations (such as UN Women, the World Bank, or WHO), and government departments. For example, the [UN Gender Statistics database](#) and the [World Bank's Gender Data Portal](#) offer disaggregated data across sectors like education, health, employment, and income.

Cross-tabulate data with other variables, such as age, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, to better understand the intersectional impacts of gender. It is also important to identify any regional or cultural disparities. For instance, rural areas may show a greater gender gap in education or healthcare access than urban areas.

While quantitative data provide measurable differences, qualitative data (such as focus groups, interviews, and case studies) offer contextual insights. They help explain why certain gender gaps exist and may reveal social norms, biases, or barriers that quantitative data alone cannot capture. Use qualitative data to supplement statistics, particularly in areas where gender roles and expectations significantly impact outcomes, like political participation or caregiving responsibilities.

Data not disaggregated by sex or gender	Data disaggregated by sex or gender
156 residents of an apartment block complex attended a meeting on new waste and water management systems for their community. A total of 750 adults live in this complex.	156 residents of an apartment block complex attended a meeting on new waste and water management systems for their community. 133 participants were men (85%) and 23 were women (15%). A total of 750 adults live in this complex, with an approximately even split between women and men.

Step 2: Analyse the facts and figures

The analysis refers to the interpretation of existing data. It is done by asking, “What does this information mean?”. The following provides a basic interpretation of the above data:

Analysis

Approximately one in five residents attended the meeting, which is viewed as reasonably good participation. However, nearly six times as many men attended as did women.

While the above analysis notes the difference between women and men, it does not analyse the causes or consequences of this difference. Adding a gender equality perspective implies using existing knowledge about the social situation and roles of women and men, as well as established sociological (or other) theories about relations between women and men. Incorporating an intersectional perspective enhances the analysis by considering how factors such as age, ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic status may intersect with gender to influence participation rates. For example, are younger women or women from certain ethnic backgrounds less likely to attend due to cultural norms or accessibility barriers? Providing this perspective is crucial so that the analysis can lead to better policy formulation and decision-making.

Step 3: Add a gender equality perspective to the analysis

The data from this example can indeed be interpreted through two different lenses: one that is gender-blind and one that incorporates a gender perspective. Consider the difference between the following two possible interpretations of the above data:

Analysis of gender differences that <u>does not consider existing knowledge about the situation of women and men and established knowledge about gender</u>	Analysis of gender differences that <u>includes a gender equality perspective based on existing knowledge about the situation of women and men and established knowledge about gender</u>
Women were in low attendance at the meeting because: Women are not interested in waste and water management. Women have no knowledge about waste and water management. Men are better decision-makers and leaders than women on issues of waste and water management. Women's low participation in the meeting will not have any (negative) consequences, since they will benefit from the new solutions anyway.	It is known that women take charge of many tasks involving waste and water management (cooking, cleaning, health). It is known that women have a lesser participation in political decision-making. Their low attendance must be due to other factors than lack of interest or knowledge. The following questions therefore need to be asked: Did the meeting take place at a time when women could attend (including in view of care issues)? Were women informed about the meeting? Are women systemically (or involuntarily) shut out of or proactively involved in community decision-making processes? Because women are still the primary managers of waste and water in the home, their low participation at the meeting is likely to result in less effective and less sustainable solutions and in low ownership of the decisions made by the primary users (women).

Step 4: Use a gender equality analysis to improve policy-making

Considering the needs and views of all people and all users of public services helps to make better decisions. In the example about waste and water management, it would be crucial to make sure that women are properly consulted for the policy adopted to be accepted and adapted to the needs of primary users. The following are some solutions to improve information gathering and subsequent policymaking:

■ Make sure that women are aware of the meeting, of how relevant the topic is, and actively encourage them to participate. If necessary, adapt and improve existing information channels (posters in schools, building halls etc.) and the way the information is presented (including using gender-inclusive visuals and language).

■ Specifically indicate in all communication and invitations that both women's and men's participation in the consultation is desired.

■ Provide childcare solutions during the meeting or accept children.

■ Consider holding multiple sessions at different times to accommodate varying schedules, including evenings or weekends, making it easier for those with work or family commitments to attend.

■ Some people may feel hesitant to speak openly in a public forum. Arranging for small-group discussions within the meeting or assigning a facilitator to ensure that everyone's voice is heard, could help make the space more inclusive, especially for those who might feel intimidated in larger settings.

■ Consult people through other means than a public meeting, for example, individual interviews or questionnaires.

■ Inform women's groups or groups where women are involved about the ongoing consultation (e.g. school parents' groups).

■ In areas where access to public transportation is limited, offering transportation options to and from the meeting could help ensure wider attendance, especially for individuals who may not otherwise be able to participate.

Longer-term measures:

■ Systematically review, adapt, and improve information and communication channels to the needs and circumstances of women locally, based on a needs assessment involving women themselves.

■ Implement measures to encourage the participation of women in decision-making at local level and within local organisations.

■ Encourage or mandate gender-balanced representation on local planning and policy committees to ensure diverse perspectives are included from the outset.

GENDER BUDGETING

Gender budgeting is an approach to planning and allocating public funds that considers the different needs and impacts on women, men, and gender-diverse groups to promote gender equality. By integrating a gender perspective into budgeting, governments can ensure that public resources are distributed equitably and contribute to reducing gender disparities. The main goals of gender budgeting include closing gender gaps, ensuring equitable resource distribution, and making the budgeting process transparent and inclusive. Gender budgeting is increasingly relevant in the current socio-economic environment, as it supports broader gender equality policies and helps address systemic inequalities.

For more information, you can refer to the [Council of Europe's handbook Gender budgeting: practical implementation](#). In 2013-2018 in Ukraine, the [Gender Budgeting in Ukraine project](#) has been implemented by the Ministry of Finance. The main component of implementing a gender approach in the budget process at the local level is a gender analysis of local target and programmes. You can refer to the [Methodological recommendations](#) for the implementation of a gender approach and an approach based on respect for human rights at the level of territorial communities (order of the Ministry of Social Policy of 7 December 2022 No. 359).

Key components

Gender analysis is a critical component of gender budgeting. It involves assessing the different impacts of budget allocations on women, men, and gender-diverse groups. This analysis helps identify potential inequalities and areas where targeted interventions are needed.

Gender-sensitive indicators are used to track and measure gendered outcomes of budget initiatives. These indicators help evaluate whether public spending is achieving its intended impact on gender equality.

Gender budgeting must align with existing gender equality frameworks and policies, ensuring that budget decisions contribute to national and international gender equality commitments. For example, the Council of Europe has developed guidelines for member states to integrate gender budgeting into their financial planning processes, ensuring that public spending advances gender equality goals in alignment with the Council of Europe's broader gender equality strategy.

Overview of steps in gender budgeting

The table below provides an overview of the steps in gender budgeting and looks at the example of vocational education and training (VET). A relevant initiative in Ukraine was implemented by the [Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation \(SDC\)](#).

Budget preparation	This step involves conducting a gender analysis of budget allocations to identify potential inequalities. By understanding how budget decisions may affect different groups, policymakers can make informed decisions that promote equity.	For example, during budget preparation, a government can examine budget allocations for vocational training and identify that fewer resources are directed towards initiatives supporting women's access to technical and vocational education. As a result, they can reallocate funds to create targeted training programmes for women in high-demand sectors, aiming to address the existing gender gap in the labour market.
Budget execution	During budget execution, it is crucial to monitor expenditure to ensure that funds are reaching the intended gender-focused initiatives.	After reallocating funds to support women's access to vocational training, the government needs to closely monitor how these funds are used to ensure that the targeted training programmes are effectively increasing women's participation in technical fields. This step helps track whether the budget is being implemented as planned and allows for adjustments if funds are not effectively reaching their targets.

Budget evaluation

After the budget has been implemented, an evaluation is conducted to assess the outcomes and impacts on gender equality.

The government can evaluate the effectiveness of the targeted vocational training programmes by examining enrolment and employment rates of women in technical fields.

They can also gather feedback from participants to understand remaining barriers, to help identify areas for improvement and inform adjustments to further enhance programme accessibility and effectiveness.

This step helps determine if the intended goals were achieved and identifies areas for improvement.

GENDER BUDGETING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE FOR UKRAINE

Gender budgeting can have the most significant impact at the local level, where authorities are closest to citizens and where fiscal decisions directly affect everyday lives. Local governments can have substantial competence in areas such as healthcare, education, social services, and infrastructure.

Gender budgeting in public transportation

To illustrate how gender budgeting can be implemented concretely, this section focuses on the area of municipal transport services. Public transportation is an essential service managed at the local level, and its accessibility and safety significantly impact the daily lives of residents, particularly women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. A gender-sensitive approach to budgeting in this area can address specific challenges, such as women's safety during transit, the accessibility of services for caregivers traveling with children, and ensuring routes meet the mobility needs of diverse communities ([Kurshitashvili et al., 2024](#)).

To begin, LGRCs can conduct a gender analysis of current transportation services.

This involves collecting data disaggregated by gender to understand who uses public transportation, their travel patterns, and specific challenges they face. For example, surveys might reveal that women disproportionately experience safety concerns while traveling at night or that bus stops are located far from residential areas, making access difficult for individuals with limited mobility. A gender analysis helps to identify these barriers and sets the foundation for targeted interventions.

Based on the findings from the gender analysis, LGRCs can establish specific objectives to address the identified challenges. These objectives might include improving the safety of public transit for women by enhancing lighting and security at bus stops, ensuring transportation schedules and routes align with the needs of caregivers and workers in women-dominated sectors like healthcare or retail, or expanding access to underserved neighbourhoods where there is a high proportion of low-income families.

Once objectives are defined, budget allocations can be made to achieve these goals. This may involve directing funds toward infrastructure improvements, such as installing lighting or security cameras at bus stops or increasing the frequency and operational hours of buses serving major employment hubs for women. Local authorities may also decide to subsidise fares for minoritised groups to make public transportation more accessible and equitable.

During the execution phase, authorities monitor how the allocated funds are used to ensure that they meet gender-sensitive objectives. For example, they could track the installation of security measures such as CCTV cameras, monitor the deployment of security personnel, and collect feedback from passengers about whether safety and accessibility have improved. This real-time monitoring enables authorities to adjust services as needed, such as increasing the frequency of buses on routes with growing demand.

Finally, an evaluation is conducted to assess whether the interventions have achieved their intended impact. LGRCs can analyse changes in travel patterns, particularly among women, the elderly, and caregivers. Surveys and focus groups can provide insights into whether passengers feel safer and whether services are more accessible. Authorities may also examine whether the initiatives have reduced barriers to employment or improved quality of life for residents. This evaluation not only measures the success of the initiatives but also helps identify areas for improvement in future budgets.

Engaging with stakeholders, including civil society organisations, women's advocacy groups, and community representatives, ensures that interventions are

grounded in local needs. Pilot programmes in selected municipalities can serve as models for scaling up gender budgeting practices across the country.

Gender-sensitive or gender-inclusive communication

The integration of a gender equality perspective in policies and activities must be accompanied by such a strategy in any communication relating to these activities, to make sure that the messages made public are not contradictory with the objectives of the activities and to strengthen the impact in terms of changes in mentalities.

What is gender-sensitive or gender-inclusive communication?

Communication related to public policies or projects can take many forms: campaigns, social media, websites, speeches, posters, leaflets, publications, photos, videos etc. All aspects of communication policies should be gender sensitive. Without a conscious effort to include a gender equality perspective, communication is likely to reinforce gender stereotypes, or simply to make gender equality issues or women invisible.

Gender-sensitive communication means using inclusive language, which promotes gender equality (including in terms of diverse and non-stereotyped gender roles) and the equal visibility of women and men. The Council of Europe has been committed to using inclusive language for over 20 years, with the adoption of [Instruction No. 33 of 1 June 1994 concerning the use of non-sexist language at the Council of Europe](#). The Committee of Ministers [Recommendation No. R \(90\) 4 on the elimination of sexism from language](#) also recommends that member states use language reflecting the principle of equality.

[Recommendation CM\(2019\)1 on preventing and combating sexism](#) reaffirms the importance of non-sexist/gender-inclusive language. It requires member states to take measures aiming at “eliminating sexist expressions, using the feminine and masculine or gender-neutral forms of titles, using the feminine and masculine or gender-neutral forms when addressing a group, diversifying the representation of women and men, and ensuring equality of both in visual and other representations.” It asks member states to promote “the use of non-sexist language in all sectors, particularly in the public sector” and to “undertake a systematic review of all laws, regulations, policies, etc., for sexist language and reliance on gendered assumptions and stereotypes with a view to replacing them with gender-sensitive terminology”. These measures also apply to the Council of Europe bodies and administration.

The use of gender-inclusive language has different implications depending on the language and many member states have their own guidelines and/or practices regarding this issue. Gender-sensitive communication also relates to choosing images that are inclusive of both women and men, that reflect diversity among women and men and that promote a non-stereotypical image of both sexes and support gender equality.

Why is it important?

Communication forms an integral part of policymaking and project management, especially when it comes to how messages, objectives, results, and impact are communicated to citizens and other stakeholders. This part of policy and project work needs to fully reflect gender equality, given that efficient communication tools, including visual communication, can have a very powerful effect on the public.

Gender stereotypes manifest themselves in three different ways: 1) women (or men, depending on the context or topic) can be underrepresented or not featured in communication tools; 2) women and men can be represented in stereotypical roles and situations, which reflects a de facto more limited vision of their opportunities; 3) a more or less subtle hierarchy of status or functions can be observed in communication tools, most often to the detriment of women (e.g. images of men as speakers and women as listeners).

Principles of gender-sensitive/inclusive communication

1. Use gender-sensitive language

The Council of Europe has outlined comprehensive [Guidelines on Gender-Sensitive Language](#) aimed at fostering inclusivity, promoting equality, and avoiding the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in both written and spoken communication. Language is recognised as a powerful tool that shapes social attitudes and behaviours, and the Council of Europe encourages its careful use to ensure equitable representation across genders.

The key principles of the guidelines are to:

-  avoid discriminatory or stereotypical language;
-  use gender-neutral language where possible;
-  make gender visible when relevant;

- employ the plural forms to reduce gender bias;
- adapt to cultural and linguistic contexts;
- promote gender-inclusive titles and professional terms.

The Council of Europe has also provided a [Gender Sensitive Communication Checklist](#) to help individuals and organisations integrate these principles into their communication practices. This checklist includes actionable steps for identifying and avoiding gender bias, particularly in public communication, media, and policy documents.

Instead of:	Use:
Ambassadors and their wives (Посли та їхні дружини)	Ambassadors and their spouses or partners (Посли та їхні подружжя або партнери)
A woman doctor (жінка-лікар or лікарка)	A doctor (лікар)

These stereotypes can also manifest themselves in the way people are presented or represented as individuals or in the reinforcement of preconceived ideas about men or women as a group.

■ Always present women and men giving their full name and function (often women are presented by their given name only) unless the informality is consistently applied to all.

■ Do not represent or quote women only in relation to social issues/family issues but aim to challenge gender stereotypes by quoting women in relation to topics that are usually addressed by men (e.g., criminal matters, defence, technology) and quote men in relation to social issues.

■ In interviews, avoid asking women questions about their private life or do so only in cases where these questions are relevant.

Employing gender-sensitive language is a necessary skill for LGRCs, so that they avoid manifestations of sexism or gender stereotypes that might reinforce gender inequalities.

Gender-sensitive language principles are increasingly used in Ukrainian, leveraging its rich and diverse lexical and grammatical resources.

In order for women to become more visible in public discourse, it is worth using both a strategy of neutralisation and a strategy of feminisation, which involve the consistent use of feminine forms and, accordingly, the reduction of the use of the generic masculine gender.

To create feminine forms in the Ukrainian language, the following are used:

- the suffix -К-, which is the most productive, since it is used to form the majority of innovative feminines (позивачка);

- the suffix -ИЦ- (засновниця, підприємця, переможниця);

- suffix -ИН- (кравчиня, майстриня, мисткиня).

The suffixes -к-, -иц-, -ин-, which are used to form feminine words, are gradually deprived of emotional and expressive shades, becoming neutral: author-к-а (авторка), speaker-к-а (доповідачка), etc. The list of such words is constantly updated: premier-к-а (прем'єрка) (about the prime minister), director-к-а (директорка), professor-к-а (професорка), etc.

As practical advice, it is recommended:

- to avoid expressions that depict a woman as worse than a man, and vice versa, a man as worse than a woman (such as "women/men cannot understand this");

- to be sensitive to any generalisations that concern women's and men's roles in society, if necessary, apply the mirror principle. If someone says: "like a real man, he...", you can answer that "like a real woman, she...";

- avoid statements that fix gender stereotypes in the language and consciousness (for example: in one of the samples for filling out documents for the competition for public positions, samples with the male surname "Qualified" and the female surname "Responsible" which reflects gender stereotypes were used);

- actively use both genders of nouns, using gender-symmetrical forms of addressing different groups of people: за прикладом «захисники і захисниці», «пані та панове», які вже є узвичаєними): учасники й учасниці, «колеги та колежанки», «працівники та працівниці» etc.;

- use words that designate a person by profession, position, type of occupation, in the feminine gender, if we are talking about women, both in the singular (applicant, visitor, teacher, guardian) and in the plural, creating new

forms of nouns (applicants, teachers etc.). If the word in the feminine gender does not sound pleasant, or there is no form, you can use the appropriate endings of the verbs: "the witness said";

■ look for patterns of inclusion of both women's and men's experiences through speech forms. Therefore, a constant emphasis on vocabulary is necessary, so you should avoid saying "participants" if we are talking about a group of people to which both women and men belong.

It is impossible to describe all cases requiring gender sensitivity, but it is important to learn to feel when a situation needs to be corrected for being gender-imbalanced or sexist.

It is worth noting that some state bodies (the State Service for Emergency Situations, the State Judicial Administration, etc.) have adopted information notes or recommendations on the use of gender-sensitive language. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine has also registered the Draft Law on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Prohibiting Manifestations of Sexism in Society (4598 dated 15 January 2021), which is included in the agenda of the session.

2. Ensure gender balance in communication

Women are often underrepresented in all forms of communication. Minority groups in society are also underrepresented. For example, according to the most recent Global Media Monitoring project, in 2020 women represented only 28% of people read about or heard in the news, and 24% of experts featured in Europe (see [Global Media Monitoring Project](#)). It is crucial for policymakers and communicators to actively work towards balancing the situation, ensuring representation of diversity among both women and men in all forms of communication.

■ Ensure a gender balance among the people portrayed in images, publications, posters, websites, videos.

■ Ensure a gender balance among speakers at events and in terms of allocated speaking time in general. Avoid men only panels and be mindful of the persons who most often take the floor.

■ Use the databases of women experts that exist in different member states or contact women's organisations who could be sources of information to find women experts in different areas/roles.

■ Try to give preference to women/men in non-traditional roles.

3. Ensure a diverse representation of women and men

■ Try to portray women and men of different ages, origins, backgrounds etc.

■ Colours: avoid using pink/blue for women/men, and dark colours for men, light colours for women.

■ Avoid the systematic representation of women in caring positions or situations and of men in decision-making positions or in scientific/technical roles.

■ Clothing: avoid the representation of men in practical clothes and women in sexy clothes or in clothes not adapted to the communicated topic.

■ Beware of the positioning and behaviour of people in images: avoid systematically putting women in passive or submissive positions in relation to men and in the way they act (standing/sitting, foreground/background, etc.) and make sure that women are not always in the background/men in the foreground.

Useful resources to support your work

1. Data and indicators

Using sex-disaggregated data is one of the preconditions for the integration of a gender equality perspective in your work. Different sources can help you find relevant data at national and European level. The gender mainstreaming section of the Council of Europe's website contains links to [different sources of data and indicators](#) on different topics related to gender equality including socio-economic and population issues, the participation of women and men in decision-making, gender equality in the justice system, and violence against women.

2. Online course on gender equality, vaw and anti-discrimination

■ The course "[Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming](#)" covers the main principles and standards of the Council of Europe on gender equality. It covers issues such as gender stereotypes, violence against women, and ensuring equal opportunities in all spheres of public life.

■ The course "[Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#)" focuses on the provisions of the Istanbul Convention and its implementation in different countries. It provides practical guidance on how to protect victims, prevent violence, and bring perpetrators to justice.

■ The course "[Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for Law Enforcement](#)" reveals theoretical and practical concepts related to violence against women, its forms and impact on victims in society. Participants will receive practical recommendations on how to respond to cases of violence against women, techniques for interviewing victims and perpetrators, as well as practical steps for professionals who help victims of violence.

■ The course [“Access to Justice for Women”](#) is designed to enhance understanding of the legal challenges women face and to promote gender-sensitive approaches within the justice system. It offers comprehensive training on international standards and best practices to ensure equitable access to justice for women.

■ The course ["Anti-Discrimination"](#) covers the principles of the prohibition of discrimination in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights and other international instruments. Different types of discrimination are addressed, including on the basis of gender, race, age, disability, and sexual orientation.

■ The course ["Combating Racism, Xenophobia, Homophobia and Transphobia"](#) reveals the key concepts contained in the standards and legal instruments of the Council of Europe and the EU in the field of anti-discrimination, as well as the relevant court decisions of the ECtHR and the Court of Justice of the EU, as well as decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights.

3. Gender mainstreaming manuals and tools

■ [Toolkit on gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms: Gender mainstreaming in practice](#), Council of Europe, 2024.

■ [Guidelines for the use of language as a driver of inclusivity](#), Council of Europe, 2024.

■ [Handbook for Gender Equality Rapporteurs - Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming in practice](#) (2022).

■ [Council of Europe Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for Co-operation Projects](#) (2022) – providing knowledge, guidance, and tools on how to integrate gender a gender perspective at all stages of the project life cycle.

■ [Toolkit on gender mainstreaming in sport](#) developed in the framework of the Council of Europe ["ALL IN: Towards gender balance in sport"](#) joint EU and Council of Europe project (2019).

■ [Factsheet - Achieving Gender Mainstreaming in all policies and measures](#) (2016).

■ [Compilation of good practices to promote an education free from gender stereotypes and identifying ways to implement the measures which are included in the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on gender mainstreaming in education](#) (2014).

■ [Gender Budgeting – Practical Implementation - Handbook CDEG \(2008\)15 \(2009\).](#)

■ [Gender Budgeting EG-S-GB \(2004\) RAP FIN](#)

■ [Promoting Gender Mainstreaming in Schools EG-S-GS \(2004\) RAP FIN](#)

■ [Gender Mainstreaming: practice and prospects EG \(1999\) 13](#)

■ [Gender Mainstreaming conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices - Final Report of Activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming - EG-S-MS \(98\) 2 rev](#)

■ [Checklist for Gender Mainstreaming Law Schools' Curricula \(2020\).](#)

4. Visual tools

■ Video and action page on sexism of the Council of Europe: [Sexism: See it. Name it. Stop it. \(coe.int\)](#)

■ Infographics on UN gender data: [Thematic Areas | World's Women 2020 \(arcgis.com\)](#)

■ UN Women infographics: [Multimedia | UN Women](#)

■ OECD video on gender equality: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j85fGU3PeeY>

■ Video on gender mainstreaming at local level (Snowploughing - Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udSjBbGwJEg>

■ Video on the gender pay gap (European Commission): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKylYlqgSbl&feature=youtu.be>

■ Video on violence against women (Care Norway): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dP7OXDWof30>

■ Videos on austerity measures and the gender pension gap (European Women's Lobby): <http://www.womenlobby.org/European-Women-s-Lobby-launches-video-clip-A-she-re-cession-What-does-austerity?lang=en>

■ Video on subtle sexism(Huffington Post):

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/48-subtly-sexist-things-women-hear-in-a-lifetime_us_566595d2e4b08e945feff668

■ Video "Women, not objects!": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5J31AT7vigo>

■ Video on the underrepresentation of women in decision-making (ELLE UK):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEKo22ryWxM>

Answers to the test

1. In 2025, approximately two in five members of the Ukrainian parliaments in Ukraine were women.

Incorrect. In 2025, women represented 21.2% (85 out of 401) members of the parliament or chamber in Ukraine ([Inter-parliamentary Union, 2025](#)). Council of Europe [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)3 on the balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making](#) provides that “the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%”. Balanced representation in political spaces is crucial for gender equality, as it ensures that diverse perspectives, including those of women, are integrated into decision-making. Gender mainstreaming in politics involves creating equal opportunities for women and men to participate, which can help promote policies addressing gender-specific needs and broader societal issues more effectively.

2. In July 2025, women represented half of ministers in Ukraine.

Incorrect. In July 2025, under the Svyrydenko government, women represented 19% of ministers in Ukraine. This falls short of gender parity, with women comprising far less than half of the ministerial roles. Achieving a gender balance in ministerial roles is essential for gender equality, as diverse leadership can influence policy outcomes that impact women and men differently. Gender mainstreaming in government positions aims to establish fairer representation, enhancing the likelihood that decisions will consider the experiences and needs of all citizens.

3. Most men (over 90%) aged 25-34 in Ukraine participated in the labour force in 2021, prior to the 2022 expansion of the war, compared to about two-thirds of women of the same age group.

Correct. In 2021, over 90% of men aged 25-34 in Ukraine were active participants in the labour force, compared to two-thirds of women in the same age group ([International Labour Organization, 2025](#)). This highlights a significant gender gap in labour force participation, with younger women being less represented. This disparity is relevant as it reflects underlying structural barriers and societal expectations affecting women's participation in the workforce. The Council of Europe's gender equality strategy advocates for equal economic participation for women and men, recognising that barriers often prevent women from fully accessing the workforce. Gender mainstreaming in employment policies can help address such barriers, ensuring that women and men have equitable access to economic opportunities, ultimately enhancing economic empowerment and social inclusion.

4. About one in 20 women in Ukraine aged 15-49 have reported experiencing violence from their partner or husband.

Incorrect. It is estimated that approximately 18% of women in Ukraine aged 15-49 who had ever been married reported experiencing physical or sexual violence from their husband or partner ([World Bank, 2025](#)). This figure underscores the prevalence of intimate partner violence among women in Ukraine. Addressing intimate partner violence is crucial to gender equality, as such violence gravely impacts women's rights, their safety and well-being. The Council of Europe has emphasised the need for comprehensive actions against violence against women through frameworks like the Istanbul Convention, which advocates for preventive measures, survivor support, and legal protection. Gender mainstreaming in policy and support services, in alignment with the Council of Europe's standards, is essential for protecting women and men, providing resources for survivors, and creating safe environments for all.

5. Women and men have equal access to resources (e.g. money, time, networks).

Incorrect. Statistics and research show situations of women and men differ across most areas of life. This is particularly true in relation to access to resources. In the European Union in 2023, women earn on average 12% less than men ([Eurostat, 2025](#)) and the average gender pension gap in 2019 was as high as 29% ([Eurostat, 2021](#)), which is the result of gender inequalities in employment over the life course. Beyond wages, there is also a gender gap in relation to access to financial products, and for example in Ukraine in 2021, only 81% of women had a bank account compared with 87% of men ([World Bank, 2025](#)). Men have also more access to symbolic resources like networks, impacting employment or

decision-making opportunities, and women have less free time, due to the higher share of unpaid care and household work they undertake. Ensuring equal access to resources is vital for gender equality. The Council of Europe's work on gender equality underscores the importance of removing barriers that restrict women's access to financial resources, networks, and time for self-development. Gender mainstreaming in economic, social, and policy frameworks can address these imbalances by promoting fairer distribution of resources, supporting women's economic independence, and encouraging policies that value and reduce the burden of unpaid care work, fostering equality in all areas of life.

6. Public policies are neutral, they affect everybody – women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity - in the same way.

Mostly incorrect. In many areas, including paid and unpaid work, access to resources, and power, women and men face different circumstances. Public policies must account for these differences to be effective. For example, promoting part-time work for women only might improve work-life balance in the short term but fails to address gender gaps in employment, pay, or pensions over the long term. Such policies can also be counterproductive, as they do not encourage an equitable division of unpaid care work between women and men. The Council of Europe advocates for gender-sensitive policymaking, recognising that policies are rarely neutral and often impact women and men differently. Gender mainstreaming ensures that policies consider these varied impacts, promoting measures that benefit everyone equitably. By incorporating gender-sensitive approaches, public policies can work toward narrowing gender disparities and fostering inclusive and sustainable social and economic development.

7. Gender roles are socially constructed; they change over time and differ between and within cultures.

Correct. The term "gender" refers to socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that society considers appropriate for women and men. Gender roles are not biologically determined or fixed; they evolve based on societal expectations, values, and norms in a particular context and period. Gender roles vary significantly across countries, social class, family status, age, ethnicity, and religious background, and are also influenced by the historical context. Importantly, these roles are not neutral; they often reflect a hierarchy of values, rights, or decision-making power between women and men. For instance, care work, traditionally associated with women, is generally valued less than technical work. The Council of Europe's work on gender equality advocates for challenging and transforming stereotyped gender roles to enable women and

men to make free choices in both public and private life. Gender equality aims to promote an environment where individuals have equal access to and control over resources and power, free from restrictive social expectations. Through gender mainstreaming, policies can support the development of more equitable and less stereotyped roles, allowing for greater freedom and equality across all spheres of life.

8. Gender-mainstreaming requires the equal participation of women and men in all programmes and activities.

Correct. Ensuring the equal participation of women and men in all programmes and activities is a core aspect of gender mainstreaming and a matter of justice. However, simply having equal representation does not automatically integrate a gender equality perspective into a policy, activity, or project. A thorough gender analysis and the integration of gendered considerations are essential. For instance, an equal presence of girls and boys in an educational programme does not guarantee their equal participation in practice (such as speaking time) or that the activity will meet their specific needs, nor does it ensure that the programme will foster greater equality between them. The Council of Europe highlights that genuine gender mainstreaming goes beyond equal numbers; it involves examining and addressing the different needs and experiences of women and men. Gender-sensitive approaches help ensure that programs and activities actively promote gender equality, fostering inclusivity and empowerment across all participant groups.

9. Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective entails new duties and practices for local gender-related coordinators.

Partly correct. When implemented thoughtfully and with proper planning (especially if support tools and training are available), gender mainstreaming does not necessarily require an unreasonable amount of extra work. However, some initial reading and/or training is often necessary. For local gender-related coordinators, gender mainstreaming involves a shift in approach, encouraging the integration of a gender equality perspective in all policies and programmes, which may involve challenging existing practices and stereotypes also at the local level. The Council of Europe emphasises the importance of gender mainstreaming across all levels of governance, recognising that this process may bring new responsibilities but is essential for inclusive and equitable local policies. Local gender-related coordinators play a critical role in ensuring that community-specific needs of women and men are considered. By rethinking and adapting local policies and practices, coordinators can help build an environment that meets the unique needs of all, fostering social fairness and justice within their communities.

10. Gender mainstreaming should replace specific policies for the advancement of women and positive actions.

Incorrect. Gender mainstreaming is a tool aimed at achieving genuine equality between women and men. In most national and international policy frameworks, including those of the Council of Europe, gender equality policies follow a “dual approach” that combines gender mainstreaming with specific policies for advancing women’s rights and positive actions. These targeted measures address existing inequalities and correct structural discrimination, particularly those affecting women, such as wage and pension gaps, violence against women, and under-representation in decision-making. Understanding this dual approach is essential. While gender mainstreaming seeks to integrate gender perspectives into all policies, specific actions for women are often necessary to address deep-rooted inequalities directly. Using both strategies, can ensure comprehensive progress towards equality within local communities, aligning with the Council of Europe’s standards for balanced, inclusive development.

11. All ministries have duties in relation to the integration of a gender equality perspective.

Correct. Since most ministries develop policies that impact people, these policies inherently affect both women and men. Taking into account the different situations and needs of everyone is crucial for effective policymaking. Gender mainstreaming aims to transform the often unequal, gendered approaches historically embedded in public institutions, ensuring that all policy-making processes consider both women’s and men’s interests and concerns. This may also extend to internal policies within ministries, such as implementing care leave for women and men, codes of conduct and training to combat sexism and violence, the use of inclusive language, more transparent promotion practices, and even the introduction of quotas. This principle highlights that all government bodies have a role in fostering gender equality. Local gender-related coordinators can advocate for and support the application of gender-responsive practices in local governance, ensuring that policies consider and address the distinct needs of women and men within their communities. This aligns with the Council of Europe’s gender equality strategy, which promotes integrating gender perspectives across all levels of governance to build inclusive and equitable societies.

12. Data and statistics on people should be broken down by sex only if sex-disaggregated information is readily available.

Mostly incorrect. Data and statistics on people should always be broken down by sex and, when feasible, by other relevant factors such as age. If obtaining this information proves challenging, it is important to understand why and address any barriers to data collection. When sex-disaggregated statistics are unavailable, making these statistics accessible or raising awareness of the gaps becomes a crucial policy goal. This is an essential step in advancing gender mainstreaming, as it enables better analysis of how policies impact women and men differently. Ensuring data are broken down by sex is vital for developing policies that meet the distinct needs of women and men within the community. The Council of Europe emphasises that sex-disaggregated data is foundational for informed and equitable policymaking, ultimately promoting fairer, data-driven decisions.

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Contact

The Council of Europe gender equality website contains information about existing standards, policy issues, publications, activities and contacts at national level and useful links.

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"Gender mainstreaming in action: A handbook for local gender related coordinators in Ukraine" aims to provide practical guidance and tools for local gender-related coordinators to systematically integrate gender mainstreaming into their work. By offering tailored methods including practical tests, definitions, case studies, and examples of good practices, this handbook empowers coordinators to advance de facto gender equality at the local level in Ukraine. The handbook was developed under the COVAW-III project (Combating Violence against Women in Ukraine - Phase III, 2025-2026), which seeks to promote gender equality and develop robust policies to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence in line with Council of Europe gender equality standards.

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