



Gender Mainstreaming

Gender planning

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The European Institute for Gender Equality created the online platform on gender mainstreaming to support EU institutions and governmental bodies with the integration of a gender perspective in their work. The platform provides insights on the relevance of gender in a variety of policy areas and offers online tools for gender mainstreaming.

The platform helps to improve individual and institutional competences to mainstream gender into the different sectorial areas and throughout the different stages of the development of any policy/programme/project. Understanding how to design, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate policies from a gender perspective will strengthen EU policies, increasing their societal relevance and responsiveness.

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1. What is gender planning?

Mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies, programmes and projects requires that both women's and men's needs are taken into consideration at all stages of the policy cycle. Gender planning refers to the process of planning and designing the implementation phase of policies, programmes, or projects from a gender perspective, and it takes place in the second stage of the [policy cycle](#).

1.1. Definition and purpose

The European Commission defines gender planning as 'an active approach to planning which takes gender as a key variable or criterion and which seeks to incorporate an explicit gender dimension into policy or action' [1].

Integrating a gender perspective into the planning and design of policies, programmes and projects requires, firstly, the recognition of gender gaps and structural gender inequalities that need to be tackled in a given context and, secondly, the definition of gender-policy objectives and the formulation of appropriate approaches and interventions to achieve them [2].

Gender planning stems from the recognition that different groups of women and men have different needs, different levels of access and control over resources, and different opportunities and constraints [3]. Gender planning pays particular attention to unequal gender relations and structural inequalities. It aims to transform unequal gender relations in different [policy areas](#) by responding to the needs of women and men and through a more even distribution of resources, actions, responsibilities and power [4].



Read more about gender planning

Gender planning is a method and a concept that emerged as a result of the inability to address gender inequalities with existing planning models and processes. It has its origins in transformative models of social and human development, which in turn emerged to inform international development models based mostly on maximising economic growth and increasing productivity and industrialisation. Feminist critiques showed that these models not only failed to be gender neutral but, by ignoring women's gender needs and gender relations, had negatively affected women in unexpected ways [5].

Gender mainstreaming was recognised in 1995 at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing as the methodology to be used to incorporate a gender perspective into policies and institutions. The following year, the European Commission committed itself to a 'dual approach' towards realising gender equality. This approach involves mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies, while also implementing specific measures to eliminate, prevent or remedy gender inequalities. Both approaches go hand in hand, and one cannot replace the other.

Through the introduction of the dual approach to gender equality, gender planning has become a tool endorsed at the EU level and implemented in some Member States.

Read more on [Gender mainstreaming on EIGE's website](#).

1.2. Why is gender planning important?

Introducing a gender perspective into the planning of policies, programmes and projects enables women's and men's interests and needs to be made visible and to be addressed. The inclusion of a gender perspective in the planning process enables policymakers to understand gender inequalities when planning an intervention, thereby avoiding perpetuating them throughout the implementation of a policy, programme or project, and achieving better results.

Adopting a gender perspective in the planning stage contributes to preventing bottlenecks in the implementation process, or at worst the adoption of measures that — if not considered from a gender perspective — could result in undesired consequences for women or men.

In addition, adopting a participatory process for gender planning, for example by [consulting with different stakeholders](#), can contribute to increasing the relevance for the people affected by the policy or programme, its transparency and the accountability of those in charge of implementation, and to avoiding conflicts in the implementation phase.

2. How does gender planning work?

Step 1. Defining the problem

At this step, an issue enters the agenda of decision-makers and the intervention problem is defined. Through a [gender analysis](#), the needs, roles, resources, opportunities of women and men and the constraints for public intervention in the respective area are identified.

Step 2. Defining the policy/ programme/project

This step includes the framing of the intervention approach, based on previous analysis, and the identification of a set of alternative solutions. The framing of the approach implies deciding what gender-aware approach will be the most suitable for the policy intervention at stake. Adopting a gender-aware approach is different from simply including women as an 'add-on'. This gender approach can be a gender-mainstreaming approach, which aims to benefit women and men equally, or a gender-specific approach, which takes into account the gender differences that emerged during the problem definition and that target (a particular group of) women or men specifically.

This step also assesses how the proposed solutions will affect women and men by carrying out a gender impact assessment of the various solutions. Finally, gender-specific objectives are identified.

Step 3. Legitimacy and operational design

During this stage a detailed definition of the intervention and its organisational and delivery design is formulated. In this stage, decision-makers identify the outcomes of the intervention, the actions to be taken in order to achieve the outcomes, the partners and their roles and the necessary budget, along with the

delivery procedures, timing and organisational structure.

Decision-makers should also identify specific [gender indicators](#) to assess the outcomes of the intervention for both women and men, disaggregated by specific target groups and taking account of how gender intersects with age, race and/or ethnicity, education, country of birth or (dis)ability, among other factors.

It is also important to address the issue of the representation of women and men. When designing a policy, a programme or a project, specific attention should be paid to ensuring gender balance in the composition of the team, the presence of staff with specific knowledge and experience with gender issues and the provision of [gender equality training](#) for staff and partners involved in the intervention.

Delivery procedures have to ensure accessibility to the intervention for both women and men or the target group. In case of access to the intervention through [tenders](#), terms of reference must be written using gender-sensitive language. It must also be used for consultants involved in assisting the planning, implementation and delivery of the intervention.

A [gender evaluation](#) should be planned at this stage to monitor and evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of the intervention from a gender point of view.

Step 4. Defining the budget

In defining the budget at the planning stage, decision-makers have to allocate adequate resources to meet the gender objectives and reach the planned outcomes. [Gender budgeting](#) may be used to ensure the adequate reflection of both women's and men's needs in the allocation of resources for the intervention measures.

2.1. Ensuring a gender participatory approach

The potential of gender planning to challenge gender social roles and the unequal distribution of resources and power will be greater if individuals and groups potentially affected by the respective intervention are involved, and if their participation is taken into account in other stages of the policy cycle, such as monitoring and evaluation.

The adoption of a gender participatory approach to gender planning:

- makes it possible to identify the problems, needs and expectations of the women and men whose lives will be directly affected by the policy;
- allows for a better understanding of how gender relates to the content of policy measures;
- increases participants' empowerment and trust in public institutions;

- assists in preventing and managing risks, unexpected results and conflicts; and
- increases the effectiveness and efficiency of policies through the involvement of affected parties.

In order to ensure a successful gender participatory approach to planning, the following are some of the key elements that should be taken into account:

- ensuring the participation of women especially those who may not be traditionally represented in decision-making structures [6];
- implementing a time frame that suits all participants, both women and men;
- ensuring the participation of gender experts, especially in decision-making;
- addressing not only women's practical needs, but especially their gender strategic interests [7];



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- making gender planning suitable for the local context;
- avoiding the reproduction of gender-unequal power relations between women and men during the process;
- sharing the results and proposals with the target groups of the plan.

Finally, a gender participatory approach also includes identifying and engaging relevant partners who can bring expertise and knowledge into the planning phase. In this context, women's organisations and other organisations that have expertise in gender-related planning and implementation should be involved in the delivery of the intervention. (Read more on [Gender Stakeholder Consultation](#))

2.2. Gender planning in different policy fields

Gender planning can be applied in different fields, from agriculture and rural development to culture, employment and health. Gender planning can also be applied to different types of interventions: policies, programmes and projects. Finally, gender planning can be implemented by organisations and public institutions.

Find out more about how gender planning is applied in different policy areas in the section on [Policy Areas](#) in EIGE's Gender Mainstreaming Platform.

Read more on gender planning frameworks

Caroline Moser's framework is one of the earliest approaches to gender planning [8]. It comprises three methodological tools: triple roles (reproductive, productive and community management); [practical](#) and [strategic gender needs](#) [9]; and policy approaches to development (classified by how they address women's gender needs). Gender planning tackles the following types of women's needs: practical gender needs, which emerge from women's living conditions (e.g. access to healthcare) and can be addressed by specific inputs; and strategic gender needs (or interests), which emerge from structural inequalities such as the gender division of labour, including issues such as legal rights, domestic violence, and women's control over their bodies. In Moser's framework, the main goal of gender planning is the emancipation of women and their release from subordination, with the aim of achieving gender equality and empowerment through meeting women's practical gender needs and, more importantly, strategic gender needs [10].

According to the Longwe women's empowerment framework conceptualised by Sara Hlupe-kile Longwe in the early 1990s, gender planning aims to assess how women's equality and empowerment are defined in practice and to what extent a policy, programme or project sustains women's equality and empowerment [11]. The Longwe framework identifies five levels for assessing women's equality and empowerment in all aspects of social and economic development:

- (i) welfare — the level of women's state of welfare compared to that of men;
- (ii) access — women's equal opportunities and access to production factors, public services and outcomes;
- (iii) conscientisation — acknowledgement of the differences between sex and gender, recognition of the cultural substrate of gender roles as a first step for changing them, women's and men's agreement on the fair division of labour and economic and political equality between women and men;
- (iv) participation — women's involvement at all stages of a policy, programme or project cycle and at all levels of decision-making;
- (v) control — women's control over the decision-making process to ensure a balanced distribution of power between women and men over the division of public resources and benefits [13].

The capacities and vulnerabilities approach aims to sustain the planning of humanitarian measures and interventions for disaster preparedness. This framework asserts that in planning a policy, programme or project in this area, three main dimensions should also be investigated using a gender lens, namely: physical/material capacities and vulnerabilities; social/organisational capacities and vulnerabilities; and motivational/attitudinal capacities and vulnerabilities [14].

The social relations approach is a framework that aims to transform the design of policies by including women as actors in their own development. Thus, in planning policies, programmes and projects, significant emphasis is put on challenging gender inequalities in the division of resources, responsibilities and power [15].

Read more on conceptual frameworks for Gender Planning in [Gender Analysis](#).

Further information

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Other resources

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