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PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE OSCE AND ITS PARTICIPATING STATES

Independent Evaluation of the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2018-2022)



Acknowledgements

This evaluation was managed by Galina Gurova, Senior Evaluator, Office of Internal Oversight (OIO), OSCE Secretariat, and conducted by Camille Massey, External Evaluation Consultant. Martina Orlandi, Evaluator in OIO, and Andrei Popa, OIO intern, supported the evaluation team with the data collection. Overall guidance was provided by Nynke De Witte, Head of Evaluation/Deputy Director, OIO.

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ACRONYMS

CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	OMSk	OSCE Mission to Skopje
CoE	Council of Europe	OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
CPC	Conflict Prevention Centre (OSCE)	PBPB	Performance Based Programme Budgeting
DG INTPA	European Commission Directorate General for International Partnerships	PBPR	Programme Budget Performance Report
DG NEAR	European Commission Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	PESU	Programming and Evaluation Support Unit (OSCE CPC)
EQ	Evaluation Question	POiD	OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe
ExB	extrabudgetary (project of the OSCE)	pS	Participating states
EU	European Union	RfoM	OSCE Representative for Freedom of the Media
GAP	Gender Action Plan	TNTD	Transnational Threats Department (OSCE)
GIP	Gender Issues Programme	TOR	Terms of Reference
GFP	Gender Focal Point	UB	Unified Budget of the OSCE
GM	Gender Marker	UN	United Nations
HCNM	OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ODIHR	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights	UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
OIO	OSCE Office of Independent Oversight	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
		UNWOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
		UN SWAP	United Nations system-wide Action Plan (for gender equality)



1. Introduction

The OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (hereinafter referred to as the 2004 “Action Plan”) was endorsed by the OSCE Ministerial Council (MC) in 2004 (MC.DEC/14/04), and has since then been guiding the Organization’s efforts to advance gender equality.

So far, there have been three independent evaluations of the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan, conducted by the OSCE Office of Internal Oversight. The first one was a targeted field office evaluation in 2011 (OSCE Office in Yerevan). The second, conducted in 2012, was an Organization-wide evaluation, aimed at providing a baseline for the implementation of the Action Plan within the OSCE. It focused on the integration of a gender-equality perspective in the activities, projects, programmes and policies of the OSCE. The evaluation revealed that while some progress had been made across the Organization and in specific programmatic areas, gender was almost exclusively associated with the human dimension.

The third evaluation, conducted in 2018, had a broader scope and coverage, and provided a more substantive review of the OSCE’s institutional structures and processes supporting gender mainstreaming and gender-specific programming across the three OSCE dimensions — the politico-military, the environmental and economic, and the human dimension. It documented the achievements and progress made by the OSCE executive structures in advancing gender equality, but also identified areas for improvement.

The evaluation concluded that “despite investments and combined efforts to improve gender mainstreaming over the past five years, positive changes have been minimal.” The evaluation highlights that gender equality and the requirement to mainstream gender are still seen by many to be competing with other priorities, rather than to be contributing to achieving programmatic objectives and implementing the main mission of the OSCE in the area of peace and security. The former evaluation included a wide range of recommendations, including on the role of the gender advisors and focal points, need for leadership and internal coordination, the implementation and updating of gender equality roadmaps and action plans, provision of gender equality training, better use of gender markers and integrating gender equality considerations into project cycle, the need for gender-specific programming, gender mainstreaming in communications and events, and monitoring and evaluation. As of the beginning of 2024, all recommendations have been closed, with the proposed management actions implemented to the extent possible and where not requiring decision-making from the participating States.

The present evaluation assesses the progress made by the OSCE since the 2018 evaluation on gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of gender equality considerations in the activities of the Organization, and in the projects, programmes and policies of the various executive structures, covering the period 2018–2022. This evaluation also looks at the changes in the organizational culture and the evolution of the staff’s perceptions related to gender equality.

This evaluation was conducted from December 2022 to July 2023, and comprised several phases, including an initial in-house data collection, an inception phase and preliminary scoping interviews with the Gender Issues Programme, two field visits, in-person and on-line interviews with OSCE staff, an online survey sent to all OSCE employees, data analysis and report writing.



2. Context and Object of the Evaluation

2.1 Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the OSCE and internationally

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and a precondition for attaining a sustainable and peaceful world. It has been recognized by the international community as a prerequisite for peace, security and development since the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995.¹

OSCE commitments to gender equality

Gender equality, respect for human rights and fighting all forms of violence against women and girls have been crucial to the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, which encompasses the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions. The Organization's overarching commitment to gender equality was first spelled out in the Charter for European Security,² adopted in 1999, which states (Chapter III, Article 23) that: "the full and equal exercise by women of their human rights is essential to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic OSCE area. We are committed to making equality between men and women an integral part of our policies, both at the level of our States and within the Organization."

The **OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality**, adopted by the OSCE participating States with Ministerial Council

Decision MC.DEC 14/04 in December 2004,³ is the main strategic policy document guiding the gender equality work of the Organization. It takes stock of the achievements and shortcomings of the previous OSCE gender equality policy document, the 2000 OSCE Action Plan for Gender Issues. It highlights the values that are at the core of the OSCE's mission, namely the right of women to fully exercise their human rights, as well as the link between gender equality and comprehensive security.

The 2004 Action Plan recalls various international instruments on gender equality, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) — a landmark document for advancing women's rights and gender equality worldwide, agreed upon during the 4th World Conference on women in 1995. The 2004 Action Plan also highlights the relevance of gender equality for the achievement of the Helsinki Principles and for the OSCE's commitments in the Charter for European Security.

The 2004 Action Plan defines gender mainstreaming as "*the **process** of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels,*" and "*a **strategy** for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.*"⁴

Since 2004, and following the adoption of the Action Plan, the OSCE has adopted a number of other Ministerial Council (MC) and Permanent Council (PC) decisions that further reiterate its gender-related commitments, specify activities and guide its programmatic work. Some key decisions include, but are not limited to:

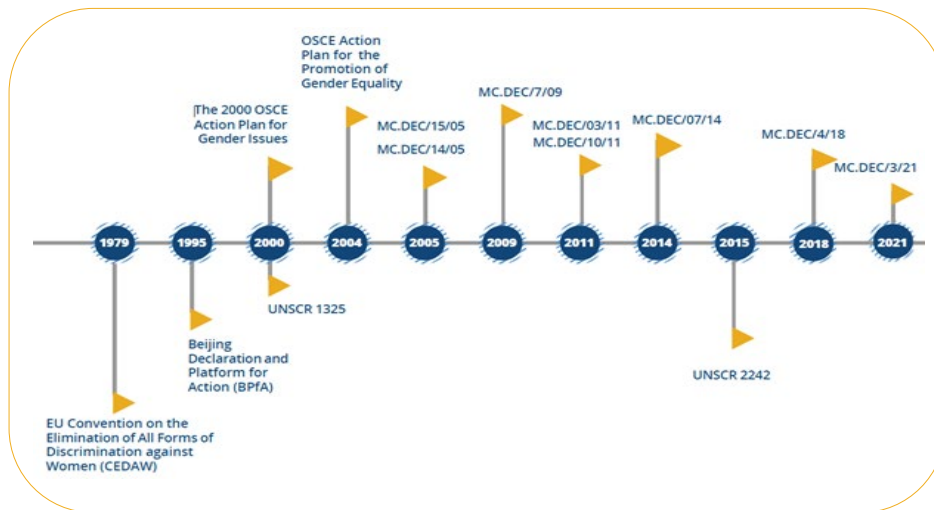
- **Ministerial Council Decision on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-conflict Rehabilitation (MC.DEC/14/05), 2005.**
- **Ministerial Council Decision on Women's Participation in Political and Public life (MC.DEC/7/09), 2009.**
- **Ministerial Council Decision on Elements of the Conflict Cycle, reaffirming “the significant role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, recalling UNSCR 1325” (MC.DEC/03/11), 2011**
- **Ministerial Council Decision on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere, (MC.DEC/10/11), 2011.**
- **Three Ministerial Council Decisions on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women (MC.DEC/15/05), 2005; (MC.DEC/07/14), 2014; and (MC.DEC/4/18), 2018.**
- **OSCE Resolution on Preventing and Combatting Corruption, 2019**
- **Ministerial Council Decision on Strengthening Co-operation to Address the Challenges Caused by Climate**

Change, two operational paragraphs on women's role in combating climate change. (MC.DEC/03/21), 2021

These legislative and policy documents address — some in a more comprehensive way and others in a more targeted way — specific aspects of gender equality, women's rights and non-discrimination in the context of political participation, armed conflict, peacebuilding, environmental security, climate change, and corruption, as well as gender-tainted offences, such as gender-based violence and, to some extent, human trafficking and labour exploitation.

A number of international declarations and resolutions have further provided the context for promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming in OSCE activities, programmes and policies. These include, among other things, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) and related United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) e.g., UNSCR 1325 (2000) and 2242 (2015), as well as the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda adopted in 2015.⁵

Figure 1: Timeline of MC Decisions and UN resolutions



Source: Drawn up by the evaluation team

Gender-equality commitments of other international organizations

To date, most international and regional intergovernmental organizations have adopted some form of strategic policy document on gender equality and women’s empowerment, e.g.:

- **The UN system-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) and an accountability framework on gender equality and empowerment of women, currently in its second iteration (UN-SWAP 2.0). This Action Plan has as many variations as there are UN agencies and organizations: each produces its own strategy and action plan. UN**

organizations report annually on the UN-SWAP implementation.

- **The Council of Europe (CoE) Gender Equality Strategy, which is in its second iteration. The organization reports annually on its implementation.**
- **The European Union (EU) Gender Action Plan, in its third iteration. The EU produces mid-term and final evaluations of each Gender Action Plan.**
- **The African Union’s 10-year Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.**

2.2 The OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

The 2004 OSCE Action Plan is built around three main commitment pillars:

- Mainstreaming gender in the structures and working environment of the Organization** and increasing gender awareness through training and mainstreaming of gender considerations in the recruitment, performance management, and other organizational processes and functions.
- Mainstreaming a gender perspective into the OSCE’s activities, policies, programmes and projects** related to comprehensive security, with a focus on activities that promote women’s empowerment and the participation of women, as well as men, in the public, political and economic life of

participating States (pS). This includes efforts to overcome negative stereotypes and attitudes preventing the achievement of gender equality.

- iii. **Promoting gender equality in the pS**, for which States themselves bear the primary responsibility and are expected to set up the required legal and policy environment, to ratify and implement relevant international treaties related to women's economic empowerment and women's inclusion in conflict prevention, and to work towards the elimination of all forms of violence against women, including violence resulting from trafficking in human beings.

The 2004 Action Plan emphasizes the right of women to fully exercise their human rights, as well as the link between gender equality and comprehensive security. It also identifies a number of priority areas of engagement with participating States for its portfolio of activities, namely:

- **Support for improvement of the normative framework (policies, legislation, regulations) of participating States**
- **Establishment of national gender equality mechanisms in the participating States**
- **Combating violence against women and girls**
- **Women's political participation**
- **Women, peace and security, and**
- **Women's economic empowerment**

Last but not least, the Action Plan calls on the OSCE Secretary General (SG), Heads of Institutions and Heads of field operations to develop plans for the implementation of commitments made in the Action Plan. The SG is required to report annually to the PC on the progress made with the implementation of the Action Plan across the Organization.

Even though the Action Plan stipulates that resources would be required for its implementation, and the plan itself would be updated when deemed necessary by the PC, it has not yet been updated. In 2014, a proposed *Addendum* was not approved due to a lack of consensus among the participating States.

2.3 The OSCE institutional structures and gender portfolio

The OSCE Secretariat and the Gender Issues Programme

The Secretariat's Gender Issues Programme (GIP) (not mentioned in the 2004 Action Plan as it was not existent at that time in its current form), plays a key role in supporting the SG and the Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) with the implementation of the Action Plan commitments. It also develops gender-related normative documents, policies, operational guidance and tools for the entire Organization, and is considered to be the main point of contact and support structure for gender-related topics and concerns. A considerable part of the GIP's efforts involves awareness-raising on gender-equality principles, policy dialogue, capacity-building, speechwriting, review of project proposals and co-operation with other international organizations.

The GIP also manages a number of projects, supporting participating States with the development of National Action Plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, as well as one of the Organization's flagship gender-targeted projects: *Women and Men Innovating and Networking for Gender Equality* (the WIN project). Last but not least, the GIP is responsible for reporting to the SG on the implementation of the Action Plan by the OSCE's executive structures.

The Department for Human Resources (DHR) within the Secretariat is responsible for gender mainstreaming in the performance appraisals of OSCE management and staff, as well as in the hiring processes. DHR is also tasked with supporting the creation and maintaining of an equitable working environment within the various OSCE executive structures.

As envisaged in the Gender Action Plan, the SG has been reporting every July to the PC on the status and progress of the Action Plan.

The SG has additionally issued two Special Progress Reports on the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan, covering the periods 2014–2017 and 2017–2019.

OSCE Institutions and field operations

The OSCE Institutions, namely the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) and the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), within their specific mandates, also work for the promotion and furthering of the Action Plan's objectives in the participating

States, while the field operations are mainstreaming gender in their regular mandated activities.

OSCE's gender portfolio

The review of the activities conducted by the OSCE Secretariat, Institutions and field operations suggests that the OSCE's executive structures operationalize the three pillars of the 2004 Action Plan through various gender-mainstreamed⁶ or gender-targeted⁷ activities, staff instructions (SI), projects and programmes.

OSCE gender-related projects, programmes and initiatives

At present, there is no comprehensive inventory of OSCE activities serving the implementation of the Gender Action Plan — whether internally or in support of participating States. The OSCE has channelled most of its gender work through several flagship programmes and projects during the period under evaluation (2018–2022) in the area of gender equality.

The most recent and comprehensive one is the extrabudgetary (ExB) WIN Project, which aims “to advance gender equality as a prerequisite for achieving and maintaining stable, prosperous and peaceful societies in the OSCE area.” The WIN project directly serves to accelerate the implementation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan across the three OSCE dimensions of security, and aims at achieving the following results:

- **Representatives of government agencies and civil society are able to formulate, implement and monitor gender-responsive normative frameworks.**

- **More women participate in conflict prevention, mediation, and other forums and processes of comprehensive security.**
- **Networks of women change-makers working in comprehensive security are stronger and more influential.**

The ODIHR project Capitalizing on the Human Dimension Mandate to Advance Gender Equality (CHANGE) represents another example of an innovative project, geared towards: (a) awareness-raising and capacity-building; (b) support for breakthrough leadership so that individuals and groups can initiate, manage and sustain change; and, (c) collaboration as a way forward towards gender equality, covering both participating States and, internally, the OSCE.⁸



3. Evaluation Methodology

3.1 Evaluation purpose and objectives

The purpose of the evaluation was threefold: (i) to ensure accountability towards the OSCE governing bodies, donors and citizens of the participating States for the implementation of the Action Plan in the period since the last evaluation, i.e., 2018–2022, (ii) to contribute to organizational learning by identifying lessons learned and good practices for future integration of a gender perspective and gender mainstreaming in the Organization’s projects, programmes and policies, and (iii) to provide recommendations that will help the OSCE to strengthen its future gender-equality related work.

The objectives of the evaluation are:

1. To assess the relevance and comparative advantage of the OSCE’s work for the promotion of gender equality within the Organization and in the participating States;
2. To **take stock of the progress** in the implementation of the Action Plan since the last evaluation, covering the period 2018–2022;⁹
3. To identify **success and hindering factors, lessons learned and good practices**, which contribute to organizational learning related to the OSCE’s performance on gender equality as per the Action Plan;
4. To identify **potential avenues that may improve** the OSCE’s delivery on commitments in the 2004 Action Plan, and make respective recommendations.

The intended users of the evaluation are:

- **Secretary General and Gender Issues Programme**
- **Programming and Evaluation Support Unit (PESU) within the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC)**
- **OSCE Gender Focal Points**
- **Programme and project managers in the OSCE Secretariat, field operations and Institutions, and**
- **Delegations of participating States.**

OSCE Institutions and field operations may benefit from the findings of the evaluation for the next iteration of their own gender road maps and gender action plans (GAPs), demonstrating how they support the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan.

In addition, participating States may use the most relevant findings of the evaluation report for funding and policy decisions, and for informing their own contributions towards the implementation of the Gender Action Plan.

3.2 Evaluation criteria and evaluation questions

The evaluation tackles the following evaluation criteria, grouped by: relevance and added value, effectiveness and coherence, and sustainability and plausibility of impact. Four main questions guided the evaluation process. These evaluation questions (EQs) cut across the three pillars of the Action Plan, apart from EQ2, which mainly relates to internal OSCE matters (Pillar I).

Relevance and added value

EQ 1: To what extent does the OSCE's work on promoting gender equality achieve a match between its commitments, as defined by relevant OSCE policy documents, and its comparative advantage?

Sub-evaluation questions:

1. To what extent is the OSCE's work on promoting gender equality aligned with commitments made in the 2004 Action Plan?
2. What is the OSCE's comparative advantage in mainstreaming and targeting gender equality in its three dimensions of security, politico-military, economic and environmental and human?
3. What are some of the good practices of other international organizations that the OSCE could leverage?

Effectiveness and coherence

EQ 2: Have any OSCE gender-based policies, programmes and activities contributed to tangible changes with regard to gender equality within the Organization?

1. How have the prevailing values, behaviours and attitudes regarding gender equality evolved among OSCE staff since 2018?

To what extent have the OSCE's internal programming, reporting and resource management processes integrated a gender lens?

EQ 3: What are the key intended and unintended results of the OSCE's activities, policies, programmes and projects on gender equality?

1. How and to what extent have current OSCE executive structures and governance systems facilitated the integration of a gender perspective in the OSCE's policies, programmes and projects? How could these be further improved?
2. What are some of the lessons learned and good practices of the OSCE's work on gender equality in case study countries, which could inspire work elsewhere? What works best in what context?
3. To what degree has the OSCE co-ordinated and communicated — internally (among its executive structures) and externally with other international and regional organizations — its work and achievements related to gender equality and women empowerment?

Results' sustainability and plausibility of impact

EQ 4: What is the likelihood that the benefits of gender-targeted and mainstreamed actions will be maintained for a reasonably long period of time after the respective interventions phase out?

1. What pre-conditions have been put in place to foster the sustainability of the OSCE's gender-related efforts and achievements internally and in the case study countries?

2. What adverse or conducive factors are at play that could affect these pre-conditions?

3.3 Evaluation approach

This is a **strategic evaluation** of the implementation of a policy document: the OSCE’s 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. As opposed to a project/programme evaluation, it does not evaluate the outcomes of an intervention or a set of interventions with a pre-defined results framework, but rather the strategic effects of the Organization’s efforts to follow the policy guidance and implement the commitments made.

While the Gender Action Plan has objectives, it does not present a results framework in the strict sense, with expected outcomes, benchmarks or indicators. Besides, the second (2012) evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, which was meant to serve as a baseline, did not cover the entire set of objectives, as it was mostly inward-focused (gender mainstreaming in the OSCE activities and structures). The Terms of Reference for the 2018 evaluation, which was more comprehensive, indicated that a Theory of Change (ToC) will be developed; however, there was no ToC presented in the final report. This evaluation team developed a ToC at the inception phase following preliminary interviews with key OSCE staff members, which helped with formulating the evaluation questions and with narrowing down the focus and the scope of the evaluation for each of the three GAP pillars, namely:

- **Pillar I (mainstreaming gender in the organization);**

- **Pillar II (mainstreaming gender in OSCE’s work); and,**
- **Pillar III (promoting gender equality in participating States).**

3.4 Data collection and analysis

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach: combining **qualitative data** from documents, interview, focus group discussions and direct observations; and **quantitative data** from a survey and other documents (e.g., results of past surveys, financial data).

Table 1: Data Collection Methods

Geographic span	Quantitative data collection methods	Qualitative data collection methods
OSCE-wide	Survey of all OSCE staff in the Secretariat, FOs and Institutions (ODIHR, RFoM and HCNM).	Document review Interviews and focus groups with OSCE staff in the Secretariat, FOs and Institutions
Two field visits: North Macedonia (OMSK) and	Document review, financial data, existing survey data, proxy	Review of the OSCE’s gender-related projects (Gender Marker: GM3 and

Geographic span	Quantitative data collection methods	Qualitative data collection methods
Tajikistan (POiD)	quantitative data from previous surveys and external sources.	GM2 projects), related documents. Interviews and focus groups with OSCE staff in the Mission to Skopje and the Programme Office in Dushanbe, as well as with OSCE partners and programme beneficiaries in these two countries. Events and project implementation observations.

Desk Review

At the desk review stage, a comprehensive set of internal and publicly available official OSCE documents, both qualitative and quantitative, were analysed.

The **OSCE-internal** quantitative documents included documents pertaining to the budgetary cycle (Unified Budget (UB) proposals, programme outlines (POs), as well as results of an OSCE survey on the well-being and safety of women.¹⁰ The qualitative data was drawn from relevant decisions of the OSCE decision-making bodies,

regulations, rules and staff instructions on gender mainstreaming, and overall structures supporting gender equality, as well as programmatic documents and reports.

The **external documents** with quantitative data were mostly gender equality indices and recent surveys on relevant topics. Further information was derived and examples of good practices quoted from the policies, normative frameworks and recent evaluations of some international organizations, namely, the EU, the CoE and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

For the analysis of specific lessons learned, some country-specific publications (reports from civil society organizations (CSOs), CEDAW¹¹ reports, etc.) were reviewed.

OSCE-wide online survey

The evaluation extended a survey to all OSCE staff, covering:

- **Standard demographic data to allow for disaggregation;**
- **Staff perceptions of the relevance and effectiveness of the Gender Action Plan;**
- **Experience with the OSCE institutional setup in support of the Gender Action Plan;**
- **Behaviours and attitudes to gender equality, gender targeting and gender mainstreaming — and their evolution over time; and,**
- **Experience in programming and implementing OSCE gender-targeted and gender-mainstreamed actions and activities.**

The survey was sent to all OSCE employees (excluding short-time contracted personnel), to a total of 2,083 email recipients. The response rate was 25 per cent (514 responses) rendering the statistical relevance very high. In addition, the survey demographics (age, seniority levels, region of posting, type of executive structure) were fairly representative of the overall OSCE staff composition, although with a relative over-representation of women (56 per cent) over men (36 per cent), which may render some response bias, and 8 per cent who did not want to specify. In this report, survey results were approximated to the nearest whole number.

Interviews and focus group discussions

The evaluation team conducted a combination of in-person and online interviews and focus group discussions, with a view to gathering rich qualitative data internally (within the OSCE) and externally, both regarding the general support to gender equality and the OSCE's support in the two countries visited by the evaluation team.

The interviews and focus groups followed a semi-structured approach. Where necessary, the lead evaluator used deep interviewing techniques.

In total, 135 persons took part in interviews and focus groups, of which 115 were women and 21 were men. In Tajikistan, a total of 62 interlocutors were interviewed individually and in groups, of which 54 were women and eight were men (20 represented OSCE staff and 42 were external interviewees, from government, parliament, CSOs or Women's Resource Centres (WRCs)). In North Macedonia, 33 persons

participated in interviews and group discussions, including 27 women and eight men (14 represented the OSCE and 19 external stakeholders — elected officials at municipal level and in the national parliament, civil servants in various ministries, state bodies and the police service, civil society representatives). In addition, 35 persons took part in interviews and focus groups in the OSCE Secretariat, ODIHR, HCNM and RFoM, of which 30 were women and five were men. Finally, the evaluation team interviewed five experts/representatives of intergovernmental organizations for the purpose of benchmarking, all of whom were women.

Direct observations

The evaluators observed OSCE-supported activities, especially during field visits. The purpose of the direct observation was (a) to assess the level of depth and quality of information and knowledge on gender equality exchanged through the activities, with a view to informing the relevance and effectiveness of various activities; and (b) to observe the diversity of participants and their level of engagement, in particular their attitudes, behaviours and values regarding gender equality, with a view to inform the assessment of effectiveness, sustainability and potential impact of gender-related activities.

Benchmarking

The evaluation benchmarked some of the OSCE's gender equality implementation and monitoring practices against the practices of some other international organizations (IOs), which were deemed good comparators (thematically and geographically) and agreed upon

during the inception phase, namely the EU, the CoE and the UNODC. The benchmarking was done for learning purposes, aiming to demonstrate both the OSCE's comparative advantage (where identified), as well as areas where the Organization is lagging behind and could learn from the practices of other organizations.

3.5 Evaluation challenges and limitations

- **Limitations of the Action Plan portfolio overview:** This is a thematic evaluation, focused on the implementation of an organization's policy framework for the promotion of gender equality through various programmes, projects and initiatives. Due to resource constraints (staff and time), the evaluation did not map and analyse the entire OSCE portfolio of gender-related projects and initiatives. The related budget expenditures, both from UB and extrabudgetary (ExB), were also not compared over the review period, mainly because of the absence of baseline and comparable data across the years, but also because the separation of the gender-related activities from the total project expenditures was often not feasible. This was partly mitigated by using statistics on the trends of projects with various gender markers; direct observations and feedback from OSCE staff, external partners and beneficiaries on progress made with the quality and target results of the OSCE's gender-related projects and initiatives; and evidence of the growing demand for such projects from the participating States and specifically donors. The evaluation also used examples of some flagship projects and their objectives and

approaches to support findings related to the implementation of commitments made in the 2004 Action Plan.

- **Limited possibility to document impact:** The evaluation team found that many of the projects were too recent to consider their impact, while others were too small to be rolled up to provide material evidence of actual impact. These shortfalls were partially mitigated by putting an increased accent on interviews and third-party research and country data.
- **Resource constraints:** Due to time and resource constraints (both within the Office of Independent Oversight (OIO) and in some FOs in Central Asia (CA), only two field visits were conducted for this evaluation: North Macedonia (OMSk) and Tajikistan (POiD). This limitation was mitigated by conducting a survey of all OSCE employees, as well as a higher number of key informant interviews with OSCE staff in the Secretariat, field operations and Institutions. The two countries for the field visits were selected after consultations with the GIP so that diverse examples of projects and a variety of voices could be witnessed by the evaluation team. The selection was also made with the consent and support of the respective Heads of field operation (some FOs in Central Asia did not have the staff capacity to organize a visit for the evaluation team).

- **Political sensitivities overshadowing information gathering:** The matter of gender equality has been and continues to be politically sensitive, and this sensitivity has grown during the evaluation process. The evaluation team applied the “**do no harm**” principle, cognizant of the power relations that sometimes exist between evaluators and respondents, as well as of the political sensitivities related to the context within which the OSCE Secretariat and other executive structures implement their activities and programmes. Partially due to the growing political sensitivity, a considerable proportion of interviewees were fairly guarded in formulating their responses. To mitigate this problem, the evaluation team conducted a survey of all OSCE staff and expanded the number of survey questions. All other interactions with evaluation participants were conducted with their previous consent and in a confidential, respectful and non-threatening manner. Data collected through interviews was aggregated and any personal identifiers were removed to protect the identity of the respondents.
- **Reduced OIO staffing:** An evaluation team member moved to another job halfway through the evaluation process. This decreased staff capacity and institutional memory. This shortfall was addressed by engaging further OIO and Gender Issues Programme staff during the review of the deliverables, which resulted in an extension of the evaluation timeline.
- **Potential bias of prevailing female perceptions:** To the extent possible, the survey data and interview lists were disaggregated by gender, by function, and by country/region. Women were slightly overrepresented in the survey, implying some response bias, but not to the extent that would have warranted statistical correction of the data, especially taking into account the subject area and the importance of bringing the female perspective into focus. In terms of key informant interviews, most respondents were women, which might also indicate some bias related to the interest in the subject. It is important to note that the interviewees were either recommended by the programmes, were the actual Gender Focal Points, or represented the teams working on gender projects and initiatives. The Evaluation Reference Group, however, comprised an equal number of male and female representatives who had a chance to review and comment on the draft report.



4. Evaluation findings

4.1. Relevance and added value

EQ 1: To what extent does the OSCE's work on promoting gender equality achieve a match between its commitments, as defined by relevant OSCE policy documents, and its comparative advantage?

✓ **Finding 1:** The OSCE's ambitions and commitments to promote gender equality in the Organization, in its GAP roadmaps and its programmes and activities made during the evaluation period, have been aligned with those enshrined in the 2004 GAP.

Gender Equality Roadmaps and Action Plans

The 2004 Action Plan stipulates that the SG and Heads of Institutions should, by 2005, develop action plans with concrete measures for their implementation. Over the years, these plans have taken the form of gender mainstreaming roadmaps with specific action items and commitments, covering a period of two to three years. The GAPs and the roadmaps constitute an important element of the OSCE's efforts to strengthen the institutional structures and processes supporting the implementation of the 2004 GAP. The Gender Issues Programme has developed detailed GAP guidance. This guidance is extensively promoted and regularly shared with all OSCE executive structures, both at the technical and senior management levels. Most executive structures have already implemented their second or third

consecutive gender mainstreaming roadmap and GAP, integrating lessons learned from their earlier plans.

According to the 2021 Annual Progress Report¹² delivered by the SG, all OSCE field operations, Institutions and thematic divisions in the Secretariat had already developed their GAPs serving as their internal roadmap for activities related to gender equality.¹³ Even though not all roadmaps have been regularly updated, this was still considered an improvement compared to 2018, when three executive structures were still in the process of developing their first GAP, and four executive structures had no dedicated gender action plan.¹⁴

The evaluation team analysed the gender roadmaps and related planning documents of 16 OSCE executive structures: Secretariat departments and units, field operations and Institutions. Most of the reviewed roadmaps were well-structured, presented either in a text or table format, with identified specific results and outputs, as well as success indicators. The pillar scheme of the 2004 Action Plan, as well as the areas of intervention along these pillars were found to be well reflected in the roadmaps, with format and chapters often indicating a link back directly to those of the Action Plan. The Secretariat departments were more inward-looking, while the field operations and Institutions included approximately equal parts of internal and external intervention components. Similarly, the targeted beneficiaries were usually chosen in accordance with the focus of the respective executive structures' broader interventions. Some roadmaps could be improved. For example, five out of the 16 reviewed roadmaps did not contain baseline data to demonstrate progress, and

nine roadmaps did not have specific, time-bound targets, which leaves the concerned entities with considerable space for adjustments in the planning process.

The roadmaps, even though broadly consistent with the GAP and OSCE's commitments, were found to be unevenly drawn upon or referenced in the project and programming cycle. In several instances, the Performance Based Programme Budgeting (PBPB) documents and the ExB projects did not refer to the roadmaps, which leaves open a question about the degree to which these roadmaps are used as 'living documents' guiding policy, programme and project implementation, or rather as 'good-to-haves' for policy compliance.¹⁵ Some executive structures do not consult or engage the GIP early on in their strategic programming and UB-planning processes.

The executive structure-wide Programme Outlines (POs) reference the OSCE commitments on gender equality in line with relevant guidance (explicit reference in the PO template to the 2004 Action Plan). The evaluation noticed enhanced precision in the formulation of gender-related commitments in the 2022 POs compared to those in the 2019 POs, in which commitments to gender equality were more general. From year to year, in addition to foreseeing both gender mainstreaming and gender-targeted activities in all dimensions, the PO documents have become increasingly precise in specific thematic areas where gender equality is of particular importance and requires mainstreaming (e.g., good governance, technology/cyber security, trafficking in human beings, anti-corruption, etc.).

Likewise, the Unified Budget Proposals (UBPs) have started to more explicitly integrate gender equality, gender mainstreaming, and prevention mechanisms, committing the executive structures to concrete actions rather than providing more general considerations, as may have been the case in the past. The project self-evaluation and performance reports have also become more specific, taking stock of the progress on respective endeavours envisaged in the UB proposals and the ExB project designs.

✓ **Finding 2:** While there is increased understanding across the OSCE of the GAP commitments and the need to implement them across all organizational structures and in the support provided to participating States, identifying the most relevant and inclusive gender-mainstreaming approaches remains a challenge in some programmatic areas.

Interviews with representatives of Institutions and field operations revealed that some OSCE staff were unsure about how to implement the GAP commitments in a way that would be at the same time (i) comprehensive; (ii) relevant to the mandates of their respective Institution or field operation; (iii) responding to the needs and demands of partners and beneficiaries; and (iv) compatible with the various participating States' understanding of these commitments.

The evaluation team identified several examples of tensions between these implementation criteria. One example concerns the support to participating States in the area of violence against women. Paragraph 43 of the GAP foresees that the GAP priority areas, including violence

against women (paragraph 44.c.), form the “basis for the OSCE Secretariat, institutions and missions to use when developing plans and programmes to assist participating States, upon their request, in implementing relevant commitments”. Yet, various interviewees reported challenges when responding to requests from some participating States for support with the implementation of their commitments deriving from the ratification of various gender-related conventions (e.g., the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as ‘the Istanbul Convention’). Field operations sometimes find themselves discouraged from acceding to these demands, either due to the lack of consensus among pS or because of diverging interpretations of whether the provision of support for the implementation of these conventions should be a priority.

Another example concerns women, peace and security (WPS). Decision 14/04 of the 12th Ministerial Council of 2004, which endorses the GAP, recalls UNSCR 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. In line with this, paragraph 10.b. of the GAP states that a priority objective of the GAP is “to assist participating States in promoting the role of women in conflict prevention and peace reconstruction processes”; paragraph 36 tasks participating States, the Secretariat, institutions and missions to “take into account obligations embodied in UNSC Resolution 1325”; paragraph 46.e. further tasks the OSCE executive structures, “as appropriate and within their mandate”, to “promote the implementation of UNSC 1325”. WPS has become a leading priority for the Secretary General¹⁶ and constitutes a main

thematic area in six out of the 16 GAP implementation roadmaps of OSCE executive structures, reviewed by the evaluation team.

A few interviewees shared that there are some diverging interpretations among pS regarding the specific role of OSCE’s field operations for the promotion of WPS and the implementation of tasks related to UNSCR 1325.

According to interviewees, differences of views among participating States regarding the scope and purpose of the 2004 Action Plan have existed since its adoption. However, these differences are culminating today in a context of increasingly diverging views on global and regional governance and security. Survey respondents to the 2023 GAP survey ranked the lack of substantive support from pS for the OSCE’s work on gender equality as the third main challenge for the implementation of the GAP (29 per cent placed it among the top three out of eight challenges).

Since the OSCE operates using the 2004 Gender Action Plan as a common policy denominator, there are consequences in terms of its relevance to today’s challenges and needs, to the evolving gender equality commitments of the pS, and to some emerging international lessons learned and good practices. For instance, the OSCE GAP, unlike comparable recent documents of other regional and international organizations, only refers to gender ‘sensitiveness’ and does not reflect the progress made by academic and practitioners’ studies on the distinction between gender sensitiveness (awareness), gender responsiveness (addressing the consequences), and gender transformative (addressing the causes) actions. In the survey, 20 per

cent of all respondents identified the GAP as outdated, making it the fourth most likely challenge (out of eight) to be identified. Yet, 33 per cent find that the GAP has remained valid over time, which speaks to the versatility of the document as a tool.

Despite the challenges presented by the current political context, there is still a broad consensus among interlocutors that an update of the GAP is currently neither possible nor desirable.

Benchmarking: The experience of other international organizations (IOs) with bringing organizational gender strategic documents up to date and enhancing their relevance.

EU

In 2010, the European Union adopted its first Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development (2010–2015) (GAP I). Since then, the EU has adopted two successor Gender Action Plans: ‘Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations (2016–2020) (GAP II)’, and ‘EU Gender Action Plan III — An Ambitious Agenda For Gender Equality And Women’s Empowerment in EU External Action (2021–2025)’.¹⁷ By regularly updating its commitments to promote a gender-equal world through these strategic organizational documents, and based on regular external evaluations, the EU has ensured continued relevance to the

emerging needs, challenges and aspirations of its Member States and partners.

Within these documents, for instance, WPS, as well as combating and preventing violence against women, have risen as key thematic priority areas — which in turn has led to an increase in dedicated resources and programming, to the benefit of recipient countries in the implementation of their own international commitments.

CoE

The Council of Europe adopted its first Gender Equality Strategy in 2014 (2014–2017)¹⁸. Following the evaluation of the CoE’s gender mainstreaming in programming (largely related to the implementation of the 2014 Strategy)¹⁹ the organization adopted a new and updated Strategy in 2018 (2018–2023).

The latter places high priority on emerging challenges, including violence against women. Despite differences of views among its Member States, the CoE has been able to capitalize on its most recent legal innovations (e.g., access to justice, migration, etc.) and policy advances, and to cross-pollinate its work on gender equality with its progress in various thematic areas.

Lessons and outstanding challenges for the OSCE

The above examples would be hard to emulate for the OSCE, being subject to a consensus rule and with participating States that may have more divergent views than the current Member States of the EU and CoE. Besides, the OSCE does not set legal standards, and can only anchor its strategic documents in binding legal norms that are external to the Organization (e.g., UNSCR 1325, the Istanbul Convention, CEDAW, etc.). Even though these resolutions may not seem as operant today as they have been in 2004 when the GAP was adopted, they are still used and implemented in the context of the mandates of the OSCE's institutions and field operations.

✓ **Finding 3:** The OSCE GAP and the work undertaken to implement its commitments are highly relevant to all three security dimensions, and this relevance has gained better recognition among OSCE staff.

The GAP, which identifies priority areas pertaining to the OSCE's work, clearly highlights the relevance of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in all three dimensions.

Interviews showed that OSCE staff in the three dimensions recognize the relevance and importance of working towards gender equality. None of the interviewees — whether OSCE staff or counterparts — questioned this relevance.

“It (gender equality) is not just a trend — it is a need!” (OSCE staff, Politico-military dimension)

“Gender equality is still sometimes seen as a third-dimension issue — but also more and more as something to be addressed in all three dimensions.” (OSCE staff, Secretariat)

The work of the Secretariat, particularly of the GIP and the PESU, has clearly contributed to broadening staff perceptions of the relevance of gender equality to all aspects of the OSCE's work. The leadership of some past and current Chairpersonships and, in particular, of the current Secretary General are said to have further accelerated this trend, through concrete initiatives, internal messaging, as well as through external communication products, such as publications, press releases and public statements. In addition, direct observation and interviews have revealed in individual structures (particularly in the field operations) the pivotal role of some mid-level managers (e.g., Heads of Department) in supporting and empowering their staff in their initiatives for the implementation of the GAP. Where such encouragement at mid-management level is missing, gender equality tends to lose traction, and there is less impetus to serve the commitment to the GAP and to the related roadmap, with concrete projects and activities.

Considering that the GAP was adopted 19 years ago, 54 per cent of surveyed staff indicated familiarity with the document (self-evaluated rating).

However, the perceived level of priority for gender equality and gender mainstreaming continues to vary and depend a lot on the dimension, the Institution/field operation and the geographic location. Some interviewees highlighted that, while there was general consensus within the Organization about the relevance of gender equality and the implementation of the GAP, it was often seen as a priority in the human dimension but remained an 'additional task' in the other two dimensions. Illustrative of this, several interviewees pointed out that periods of heightened security tensions in the OSCE region have diminished the attention to gender equality, and the time and space for staff to work on it.

Survey respondents rated the GAP's usefulness to gender mainstreaming in their line of work at 3.3 out of 5, with an even spread of 1-, 2-, 4- and 5-star ratings and a modest majority of 3-star ratings. This suggests that the perception of the GAP's relevance as a tool for gender mainstreaming is uneven across the Organization. The analysis of the roadmaps for the Action Plan's implementation further corroborated this trend, showing that gender aspects in the second (economic and environmental) dimension are less represented.

✓ **Finding 4:** The OSCE has a strong comparative advantage when supporting participating States with the implementation of their gender-equality commitments, however this advantage is not utilized to its full potential.

The OSCE as an organization has high relevance and offers added value to the participating States' work on gender equality. The 2004

GAP and all related roadmaps and action plans reiterate the core values of the OSCE's mission, namely the link between gender equality and comprehensive security- and the right of women to fully exercise their human rights. Virtually all interviewees dealing with (or in charge of) gender issues in the line ministries and institutions of the visited countries appreciated the OSCE's work on gender equality, highlighting the Organization's particular edge and comparative advantage based on several factors:

- **Due to the specialized mandates of its executive structures, be it at central or field level, the OSCE offers strong expertise and legitimacy on politico-military and security issues;**
- **The OSCE is seen as politically neutral, both within the locations where it is present, and regionally, when addressing gender equality issues;**
- **The OSCE has extensive and continuous (not project-funded) in-house expertise, including expertise related to gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence, and in many cases a long-term field presence. This contrasts with other organizations, such as the EU;**
- **The OSCE is also seen as a more agile international partner in terms of quick reaction to emerging needs and demands. This is not specific to gender equality but it is particularly valuable, because it gives the Organization the ability to swiftly pick up on creative, bottom-up initiatives from local stakeholders.**

Benchmarking: Different organizations offer different comparative advantages, some of which are complementary to those of the OSCE.

EU

The latest evaluation²⁰ of the EU Gender Action Plan (III) shows that the EU relies extensively on external expertise for the implementation of its GAP III. In addition, the EU programming cycle is very long, leading to a comparatively slow reaction to needs, unlike the OSCE's reaction time. Its added value relies therefore not so much in the expertise that it brings, or its agility, but rather in the incentives it creates for its partner countries. In the pre-accession countries, the commitments made by domestic authorities on their path towards EU membership include gender equality. In addition, gender equality considerations are gradually integrated into the preconditions for certain forms of support (e.g., blended finance operations, external action guarantees), and some actions that promote gender equality rely on considerable funding. The EU therefore has a strong comparative advantage in terms of the incentives it can offer.

The EU and the OSCE are thus perceived by some of the interviewed national stakeholders in the sampled countries as complementary in terms of their added value and relevance to boost gender equality efforts.

CoE

The CoE, like the OSCE, offers thematic expertise. However, the CoE's field offices are usually significantly smaller than those of the OSCE, and do not include gender-specific expertise outside of project-specific staffing. While the CoE can rely on its standards-based expertise and exchange of knowledge among countries, it does not reach the field presence scale of the OSCE, and its geographic spread is limited. In the countries sampled for this evaluation, the CoE was not present (Tajikistan is not a CoE Member State) or was not considered a significant actor on gender equality.

- ✓ **Finding 5:** The OSCE has considerable assets and a comparative advantage when it comes to promoting gender equality in the pS but it requires gender-champion middle managers to optimize these assets and solidify the field operations' gender portfolios.

Thanks to the factors mentioned earlier (the comparative advantages), the OSCE is capable of playing the role of a convener for actors who are responsible for or are supporters of gender equality. At the same time, it does not have the capacity to offer meaningful incentives to elicit political will, nor to fund large initiatives. Plus, the Organization's funding structure makes it highly dependent on extrabudgetary funding, usually for projects of a relatively modest size. Yet, OSCE FOs are particularly valued as partners for gender champions²¹ from within local partner institutions and organizations.

In practice, the OSCE sometimes competes with local CSOs for similar funding sources, according to some interviewees from civil society. This is a concern often heard regarding international and regional organizations, which is not specific to the work on gender equality but appears more acute in this field funding for which has reportedly shrunk (according to interviewees in various executive structures and local counterparts).

In this context, the OSCE's executive structures allocate priorities to the various thematic areas in which they are engaged. However, gender equality is rarely the first among these priorities. The Organization's assets of listed above are therefore not necessarily invested into gender equality, which often leads to a sub-optimal mobilization of the OSCE's comparative advantage for its gender equality work. For instance, in the countries visited by the evaluation team, the OSCE's national staff demonstrated strong motivation to work on gender equality, possessed context-specific expertise, enjoyed long-standing experience, and deep partnership and trust relations with their local counterparts — but these comparative advantages are not systematically directed or leveraged by some supervisors or decision-makers towards gender-related initiatives or gender-mainstreamed projects. It requires a gender-champion middle manager to optimize these assets and solidify the field operations' gender portfolios and gender-targeted activities.

4.2 Effectiveness and coherence

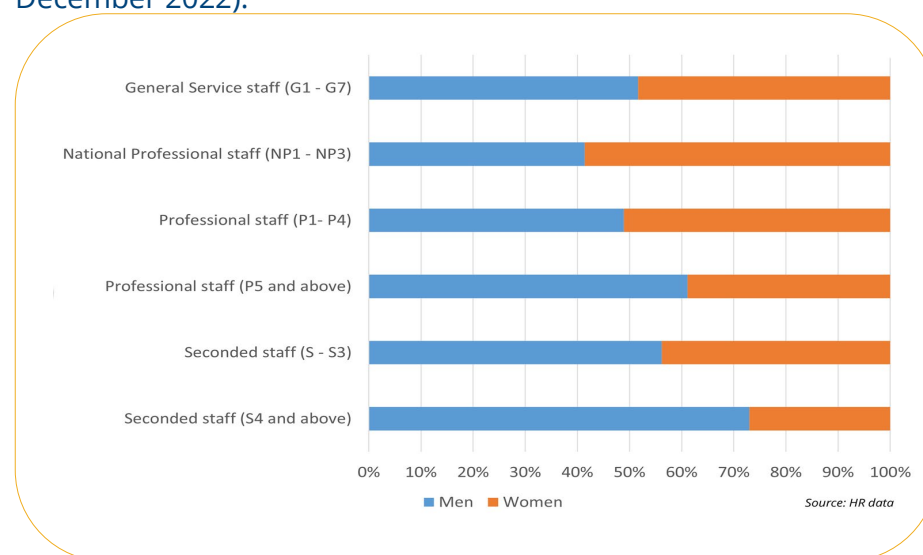
EQ3 (2): Have any OSCE gender-based policies, programmes or activities contributed to tangible gender-transformative

changes with regard to gender equality within the Organization?

✓ **Finding 6:** The OSCE has considerably improved gender parity among its seconded, professional and senior management positions. However, achieving equitable representation of women in some positions remains a challenge.

The OSCE has made conscious efforts to achieve gender parity at all levels of the Organization, and clear progress was made in a number of areas (see figures 2, 3 and 4). The Organization's progress accelerated after the launch of the Secretariat's Gender Parity Strategy in 2019. For instance, at the senior management level, 33 per cent were women in 2022, compared to 28 per cent in 2018.

Figure 2: Gender balance across all staff categories (as of 31 December 2022).

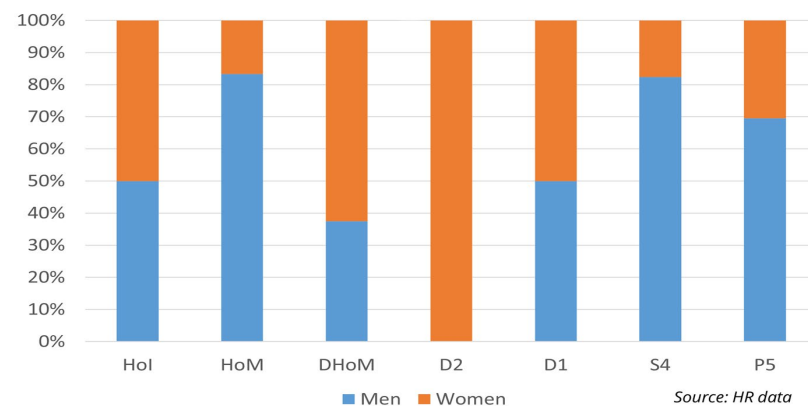


Despite this progress, some gains remain fragile, especially when the figures are disaggregated and analysed by region and level of posting. For example, the overwhelming majority of Heads of field operations are seconded men. Historical data also shows that only 14 seconded women have ever held that position (compared to 155 men). While parity was achieved for Heads of Institutions in 2022, the share of female Heads of field operations was only 17 per cent (see figure 3), and this number has not changed much since 2018.²² At the same time, in 2022, about two-thirds of the seconded deputy heads of field operations were women. The percentage of women in other senior seconded positions (e.g., at the S4 level) was only 18 per cent in 2022 (Figure 3).

The overall underrepresentation of women in senior positions in field operations can partly be attributed to the low level of secondments of women by the participating States.

“We are now at the OSCE’s historical top levels of parity. There is parity among the Heads of Institutions, and we have gender parity among directors until now — but subject to turnover, and there is no guarantee that it will stay like that.” (OSCE officials)

Figure 3: Gender Balance: Senior Management Positions and S4/P5 (2022)

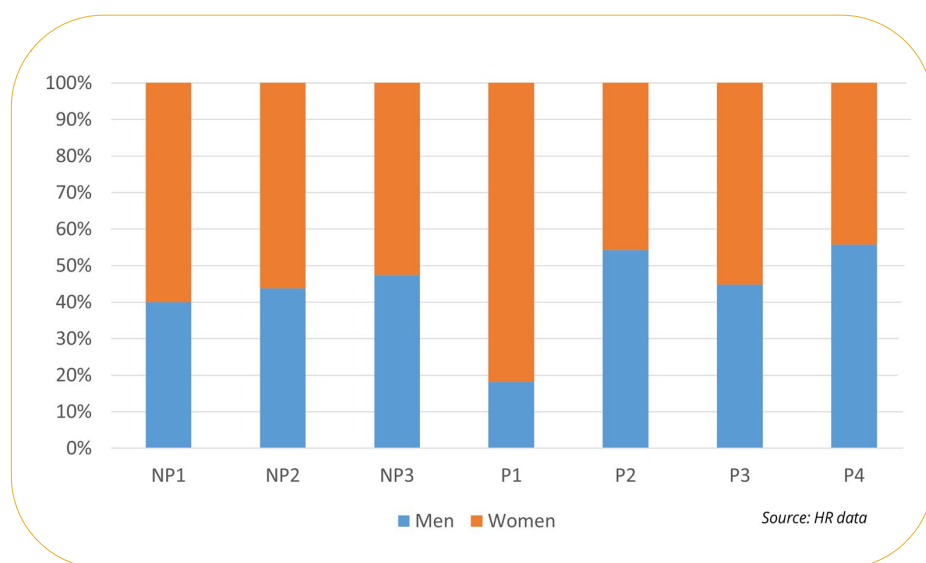


Heads of OSCE field operations and institutions pose for a group photo with OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid and OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, Bujar Osmani during the Annual Meeting of the Chair and the Secretariat with Heads of OSCE field operations and institutions, Vienna, 13 January 2023.

OSCE/Harald Sahling [Photo details](#)

Parity at professional (P-level) positions is quite uneven, with marked — and apparently traditional — over-representation of women at the entry level and under-representation at the P4 level (see Figure 4). Mid-management, and especially first dimension-related positions, were in majority held by men in 2022. A majority of national professional staff, on the other hand, were women in 2022 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Gender balance in the professional positions (P1/NP1 to P4/NP3)



While the responsibility for recruitment and professional development of staff rests with the OSCE, the secondment system is mostly under the operational control of the participating States.

According to 38 per cent of surveyed staff, encouraging the pS to second more women was the right way to promote achieving gender parity.²³

The OSCE is encouraging female talents to apply for appropriate positions, as the GAP annual reports note. A good practice introduced at the Secretariat and in some field operations, e.g., the Programme Office in Dushanbe, is the re-issuance of vacancy notices until there is a sufficient number of female candidates.

Interviews indicated that the Organization had explored and continued to explore new avenues and incentives for attracting female professionals, through various promotional activities, consciously featuring female leaders and staff members in their public relations and recruitment fairs, as well as in printed and online materials. These efforts to attract more female applicants have apparently yielded good results. For example, in 2021, women made up around half of all candidates among the majority of staffing categories across the OSCE, except for mid- to senior management posts (P4 to D1), of which 40 per cent of applicants were women. Given this constraint, it has taken a conscious effort to improve the gender balance for the latter category of positions. Also, very few women applied for employment at the General Management (GM2) level, a staff category with 95 per cent male representation, which comprises mostly drivers, manual workers and security guards. Women, however, hold 100 per cent of posts at the GM1 level, almost exclusively cleaners. This illustrates how the OSCE staffing structure mirrors gender roles in the societies where the Organization is present.

Another notable human resources (HR) management practice introduced by the OSCE is the requirement for at least one female panellist to be present during interviews. Aimed at encouraging female applicants and mainstreaming gender awareness, this practice demonstrates the ongoing search for innovative and inclusive HR approaches. However, some interviewed mid-management representatives in the field challenged the merits of this practice, and argued that they should have male-only panels if deemed appropriate. Some interviewees noted that a woman on a panel is usually the one tasked with posing standard gender-equality questions to the candidates. Those questions were described as standardized, generic, often considered out-of-date, and/or not adequate for the topic at hand, as well as insufficiently related to specific recruitment topics (justice, policing, democratic governance, journalism, etc.). This is reportedly due to the fact that some field operations have the practice that panels are not allowed to alter gender equality-related questions, which might be reducing them to a bureaucratic formality.

During the interviews, some interlocutors indicated that the secondment system and the conditions of employment were not gender responsive, which creates considerable difficulties for retaining international staff, with systemic shortfalls disproportionately affecting women, especially at a mid-career level. The secondments are often provided without salaries paid by the seconding authorities, which reduces the range of states whose nationals can work at headquarters, and also affects the financial stability of officials who join the OSCE with their families. Some countries do not cover housing or education expenses either, which is

another disincentive for both men and women with families to apply and/or accept a secondment. Or if they do accept, it is mostly for short-term assignments.

Although various field operations allow international staff members to bring their families, international family members do not receive benefits or entitlements for their families. This can be regarded not very gender-responsive if neither housing nor education grants are foreseen, bearing in mind that, according to the majority of interviewees, women are less likely than men to be willing to join a field operation without their family. This is crucial for mid-management positions — at an age when people often have school-age children.

The 2023 survey showed that while respondents mostly disagreed that field missions were better suited for men (77 per cent), the opinion was almost evenly split (47 per cent/49 per cent) on whether women prioritize family over career more than men (women tend to agree more with the latter statement than men).²⁴

During the Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic period, flexible working arrangements became more mainstreamed at the Secretariat, the Institutions, and the field operations. The Staff Instruction on Flexible Working Arrangements became better known and used more fully. A few interviewees noted, however, that the system had become quite arbitrary and administered at the discretion of senior managers in a way that was particularly incompatible with childcare — a task most often taken up by women. A lack of gender-responsiveness was also reported with regard to childcare since there

is no meaningful paternity leave foreseen by the current regulations. In the survey, 56 per cent of the respondents indicated that the best way to achieve better gender balance would be by implementing flexible working arrangements.²⁵

As a means for increasing gender parity, women ranked first the promotion of professional growth, followed by the need for flexible working arrangements, and only then, — by an increased effort from seconding authorities.

✓ **Finding 7:** The Gender Issues Programme, the Gender Focal Points and the Gender Advisers are the cornerstone of gender mainstreaming in the OSCE, delivering an essential service, but they are under-resourced and under-used.

The GIP and the Gender Focal Points (GFPs) (along with internal capacity-building activities) form the backbone for promoting expertise on gender equality, support OSCE staff to effectively gender mainstream all their activities, and monitor how they do so.

The GIP, which has undergone several iterations and appellations during the period under evaluation, is an essential element of the OSCE's gender architecture. This specialized unit within the Secretary General's Office serves a double function: (i) internal, by providing strategic advice to the Secretary General and supporting the pS, the Chair and all executive structures with mainstreaming gender equality, as well as with monitoring and reporting on the GAP implementation; and (ii) external, by implementing gender-targeted projects, whose key objective is gender transformative.

The establishment of the system of GFPs in the Secretariat and all Institutions and field operations has provided the OSCE with a crucial infrastructure from the point of view of institutional adaptation to the requirements of the GAP. The GFPs are motivated, often self-educated gender practitioners who build their skills on the job or come with their own previous experience on gender equality.²⁶ Unlike the GIP staff who are gender specialists, the GFPs have not, however, received more training on gender issues than other OSCE staff. According to the survey, 77 per cent of the GFPs had no special training for this task. The percentage is even higher among female respondents, 88 per cent of whom indicated a prevailing assumption that women may know how to be a GFP without related training. Survey results further indicated that 21 per cent of GFPs have never had training on gender equality in the OSCE, 56 per cent attended one or two such training events, and only 23 per cent attended three or more training events on gender equality. The relative majority of GFPs are also recent hires (44 per cent have been in the OSCE for less than three years) and often at junior-level, based on interview data.

Some of the roadmaps analysed by the evaluation team already offer training options for GFPs. For instance, the **Generic Roadmap** of the Secretariat, the Roadmap of the Office of the Secretary General and that of the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, foresee internal training on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, including on specialized topics.

The 2021 OSCE annual progress report on the implementation of the GAP underscores how important it is for the GFPs to be supported by

dedicated Gender Advisers in the respective executive structures to ensure coherent and more systematic gender mainstreaming activities across the Organization.

The 2018 Action Plan evaluation found that field operations with designated Gender Advisers (e.g., the Mission to Kosovo and the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina) had made more progress in gender mainstreaming than their peer structures. The evaluation also concluded that Gender Advisers directly reporting to the Secretary General, or the Head or Deputy Head of Mission, were more effective since they could provide strategic advice and gender-related support to staff from a more central position, as well as inform senior management of opportunities or outstanding issues to be addressed. The present evaluation confirmed the ongoing validity of this finding with concrete examples from the field visit to North Macedonia. Interviews with GFPs, Gender Advisers, and their supervisors and Heads of field operations also showed that this finding remains valid.

Good practice: Complementarity between GFPs and dedicated Gender Advisers

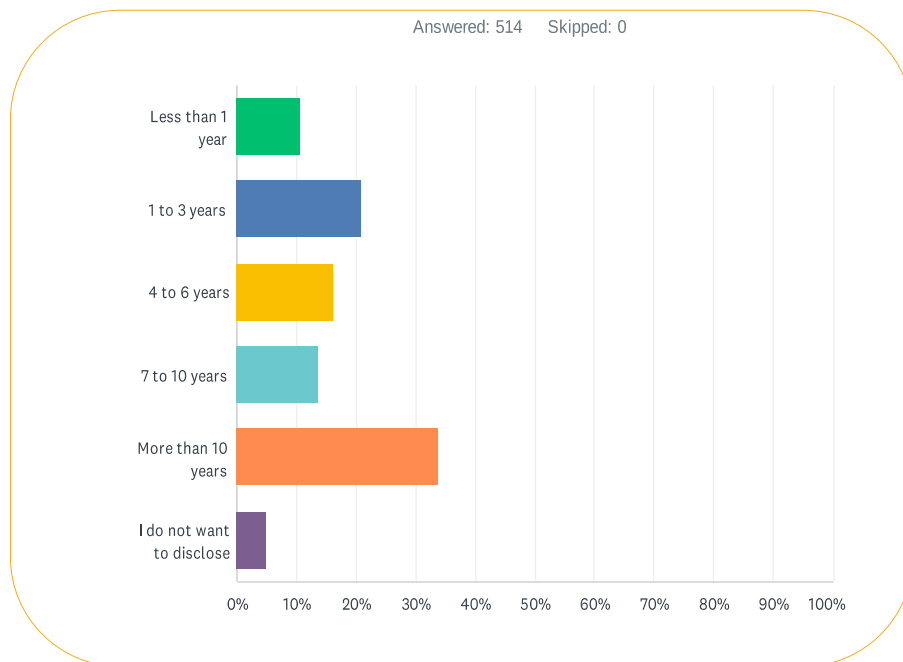
In addition to the GFPs, several executive structures have created Gender Adviser positions for full-time gender experts. In the sampled field operations, this was the case in North Macedonia. Gender Advisers complement GFPs and give a measure of the level of priority afforded to gender equality by their executive structure, as these posts are usually funded by the Unified Budget.

The GFPs interviewed during this evaluation highly appreciated the possibility to exchange views and experiences in the annual GFP meetings, as well as the facilitation provided by the GIP, and expressed their wish that these meetings were more frequent. The GFPs reported that they maintained regular and positive communication as a group of individuals invested in a single cause. These contacts are reinforced by regular work visits to the field and discussions about specific problems.

Despite these positive experiences, the evaluation found that some GFPs were under-utilized as a resource for gender mainstreaming. The majority of survey respondents (82 per cent) indicated being aware of who the GFP in the executive structure was. According to the survey results, national staff²⁷ were least likely to know who their GFP was, compared to international contracted or seconded staff. About half of the survey respondents (57 per cent) said that they had never approached their GFP. Confirming this, 44 per cent of GFPs indicated that their colleagues rarely approached them for advice. Survey respondents rated the usefulness of the GFP system at 3.1 out of 5. In all situations related to gender mainstreaming (project design, stakeholder analysis, activity planning and implementation, internal reporting, preparation of research/publication, preparation of communication products), the majority of survey respondents, who conduct programmatic work, indicated that they consulted their GFP but tended to do so rather rarely: the majority— once a year, or two to six times a year, in contrast to a small minority (nine per cent) who do so on a monthly basis. Still, 44 per cent of respondents said that they had never approached their GFP for gender mainstreaming,

which a high percentage is considering the GAP's objective to gender mainstream in all areas. When solicited and/or provided, the GFP's advice is taken into account about 50 per cent of times.

Figure 5: Length of service (GFPs only)



One of the key reasons indicated for the suboptimal use of GFPs is that this function represents an extra task for many officials. GFPs are usually OSCE officials who hold another function, and who take on this role additionally: 84 per cent of the surveyed GFPs stated that this constituted an additional task. For 42 per cent of the surveyed GFPs, this task was imposed on them. The survey showed that GFPs spent

on average 30 per cent of their time on gender-related tasks, but this is very unevenly distributed, as it ranges from four per cent to a maximum of 66 per cent. Of the total surveyed GFPs, only 16 per cent were devoting 100 per cent of their time to gender-related work (most probably these respondents were Gender Advisers). GFPs indicated in several interviews that they were not always able to provide support to their colleagues and respond to all request due to other, more urgent priorities and tasks.

Good practice: Regional network of GFPs and Gender Advisers in South-Eastern Europe

The GFPs and Gender Advisers in the field operations in South-Eastern Europe have formed a network that meets regularly and interacts informally on a permanent basis. They have established a practice of calling on one another for advice or for sharing feedback on their respective initiatives, for a peers' sounding board on analysis and ideas, and for dialogue and inspiration in dealing with challenges faced in the discharge of their functions. The network is very dynamic and mutually supportive, which ensures cross-fertilization of knowledge and experience, in-depth induction of new incumbents, and a high level of motivation thanks to the bespoke support it offers and the emulation it creates. The evaluation team had an opportunity to meet four representatives of this network, who testified to the usefulness of their exchanges.

Benchmarking: Gender advisers in the CoE and the EU

CoE

Until recently, the Council of Europe had a gender adviser in one field operation. At the moment, it has none. There are units tasked with gender-specific monitoring and co-operation activities for the implementation of relevant conventions — but no generic gender advisory functions that could serve gender mainstreaming.

European Union

In contrast, the EU Commission has gender advisers at the headquarters level in external action directorates (Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)). The EU External Action Service has gender advisers at the central level, and at field level in all civilian and military operations.

The evaluation found that the role of the GFPs is unevenly valued, largely depending on the level of attention and priority given by middle-management and leadership in the respective executive structures. Of the GFPs who responded to the survey, 28 per cent indicated that their gender-related function was not recognized by their supervisor (21 per cent not recognized by supervisors, which suggests a slightly higher appreciation by leadership than by middle

management). Yet, GFPs remain in their vast majority highly committed: less than 7 per cent wished to stop fulfilling this function. The uneven use of the GFPs and, where existent, of the Gender Advisers, could also be correlated with the feedback from some interviewees, who indicated difficulties with integrating the GFPs as part of the standard working consultation process for projects and programmes. The degree to which GFPs are included in decision-making at all levels may depend on their level of seniority, their position on the organogram, but also on the awareness and attitude of the managerial cadre and leadership. It was mentioned, however, that the knowledge shared through GFP networking and the persistence of individual GFPs, often contributes to progress with their acceptance and inclusion in the programming work.

“I am proud that I got my [gender unit in a field operation] on the mailing list of those who review the programmes, and who are included in the preparation of high-profile visits.” (Gender Focal Point)

“The Gender Advisor should be in the Head of Mission’s office, not in the Human Dimension Department as it is now — that would be more logical, since this Advisor serves the whole mission anyway.” (OSCE interviewee)

Despite challenges, the majority of interviewees who did use the help of their GFP, considered it as inspiring. GFPs, therefore, act as gender champions and beacons of gender mainstreaming who have a high potential to advise their colleagues — but often lack the time to do so

sufficiently, and would need their management and leadership to lend more authority to their function.

Benchmarking: the EU uses a GFP architecture, which demonstrates similar advantages and faces similar challenges to those faced by the OSCE GFPs.²⁸

The system of GFPs and gender markers in the EU is quite similar to that of the OSCE. A recent EU evaluation²⁹ found that GFPs did not have decision-making authority but provided significant assistance to other staff in mainstreaming gender in the relevant programmatic documents. Similar to the OSCE, GFPs in the EU often lack the time necessary to perform this (additional) task, but form a tight-knit group that communicates regularly. However, the result of their efforts depends largely on the organizational culture in a given sub-division/field or location, and the degree of commitment by management and leadership. The evaluation³⁰ recommended clarification of the GFP functions and an increase in human resources dedicated to gender equality and gender mainstreaming. It proposed to better back up GFPs with continuous training, and to select GFPs who have sufficient seniority and decision-making power for serving as agents of change on a larger scale.

Good practice: The OSCE's Mission to Skopje (OMSk) Gender Mainstreaming Working Group

OMSk's GFP and Gender Adviser facilitate a monthly working group, gathering representatives from various units in the mission departments (including the Head of Mission's office). This working group exchanges updates on the evolution of the country's gender equality environment and information on ongoing Mission activities/projects with gender equality relevance, in light of the GAP roadmap.

The working group further exchanges experiences and learning on gender mainstreaming in the respective (draft) projects. This ensures cross-fertilization, keeps gender equality and gender mainstreaming on the staff's agenda, and creates a space to develop common messages and approaches across the three dimensions.

In contrast, the staff in the Programme Office in Dushanbe (POiD) shared their concern that, while gender equality and gender mainstreaming are high on the agenda of the Office, they have faced some limitations in terms of cross-fertilization and Office-wide approaches to gender equality, partly due to limited human resources and vacancies in key positions.

✓ **Finding 8:** The resources for promoting gender equality, particularly within the Gender Issues Programme, are not commensurate with the OSCE's ambitions and commitments.

Overall, all the above-listed elements of the OSCE's gender infrastructure tend to be under-resourced. The GIP is underpowered in terms of staffing: apart from the Senior Gender Adviser and one UB-funded Adviser on Gender Equality positions, the Programme relies on highly skilled seconded and project staff. Funding for GIP's human resources is minimal from the UB's perspective, and many interviewees argued that it mirrored the (low) level of priority afforded by some participating States to the issue. While playing an important support function in the Secretariat and for the programmatic responsibilities of the Office of the Secretary General, the fact the GIP does not have a clear and strong mandate nor a GIP head with director's rank, diminishes the Programme's ability to weigh in on high-level management decisions and on the allocation of resources. As a result, GIP staff consider themselves overstretched, which could affect the level of support they provide to GFPs and colleagues working on gender-related projects in the executive structures.

In most units and departments of the Secretariat, and in the Institutions and field operations, concrete gender equality functions are allocated as an extra task to specific individuals, with the exception of the GIP and a limited number of gender advisers (usually in the field). This limits the perception that gender mainstreaming is everybody's responsibility, since this specific 'extra task' is not allotted

to all. It also affects the ability of the GFPs to perform up to the level required by the challenge.

The evaluation team found a similar dilemma related to the access to resources for gender equality and gender mainstreaming: there was often a mismatch between the ambitions stated in the roadmaps, the human resources dedicated to gender equality, and the funding available to implement those ambitious commitments. The last two, in particular, were sometimes inversely proportionate to each other. This mismatch of ambitions and resources limits the ability of many OSCE executive structures to create sizeable positive precedents of strong gender-mainstreamed or gender-targeted initiatives.

"In some missions, there is now a pool of money for gender equality, but the capacity doesn't catch up. In others it's the opposite. You almost never have both at the same time." (OSCE Staff)

Under these circumstances, a lot of progress made towards gender mainstreaming and gender equality initiatives has been based on the individual goodwill of technical staff and mid-level managers, if and when they were able to elicit support from their leadership.

According to the 2004 GAP, "The Secretary General and Heads of institutions and missions shall exercise strong and active leadership in building sustainable gender awareness in the Organization." (2004 Action Plan, para 14). Recent initiatives of the Secretary General strongly attest to the Organization's support for gender equality, awareness-raising, enhanced gender-related activities and gender-mainstreamed projects.

The evaluation also found that the bottom-up push for the implementation of the GAP has been continuous thanks to an increasing number of gender champions in the Organization. The top-down change, however, was found to be uneven, largely due to limited incentives for mid- and senior-level management to invest in the implementation of the GAP. Despite strong support from the SG, according to interviewees, mid-level managers often refrain from exposing themselves to risk and only engage with strong gender-related initiatives if they are personally exceptionally committed to the issue. As a result, the level of priority afforded to the GAP has seen a slow, bumpy upwards trend — and OSCE staff do not take it for granted.

Finally, some interviewees expressed concern that the championing of gender mainstreaming was still mainly done by women. This observation was also corroborated by the demographics of the interviewees, although the evaluation did identify some strong gender champions among male employees. The OSCE has also invested efforts to 'bring men on board', through internal training and initiatives that foster gender equality at the OSCE workplace, promote equal treatment and opportunities for women and men, create effective structures of consultation among male and female colleagues, and speak out against gender-related inequalities. A dedicated publication, *OSCE Men for Gender Equality*,³¹ depicts a number of creative ideas and initiatives, including such aimed at combating gender-based violence in the OSCE area. In 2022, an innovative 'Toolkit on MenEngaged', targeting OSCE staff was developed under the WIN project.³²

Overall, even when the OSCE implements gender-mainstreamed and gender-targeted projects and initiatives, limited funding and inadequate human resources could hamper their reach and magnitude — and therefore, curtail the ability of gender champions among OSCE staff to sufficiently support participating States in the fulfilment of their gender-equality commitments.

✓ **Finding 9:** There has been a gradual but steady change of attitudes, with staff increasingly embracing gender equality as part of their job, but several factors within the Organization warrant a constant reiteration of the need for further investments to sustain this change.

The attitude within the OSCE towards gender equality has considerably evolved, with a growing feeling of shared responsibility. According to the majority of interviewees, the OSCE as an organization has started from a relatively low value afforded to gender equality, compared to other international organizations, but has made considerable progress. Interviewees almost unanimously agreed that gender equality has gained increased significance and legitimacy in their executive structures and administrative units. In a 2020 OSCE survey on *Needs and Resource Assessment on Gender Mainstreaming*, 44.5 per cent of the surveyed staff said that gender was relevant to all aspects of their work. Three years later, in 2023, there is unanimous understanding among staff that gender equality is part of the job in the OSCE. However, the evaluation found that the level of personal implication and commitment varies among staff and management categories.

“When I joined the OSCE in a position dedicated to gender, I was told ‘think of the next fashion because this gender thing will end, and you will be without a job’. Later, people realized gender was here to stay.”
(OSCE staff)

“Nobody is against gender mainstreaming — but few feel responsible for it, and few see it as a priority.” (OSCE staff)

The first factor for this contrasted progress is the GAP itself, and the level of familiarity with it as a guiding policy document. The GAP is well known as a document, but not necessarily in depth: survey respondents self-assessed their knowledge of the GAP, giving themselves around 54 out of 100 points on average (GFPs have a stronger knowledge, with self-assessed 74 points).

Another factor, which is double-edged, is the frequent staff turnover in the OSCE. Interviewees highlighted that, on the one hand, hiring persons with different experiences, possibly with exceptional engagement for gender equality, reinforces the upward trend. These new hires inspire their colleagues and become gender champions. On the other hand, turnover also means that training and sensitization investments need to be constantly repeated or renewed.

Good practice (Programme Office in Dushanbe)

The POiD systematically organizes training for incoming staff members on gender equality, as well as regular training by external experts on gender mainstreaming. This ensures that gender equality and gender mainstreaming are perceived as

an integral part of each staff member’s work, and that capacities persist despite turnover.

Lesson learned: Acceptance of internal pushes for gender equality and gender mainstreaming varies a lot across field operations.

Reactions to the internal organizational push to embrace gender equality and to apply the OSCE’s internal policies related to gender equality vary a lot. An interviewee from a non-sampled field operation shared an experience with the introduction of new gender mainstreaming processes: “Oftentimes, I faced negative reactions to the concept of gender on the part of people who did not understand it. I was surprised by the push-back from staff (especially the national staff, but not only). Some were of the opinion that I was imposing a Western concept that was not in line with local traditions.”

Similar testimonies were frequent in interviews. In most cases, the outcome was eventually greater acceptance, provided that:

- **There was a continuous push and encouragement from the leadership of the executive structure;**
- **There were at least a few celebrated role models at several levels —from general service national staff, national and seconded professionals, to international leadership staff;**

- **Management, supported by the GFPs and/or the gender advisor(s), entertained an open and transparent, yet moderated dialogue, in which the fundamentals of the OSCE's commitments were reiterated.**

A third factor is the level of priority allocated to gender equality by decision-makers in a given executive structure. Almost all interviewees indicated that gender equality and gender mainstreaming were now accepted by most staff as an integral part of their work, and that they had gradually raised gender considerations in the order of priorities of their respective executive structure. Examples from the sampled field operations and testimonies from the Secretariat and Institutions showed that, when executive structures are subject to stress, the level of priorities becomes more explicit. The applied outcome-harvesting method revealed that gender equality and gender mainstreaming tended to remain relatively low in the order of OSCE priorities in such cases. According to many interviewees, in an environment where many staff members are overburdened with extra tasks (e.g., focal point tasks, acting officially, or not, to fill in for vacant posts), work on gender equality and gender mainstreaming was often served last, or not at all.

“I do not have sufficient time to work on gender equality while also fulfilling the roles of a Head of Programme and policy advisor, covering for some employees as well.” (OSCE official)

“When we need to cut from the [Head of executive structure's] talking points for an important meeting, it is gender equality that gets cut out first.” (OSCE official)

Finally, a **fourth important factor**, and an incentive to accelerate progress in the staff's uptake of gender equality commitments, is to increase accountability for gender equality, as pointed out in the 2021 Annual GAP Progress report. The OSCE GAP includes in its text a fairly robust accountability mechanism, which was a good practice at the time of its adoption. It includes annual internal reporting by the Secretary General to the PC and regular (periodic) independent evaluations of the GAP. One third (38 per cent) of survey respondents considered that the monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the GAP was insufficient, and that it constituted a challenge for the Organization. It is the top challenge selected by respondents. This perception is stronger among GFPs, who tend to be most attuned to the GAP: 49 per cent are of this opinion.

Benchmarking: EU, CoE and UN monitoring mechanisms for gender equality strategic documents

EU

The EU's GAPs are regularly monitored and evaluated. Each GAP undergoes a mid-term and an end evaluation. These evaluations are all external and independent. In addition, the EU GAPs undergo internal annual reporting, led currently by DG INTPA.

In addition to the GAP, the EU has deployed, under GAP III, Country-Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs), prepared by all EU Delegations according to a standard template. These CLIPs are informed by periodic gender country profiles and broad

consultations. The CLIPs are reviewed and monitored periodically (at the middle and at the end of the seven-year financial cycles of the EU programming). Each EU Delegation reports on its CLIP, and subsequently updates it.

CoE

The CoE Gender Equality Strategy is not subject to regular evaluations. The Strategy does not foresee a particular monitoring, reporting, or external evaluation mechanism: it leaves this issue open by stating that “the development, implementation and evaluation of co-operation activities, is based on country specific and thematic action plans and other co-operation documents.”

However, the CoE monitors the fulfilment of its Member States’ commitments in the area of gender equality through several powerful mechanisms:

- Monitoring mechanisms of applicable conventions that have a particular relevance to gender equality (Istanbul Convention, Lanzarote Convention, Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, etc.)
- Monitoring of other conventions and other monitoring mechanisms, which sometimes includes a gender lens (e.g., European Social Charter reporting, ECRI, GRECO, etc.) Review of the implementation of judgements of the European Court of Human Rights (which include a

significant proportion of decisions relevant to gender equality)

UN

The UN has introduced a system-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP), which leaves a broad margin of appreciation to the UN organizations for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation. However, the UNSWAP 2.0 version possesses a scorecard that facilitates the harmonization of monitoring and evaluation across the organizations. The scorecard inspires the monitoring and evaluation plans elaborated by each UN organization. For instance, UNODC envisages a baseline study, annual updates (monitoring), mid-term reviews, and end evaluation.

The UNSWAP activities are complemented with the monitoring of applicable UN Conventions relevant to gender equality (primarily through CEDAW reporting and the Universal Periodic Review), which enables standard-based monitoring of the implementation by Member States and also records some of the international support received in this area.

The regular individual performance appraisals are another good avenue for accountability. From the point of view of institutionalization of gender policies within an organization, individual performance reviews may serve as a good tool to counterbalance this phenomenon, provided that relevant objectives are set and consistently monitored. As pointed out by the 2021 annual

GAP report, OSCE managers have obligatory gender-responsive objectives in their performance management agreements since 2019. However, this is not often the case for other OSCE officials, according to the interviews. Many interviewees reported having a gender-related objective in their individual annual performance assessments, which is often viewed by supervisors as secondary. When this happens, these objectives are not considered an organizational requisite. They are usually self-set: sometimes by managers, but more often by staff themselves, in addition to their other objectives. Even GFPs do not always have a gender equality objective in their performance reviews: in 2020 and 2021, only 74 per cent of the GFPs did.³³ There are positive cases though: the Office in Dushanbe reports that all performance management plans are required to have at least one gender objective.

Benchmarking: CoE framework and actions on gender equality for staff.

While the OSCE GAP encompasses both internal and external aspects of gender equality, the CoE adopted in 2006 a Strategy on Non-Discrimination, long before its Gender Equality Strategy, which concerns support to Member States. Under this Strategy, a **Committee for Diversity, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination**, gathering staff representatives and representatives of Member States, and chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, adopts **biennial Action Plans and recommendations** to the Secretary General. The Committee then steers and monitors the implementation of these plans. In addition, non-discrimination and gender parity among staff are

enshrined in the Staff Statutes (a document setting the rules for staff and adopted by the Member States — whereas strategies and regulations are enacted by the Secretary General). The upcoming **Strategy on diversity** (expected in 2023) **goes further in scope**, in particular regarding persons defining themselves as non-binary.

On harassment, the **Human Dignity Regulation** was complemented in 2023 by a **Policy for Respect and Dignity**. The general approach is to consider **a continuum between poor management/working relations practices and harassment, and between gender bias among staff and sexual harassment**. The efforts to prevent sexual harassment therefore encompass a **holistic range of actions** engaging the top, senior and middle management, to continuously improve the organizational culture of mutual respect, inclusion and diversity.

In practice, the CoE has long established a **network of ‘trusted colleagues’**: staff members who receive special training to act as a port of call for any issue related to a lack of positive relations among staff and with supervisors, including from a gender perspective. Performance appraisals are both individual and collective, with gender objectives and teamwork objectives for managers. A cohort of managers, and others on a voluntary basis, have undergone a 360-degree performance appraisal.

In 2019, the CoE's Human Resources, Ethics and Equal Opportunities Officer and a network of trusted colleagues ran the staff **campaign CARE**. It involved various media, including the Intranet, social media, posters, Q&A messages, as well as meetings and conferences within the organization. A good practice to be replicated included the production of **videos presenting testimonials of (sexual) harassment read by the top management, and mock situations enacted by all staff (including the Deputy Secretary General)**. The campaign targeted all staff, and as a priority those with the least stable contracts.

In cases of sexual harassment, the victim may reach out to Human Resources, but also to trusted colleagues and to external mediators (the CoE hired specialized external and independent mediators to act upon complaints). Investigations are carried out by **external, independent anti-harassment investigators**, who may recommend a disciplinary procedure. In addition, it is a positive (disciplinable) **obligation of colleagues and supervisors to report** the facts as per the 2023 **Whistleblowing Regulation** (internal training on the regulation is pending). In such cases, the person against whom a report has been filed, is placed under monitoring by Human Resources, which may lead to a disciplinary procedure.

✓ **Finding 10:** Training relevant to gender equality and gender mainstreaming has achieved wide outreach in the Organization, but its fine-tuning and targeting can be further optimized.

The institutionalization of the gender perspective in the OSCE is facilitated by the systematization of **orientation** and **training** on gender equality and gender mainstreaming. The General Orientation Course, which is obligatory to all new OSCE staff, includes a gender equality segment. Additionally, ad hoc gender-related courses are offered by the Institutions and field operations. As a result, close to 70 per cent of the survey respondents had at least one gender-related training, while 14 per cent had more than three. These are good figures, showing that the basic gender training has a wide outreach. According to survey results, OSCE staff in the Western Balkans were most likely to be highly trained in gender equality, closely followed by Central and Western Europe (corresponding mostly to the Secretariat and Institutions), whereas the figures were behind in Central Asia (33 per cent of the respondents in this region were never trained on gender) and, to a lesser extent, in Eastern Europe.

In 2022, the Department of Human Resources alone reported having provided nine general/basic courses related to gender equality³⁴ for 1,220 participants (642 women and 578 men) and two advanced courses for 88 participants (66 women and 22 men). However, out of a total of 11 courses, four were not OSCE-specific but borrowed from the UN system. The evaluation team received feedback on these courses that described them as generally interesting, but containing

entire sections (e.g., on internal reporting mechanisms) that were irrelevant to the OSCE. Participants also indicated that they would have appreciated an opportunity to learn more about OSCE-specific mechanisms. Field-based officials also reported a lack of access to Secretariat-based training when delivered in person. Most interviewees found in-person training sessions on gender equality and gender mainstreaming much more effective, as they focused not just on knowledge but also on skills, attitudes and values.

Interviewees described the OSCE advanced training sessions as not dimension- or topic-specific but rather meant to address the positioning of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the work of the Organization: one of the training courses is focused on gender-responsive leadership, while the other is a mentoring programme. According to participants, they do not, however, cover specialized issues that would be helpful to OSCE staff, who may lack gender-specific skills and often cannot find external expertise to palliate their own competency gaps to effectively gender mainstream their activities and projects.

Interviewees indicated that specialized gender training (e.g., on gender mainstreaming in technical areas dealt with by the OSCE's executive structures, such as policing, energy grids, criminal justice, penitentiary, waste management, border management, etc.) needed often to be sought outside of the Organization. However, such expertise is particularly difficult to obtain due to limited resources (travel, costs of external training courses), particularly for staff posted in the field.

“We work on very technical, specialized topics, and we hire specialists who know the topic but not gender equality. These topics are also male-dominated (related to the second dimension).” (OSCE Staff)

Several interviewees (including some who implement fully gender mainstreamed projects) reported having paid privately for their own gender training, or for part of it (e.g., they paid for the cost of the training while their executive structures covered the travel, or vice versa). They indicated that topic-specific gender training was perceived as a luxury by many supervisors. This is perceived as a major challenge since the lack of topic-specific gender skills stands in the way of transitioning from good will and basic gender-sensitiveness (e.g., ‘counting women’ in projects and activities) to genuine gender mainstreaming through transformative approaches. Survey results showed that only 29 per cent of respondents considered gender equality as adequately mainstreamed in their specific work area.

✓ **Finding 11:** The OSCE has developed a number of Staff Instructions aimed at preventing gender discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. However, the level of awareness and understanding of these Instructions among staff indicates a need for better promotion and training.

As an employer and as a supporter of the participating States' efforts to fulfil their commitments, the OSCE promotes diversity, including

gender parity as an important asset for the Organization.³⁵ This is embedded in the OSCE's recruitment and talent management approaches.³⁶ It is also in line with the GAP commitments.

The OSCE strives to achieve a balanced gender representation within its human resources at all levels, in all locations, and in all dimensions. Achieving gender parity often means an effort to increase the representation of women, who have historically been under-represented, especially in certain field locations, at senior management and leadership levels, and in the first dimension, according to the 2018 GAP evaluation and the OSCE's 2020 and 2021 annual progress reports.

The first lever used by the Organization to achieve gender parity is **regulatory**: ensuring non-discrimination in recruitment and talent management-related rules, and adopting a **regulatory framework** that makes the OSCE a conducive workplace for both men and women, free from discrimination and gender-based violence. On this front, the progress recorded in the previous evaluation has continued, albeit with some delays compared to that of other international organizations.

"The Secretariat's mandate on gender is very clear: internal and external. But not everyone understands it clearly: many people put emphasis on the external part, and they forget about the necessary work to push for gender mainstreaming internally. I see this as a risk." (OSCE Staff)

In addition to the Code of Conduct, which includes relevant provisions, the OSCE revised in 2022 its Staff Instruction on Professional Working Environment (SI21, originally implemented in 2013), which contains a definition of sexual harassment and related procedures to report/investigate/act upon complaints. The survey indicated that 87 per cent of the survey respondents knew about SI21. The Staff Instruction on Flexible Working Arrangements, which includes certain gender considerations is known to 91 per cent of staff, as is Staff Instruction 32, adopted in 2022, on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). Contrary to what a few interviewees shared, the survey showed that the PSEA policy is well known in the Organization: 83 per cent of the respondents knew about it.

The least informed staff members were national staff, and lack of information was more frequent in Central Asia.

Benchmarking: Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse policies

Other international organizations have adopted PSEA policies or regulations similar to the OSCE's, — some of them much earlier than the OSCE.

The **CoE** relies on the observance by its own structures of the **Lanzarote Convention**, a landmark legal instrument to prevent, prosecute and protect against PSEA, adopted in 2007.

UNICEF adopted an anti-PSEA strategy in 2019.³⁷

NATO adopted its PSEA document in 2019.³⁸

The OSCE currently trains its staff on the PSEA by using the UN mandatory training. The latter is of good quality, however, designed with a view of humanitarian aid beneficiaries, which is not the OSCE's case. OSCE staff also found the reporting and referral system not applicable to the Organization, indicating the need for a better, OSCE-tailored training. An OSCE-specific online training is close to be finalized.

The survey results also showed that the above-listed Staff Instructions, although well known to OSCE staff, have not been used to their full extent, particularly SI21 on a Professional Working Environment. Surveyed staff, although mostly agreeing that “all necessary policies and regulations are in place to combat sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse” (33 per cent strongly agreed and 45 per cent somewhat agreed), did not know that violations are severely punished (about 30 per cent of all respondents).

These shortfalls in the knowledge and implementation of the above-mentioned OSCE regulations is regrettable because the evaluation team encountered indications that violations still occur. About a third of survey respondents (37 per cent) agreed (somewhat or strongly) that there were many instances of discrimination in the Organization; and almost 20 per cent indicated that there were instances of sexual harassment. These figures rise to 46 per cent and 33 per cent when considering only women's responses (24 per cent and 14 per cent for men). About half of the surveyed respondents further believed (strongly or somewhat) that “it is difficult to report sexual harassment,

because there are not enough measures in place to protect victims (49 per cent) or whistle-blowers (50 per cent) from retaliation.” Even if these are only perceptions, the figures indicate a climate in which women who, according to interviews and survey figures, are more likely than men to fall victims of sexual harassment, may not feel entirely safe.

These results could be partly explained with the uneven understanding of the definition of the various violations, once applied in everyday office life. For instance, 41 per cent of survey respondents believed that mentioning one's sexual or sentimental attraction the first time was always sexual harassment, and six per cent believed that complimenting someone on their appearance was always sexual harassment. About a third of the respondents (34 per cent) believed that dismissive behaviour or remarks always constituted sexual harassment, even though the question distinguished it from “offensive or demeaning behaviour” based on one's gender.

Existing misconceptions could relate to the fact that the Staff Instruction on Professional Working Environment deals with both sexual and non-sexual harassment, which according to some interviewees is particularly confusing. The SI postulates that the OSCE encourages informal solutions of workplace conflicts (and leaves open whether sexual harassments fall thereunder). The Staff Instruction also stipulates that the failure of supervisors to address a violation of the SI may be considered a misconduct warranting disciplinary action.

✓ **Finding 12:** The staff perceptions, which have evolved, have had mixed effects on the progress towards gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violations.

The OSCE has a distinct organizational culture, owing to its mandate and a number of factors, such as: the variety of its Institutions and field operations and the strong field presence, the nature of its thematic areas, and the specificities of its human resource management as a non-career organization with contracts tied to annual budgets and a strong reliance on secondments.

The survey showed that a relatively small proportion of respondents tolerated behaviours that are clearly breaches of the OSCE regulatory framework, and in some cases criminal offences, falling under SI32 on Sexual Abuse. One fifth of all respondents (23 per cent) considered that “offensive or demeaning language based on one’s gender” is only sometimes, or never, sexual harassment, and eight per cent of the respondents considered that “imposed physical contact of a sexual nature” is only sometimes (seven per cent), or even never, (one per cent) sexual harassment. This indicates that the concept of sexual harassment, and its possible overlap with criminal offences in some cases, is not well understood.

The most likely staff categories to tolerate one of the behaviours that would qualify as sexual harassment, or to admit that they do not know, were among national staff, and to a lesser extent, among seconded

staff. Proper identification of sexual harassment appears less likely in Central Asia.

The same survey also showed that tolerance towards certain behaviours, although on a downward trend over the past five years (based on information from interviews), was still present. For example, 14 per cent of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that “people who say they were victims of sexual harassment were making up or exaggerating their claims”, and according to five per cent of respondents, “gender-based violence or harassment is often provoked by the victim”. These figures are low, but bearing in mind the standard survey bias (respondents who choose to take a survey on gender equality are more likely than others to be proponents of gender equality and have a level of self-consciousness when responding to such questionnaires), they indicate that the OSCE has to constantly promote its internal regulations and policies, and to conduct periodic training courses and other awareness-raising initiatives. Data disaggregation showed that these perceptions exist, at small levels, everywhere, both among men and women. They appear slightly more frequent in Central Asia.

Consistent with the perceptions above, 17.5 per cent of respondents said that they had witnessed sexual harassment in the OSCE during the evaluated period. Women (22 per cent) were more likely than men (eight per cent) to have identified as a witness of sexual harassment, showing again a margin of progression in awareness-raising. The overwhelming majority of those who had witnessed a sexual harassment reacted in varied ways — from providing support/advice

to the victim, to confronting the perpetrator or alerting a supervisor, a GFP, or a staff representative.

Among the surveyed respondents, 14 per cent reported that they have been a victim of sexual harassment in the OSCE in the past three years. For the overwhelming majority, the perpetrator(s) was/were identified as male (85 per cent) and in 15 per cent of cases, as female. These results indicate **a significant decrease** from the 45.7 per cent overall sexual harassment prevalence rate for OSCE found by the **Safe Space Survey Level 2** conducted by Deloitte in 2019. The rate of witnessing sexual harassment in the OSCE has also decreased, from 42 per cent in 2018 (Deloitte 2019) to 17.5 per cent in 2023 (GAP Survey). This positive result and the **decreasing trend of sexual harassment survey statistics** in the OSCE can be attributed to a number of measures and initiatives undertaken by the Organization, such as, but not limited to, the introduction of the Staff Instruction on Professional Working Environment in 2022, the promotion of a zero-tolerance policy, and the fact that victim-centric and sexual harassment complaints can now be submitted directly to the OSCE Office of Internal Oversight for investigation.

In the 2023 GAP survey, almost half of those who claimed to have been a victim of sexual harassment (46 per cent) said that they had not reported the violation, which is corroborated by interviews: under-reporting and trust towards possible avenues and remedies continue to be challenge. Moreover, the 2023 rate is higher than the 35.7 per cent of respondents who had not reported harassment incidents in 2019 (Deloitte survey). Among those who stated in the 2023 survey to have reported sexual harassment, the majority had turned to their

supervisor or a peer. When triangulated with information from the interviews, this shows the importance of having trusted colleagues and role models in the Organization.

Figure 6: Survey results: Victims of Sexual Harassment (including inappropriate behaviour, language or remarks)

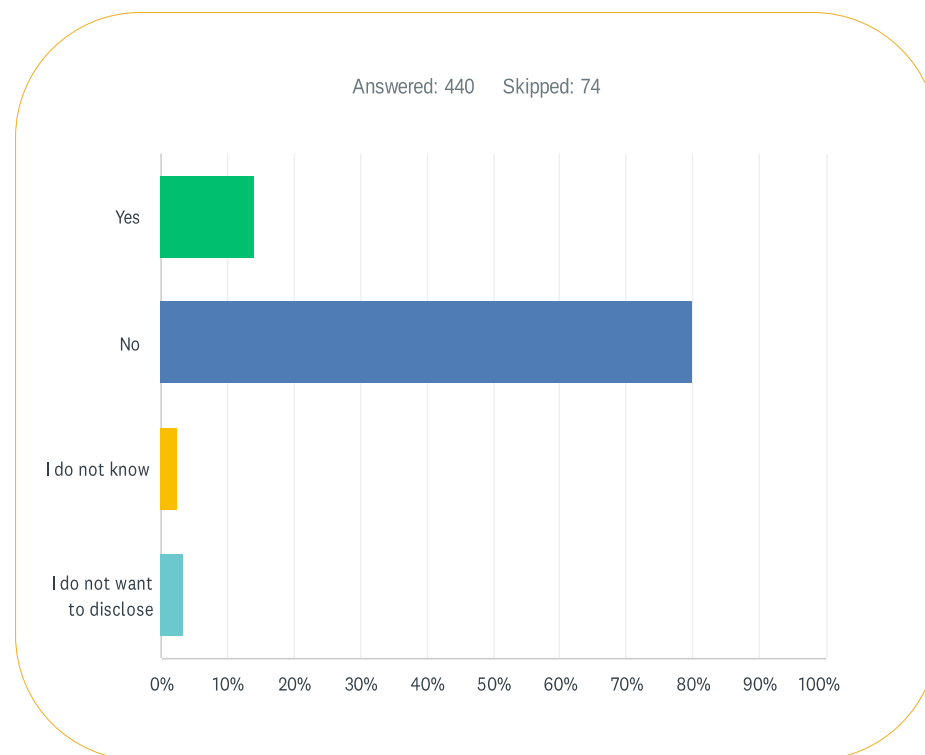
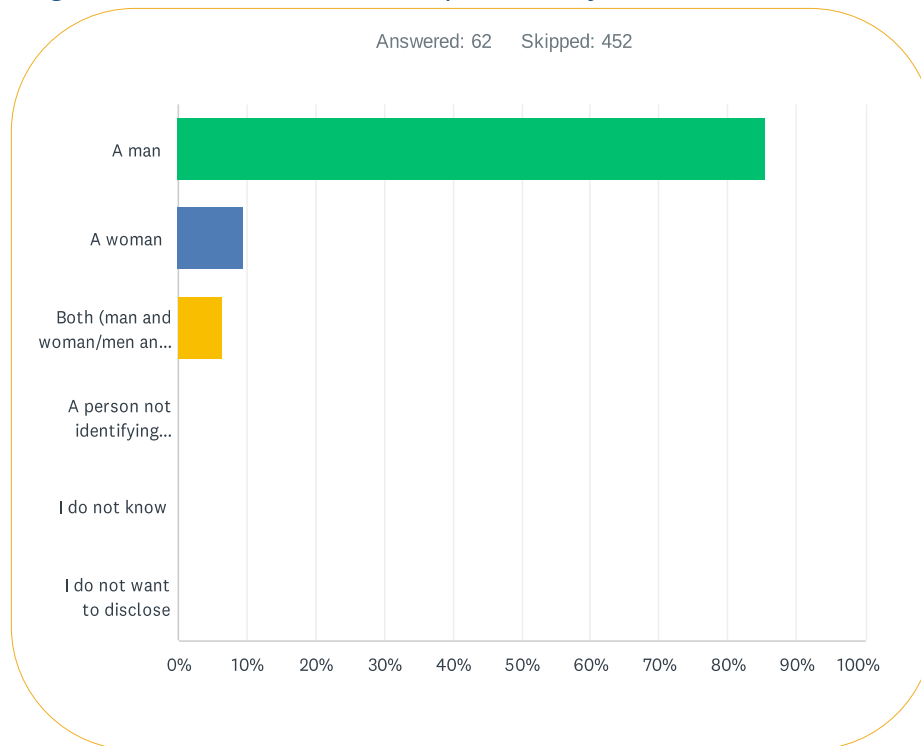
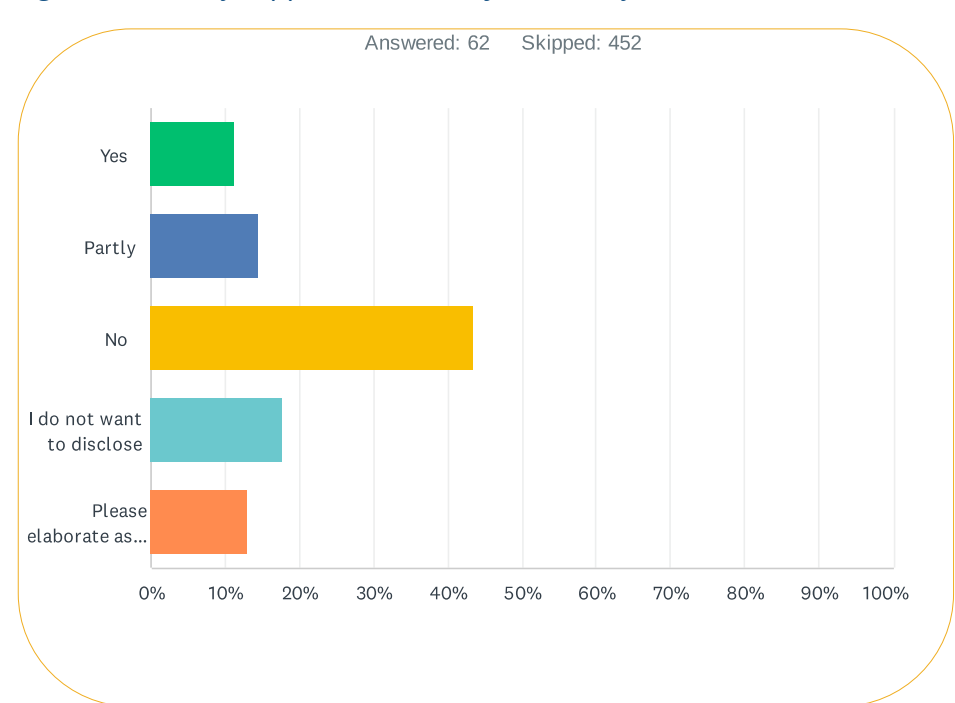


Figure 7: Sexual Harassment Perpetrators by Gender



The level of satisfaction with the Organization’s response/reaction in 2023 was, however, rather low with 44 per cent of the respondents who stated they were victims indicating they did not receive the support they needed, and 15 per cent saying they only partly did.

Figure 8: Level of Support Received by Victims of Sexual Harassment



The geographic disaggregation of the responses reveals a higher percentage of respondents who identified themselves as victims or witnesses of sexual harassment were located in Central Asia.

When triangulated with interviews and direct observations, the 2023 survey results showed three correlated phenomena:

- **a degree of confusion as to what should, and what should not be tolerated;**

- **the persistence of some inappropriate behaviours despite the Organization's efforts; and, a workplace culture which still, on some occasions and in some locations, allows abrasive management styles compounded by certain gender stereotypes and gender-specific treatment of one another.**

Interviewees in their vast majority, in particular women, described repeated displays of abrasive management approaches resting on power relations rather than empowerment of staff, which are reportedly more frequent towards women than men. The evaluation team also directly observed such behaviours during one field visit (between a supervisor and a supervisee, and towards the evaluator).

The survey results also indicated that, albeit not widespread, such issues remain a challenge for the Organization. For instance, 35 per cent of respondents (a notable minority) agree with the statement that “when there is an extra task to complete, managers tend to ask women more often than men”.

“There are lots of micro aggressions on a daily basis by people not taking the topic seriously, or simply misogynistic comments, or sexist behaviours. When I [being a woman] send an email to a working group — there is no reply. When I ask my male peer colleague to send an email — he gets replies.” (OSCE staff)

There are also biases related to women’s capacity to fulfil certain roles, with 26 per cent of respondents disagreeing somewhat or strongly that in the OSCE, “your opinion has the same value, whether you are a

man or a woman”. When asked whether they would rather trust a man or a woman to fulfil a task, a higher percentage of respondents indicated that they would trust a man rather than a woman, especially on security and military issues.

Finally, compared to other, similar surveys in other organizations, the proportion of respondents who selected “I do not want to respond” to several questions (including on demographics) was rather high. While this did not affect the statistical significance of the results, it was indicative of a guarded attitude, including possibly for fear of repercussion, as suggested by some interviewees.

EQ 2 (3): What are the key intended and unintended results of the OSCE's activities, policies, programmes and projects on gender equality within the Organization and in the participating States?

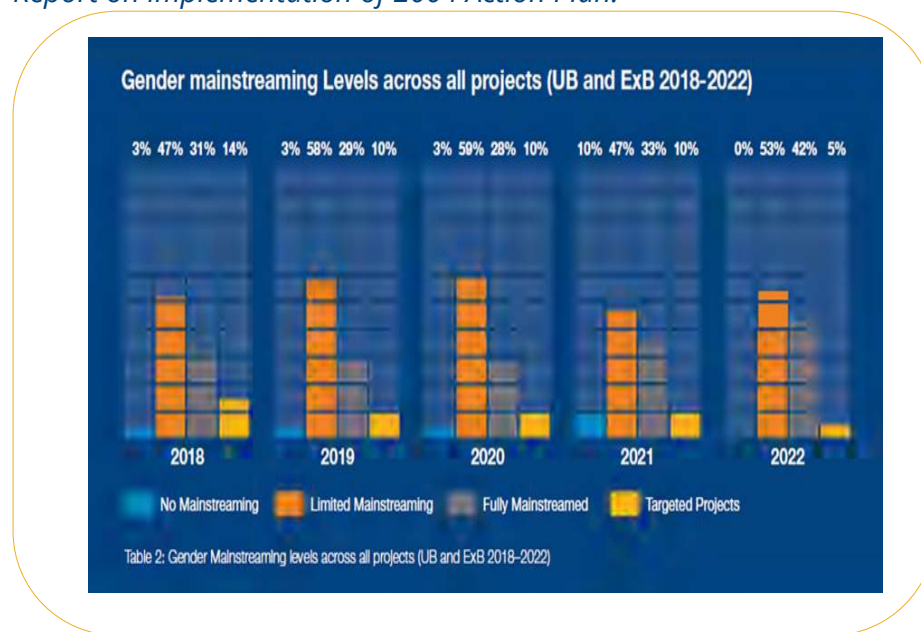
- ✓ **Finding 13:** The OSCE has recorded tangible results in terms of gender mainstreaming of projects during the evaluated period.

The Gender Marker System

The OSCE projects’ gender mainstreaming and/or contribution to gender equality is indicated by a gender marker, assigned by the project authors, and reviewed by the OSCE Programme and Evaluation Support Unit (supported by the GIP) when it comes to projects from field operations, the Secretariat and RFoM. The marker was introduced in January 2020 as a tool to reflect the ambitions to contribute to, and the actual contribution to, gender

mainstreaming/equality. The annual progress reports on the implementation of the 2004 Gender Action Plan show a consistent increase in the number and the degree to which the projects are gender mainstreamed. Up until 2021, the gender markers of the projects (ranging from GM-0 (not gender mainstreamed), to GM-2 (partially gender mainstreamed) and GM-3 (fully gender mainstreamed or gender-targeted) have been progressing (see Figure 9), although in 2021 there was a rebound of non-mainstreamed (GM0) projects. In 2022, however, the share of gender-targeted projects fell from 10 per cent to 5 per cent. At the same time, the percentage of fully gender mainstreamed and targeted projects slightly increased.³⁹

Figure 9: Gender Mainstreaming Trends. Source: 2022 Annual Progress Report on implementation of 2004 Action Plan.



According to the annual progress reports, the uneven trends in gender mainstreaming are largely attributed to the uneven capacity of the various Institutions and FOs to follow up on gender-related commitments and to integrate them deeply into the programming process during the design phase, and also to reflect them in the programme/project indicators.⁴⁰ This view is also borne out by the interviews conducted by the evaluation team.

“We no longer see any GM-0 projects, almost. There is growth in GM-2 and GM-3 projects. But the majority are GM-1 projects, which could have been G2 or G3, if gender analysis and a gender equality-focused project concept note had been pushed for earlier. To make this jump would not be so difficult.” (OSCE Staff)

Interviews and the analysis of project documents revealed that field operations find the feedback they receive from PESU and the GIP colleagues beneficial for increasing the level and quality of gender mainstreaming of the projects. They highlighted, however, that they were often pressed by deadlines from donors and the need to submit all programming documents on schedule, which limited their time for sound gender analysis at the project design stage. Further changes may not always be feasible once the project/programme proposal is submitted and approved. This is especially true given that GIP recommendations are not binding and can thus be sidelined under time pressure.

Lesson learned: *The timing of the gender marker review is key*

For the gender perspective to be even better integrated into programming, consultations with the PESU/GIP should take place earlier in the programming process. Interviewees reported that departments screened projects at the stage in the project cycle when most of the drafting and activity planning — which requires consultation and consensus with staff, actors, donors and stakeholders — was already completed.

Earlier consultations by programme managers with PESU/CPC would help build staff capacity and add substantial value to the projects, and would also reduce the burden on PESU/GIP to make multiple reviews or provide comments at a stage when they would be perceived as late criticism (notwithstanding the possibility for interaction and advice given downstream).

Finally, the available data concerns the number of projects associated with each marker, but it does not provide information about the funding under the respective project categories (GM-0, GM-1, GM-2, GM-3); neither does it inform, within a GM-1 or GM-2 project, what proportion of the total funding contributes to gender equality. As found in organizations with which the evaluation performed benchmarking, this type of data is at best extremely challenging to produce, and possibly misleading. The absence of aggregated data on gender-related expenditures or budget commitments of projects with

different gender markers, does not allow a comparison of the actual OSCE spending on gender-related initiatives across the years and limits the interpretation of the significance and actual impact of strongly gender mainstreamed projects.

- ✓ **Finding 14:** The OSCE has pioneered a vast number of innovative programmes and initiatives to support participating States in the implementation of their commitments, but these initiatives often lack visibility and are seldom cross-referenced among dimensions and executive structures. The lack of internal coherence and co-ordination limits the opportunities for synergies and scaling up of these innovative gender-equality initiatives across the Organization.

Within a gradually progressing, but still challenging gender-equality focused environment, many Secretariat departments, Institutions and field operations have designed and implemented promising initiatives in support of the participating States and their citizens. These initiatives often resemble 'modelling' experiments, by which the OSCE inspires its counterparts to:

- **adjust the applicable normative frameworks through convening and facilitating dialogue, and through the provision of advocacy, advice and expertise for gender-targeted legislation, regulatory acts, and policy; or (more rarely) through the inclusion of gender considerations in**

other sectors' normative frameworks (e.g., anticorruption, policing, etc.); and

- **experiment with new models of public service and/or public goods delivery (modelling) in all fields of action of the OSCE (e.g., energy, services to victims of crime including violence against women and girls, policing and police training, etc.).**

Both approaches may go hand in hand, or separately. In some cases, the projects also generate knowledge and data to inspire both normative frameworks and modelled services/approaches. Most projects supported by the OSCE in the pS are combining relevant expertise, advocacy, advice, facilitation, and capacity-building, while also respecting their political mandates and priorities.

To this end, all OSCE structures have deployed varied, and often innovative, initiatives to sensitize and galvanize staff's commitment to the GAP. The 2021 Annual Progress GAP Report lists no less than 11 OSCE-wide initiatives, which are only the tip of the iceberg since Institutions and field operations also make their own efforts. The 2022 Annual Progress Report identifies 13 major gender-related initiatives as 'key successes' for the Organization.

The evaluation-related field visits and the analysis of gender-mainstreamed projects led by the Secretariat and the OSCE Institutions yielded many promising examples. They are not exhaustive, as many other UB and ExB projects exist throughout the Organization. Most of these examples, however, come not from gender-mainstreamed but from gender-targeted projects. The

evaluation found that OSCE project officers rarely shared experiences and best practices, especially across field operations and Institutions. It is commendable, however, that ODIHR has started sharing and promoting some of its good practices and valuable learning generated through its major gender-related project and initiatives, experience from which all OSCE executive structures could benefit. PESU's 'Network of Project Practitioners' is another example of a mechanism where best best practices are shared across executive structures, including on gender.

The evaluation sampled several examples that yield particular learning. Two of them are the current gender-targeted flagship projects of the OSCE, namely the GIP's *Women and Men Innovating and Networking for Gender Equality* and ODIHR's *Capitalizing on the Human Dimension Mandate to Advance Gender Equality* projects.⁴¹

Women and Men Innovating and Networking for Gender Equality (WIN)

The WIN project (launched on July 1st 2019 and extended until December 31st 2025 with a budget of €5,8 million), is led and implemented by the OSCE Secretariat's Gender Issues Programme (GIP). The project is financed through extra budgetary contributions and builds on a number of OSCE/GIP knowledge products, including the results of the OSCE-led *Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women* conducted by the GIP in 2019.⁴²

WIN can be qualified as a gender-targeted umbrella, a catalyst project, which is both in- and outwards oriented. It acts as an accelerator for

other initiatives, as a capacity-building and promotional project for women's empowerment, through the generation of knowledge, bespoke tools, learning, advocacy, networking and campaigning. As such, it has the potential to bridge many of the gaps identified previously in the OSCE's gender-equality and mainstreaming infrastructure, as well as in the gender-equality infrastructure of the participating States.

To date, the project has recorded promising results by contributing to the development of legal frameworks and policy documents in several participating States,⁴³ generating baseline studies, producing and conveying knowledge, developing communication strategies and unrolling social media campaigns. WIN has also covered planning and programmatic activities, such as mapping exercises and needs assessments. Key thematic areas include violence against women; women, peace and security; and women's participation in economic and environmental issues. For instance, a comprehensive mapping of women resource centres and other integrated services to survivors of gender-based violence was conducted in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. Under WIN, a project on domestic violence in Tajikistan was also equipped with mapping and a training-of-trainers' module, which beneficiaries and stakeholders found particularly helpful. However, such positive precedents have not yet been leveraged or multiplied to create stronger synergies between the WIN project and other initiatives in the Secretariat, the Institutions and the field operations.

A recent mid-term evaluation of the WIN project indicated that it had the potential and capacity to intervene at a strategic level, allowing it

to support other OSCE UB gender-focused initiatives. The mid-term evaluation found that *"One of the strongest advantages of the project is its capacity to demonstrated that gender is not only a dimension of the OSCE's work, but a decisive factor in achieving effectiveness in comprehensive security (e.g. role of women in Ukraine's NAP implementation, territorial security, support provided to people to survive in communities, etc.)."*⁴⁴ However, interviews conducted for this evaluation with programme officers from other executive indicated that the expertise and innovative ideas of the WIN project need to be better promoted across the Organization, leveraged and scaled up. Triangulation of project documentation and interviews with stakeholders from various perspectives showed that the project management burden for WIN has been multiplied by particularly stringent donor constraints (e.g., strict activity earmarking and implementation of activities within exceedingly short timeframes after late disbursement of engaged extrabudgetary funds), and general under-funding of the project (around 50 per cent at the end of 2022). Some GIP interlocutors saw a trade-off between management of the WIN project and their regular support functions, even though the WIN has increased the human resources of the GIP and is contributing to the UB objectives of the Programme.

The evaluation also found that even if not all necessary funds had been raised, the WIN project had the capacity to prioritize and leverage the outputs that are interconnected with other OSCE initiatives and work towards achieving stronger organization-wide outcomes.

Capitalizing on the Human Dimension Mandate to Advance Gender Equality (CHANGE)

ODIHR's CHANGE project (which started on 1 June 2022, is slated to end on 1 July 2024, with a budget of €3,4 million) is a policy and innovation gender-targeted initiative seeking to strengthen the individual and collective impact of policies and social norms empowering women in democratic institutions to apply gender transformative approaches, to close the gender gap, to promote women's human rights and to ensure women's safety. The project engages politicians; parliamentarians; representatives of national and local government, as well as of public institutions; members of election administration offices, parliamentary committees, existing working groups, the judiciary and other professional associations; civil society representatives, especially women's groups (including those working with diverse under-represented groups); academia and media representatives; and members of National Gender Equality Mechanisms. The project also works with traditional, religious and minority communities in target participating States.

Within the OSCE structures, the project co-operates and establishes synergies with field operations, and with the Secretariat's GIP. Externally, it seeks to co-ordinate and build collaborative efforts with other international organizations, such as the UN and the CoE. One of the main expected outcomes (at the individual level) is that "Women and men within project beneficiary groups from target pS have improved capacities and skills to shift negative attitudes". At the

institutional level, the project aims to support democratic institutions, the security sector and the judiciary. It does so through the promotion of gender-sensitive policies and women's rights, among other approaches.

To date, the CHANGE project has delivered capacity-building training for women on justice and on gender-responsive justice systems, including by facilitating learning and exchanges for existing associations of women-judges. Gender mainstreaming in the justice system, including through moot court activities and the design of capacity-building curricula for gender inclusiveness, has been another notable achievement. Importantly, the project has been designed with monitoring tools to document the progress.

The project team reported some challenges related to the lack of a shared understanding of the essence of 'gender equality' both in a cross-sectoral sense and when facing overlapping discrimination, when several vulnerability traits are combined. The project has learned over its lifetime that gender empowerment tends to disproportionately benefit dominant groups (ethnically, socially, etc., depending on country/context). It has also concluded, based on observation and analysis, that political parties are one of the important drivers of gender discrimination and violence, as well as an impediment for the reversal of these practices. This presents an important operational challenge for achieving women's enhanced involvement in decision-making.

Women Resources Centres Project (POiD, Tajikistan)

Another innovative and gender-targeted project that is deemed successful, is being implemented by the OSCE in Tajikistan. The Programme Office in Dushanbe has been supporting the work of Women Resources Centres (WRCs) since 2004. Over the years, the geographic scope of the project has expanded and the number of WRCs increased, reaching 15 in 2019. As of 2023, 13 operational WRCs are supported by the OSCE in Tajikistan. POiD is implementing this ExB project through implementing partnership agreements with several CSOs involved in the management of the WRCs. The project's main goal is to support the Government of Tajikistan in assisting victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, mainly rural and disabled women, and to rebuild their lives by providing psychosocial counselling, free legal aid, and capacity-building, while raising the population's awareness on issues of domestic violence and violence against women. Direct observations during a field visit enabled the evaluation team to identify some of the project benefits, in terms of girls' access to school and training, increased understanding and government support towards survivors of domestic violence, integration of the specific needs of women for economic empowerment (e.g., legal and social services), empowerment of survivors as managers in the resource centres, increased reporting of violence against women and domestic violence to the police by the WRCs, and, more generally, an enhanced knowledge of women of their rights.

“The Women Resources Centres Project is remarkable. Other organizations can't do this because the Centers are located in different regions outside the capital. Because of the civil war, but also due to the lack of awareness raising campaigns, women did not know about their rights and gender issues. After the launch of the WRCs, the level of understanding is much higher. A very good achievement by the OSCE.” (Local counterpart)

The WRCs are optimized as they are well connected to one another and exchange experience and good practices with each other. The OSCE is connecting the WRCs with complementary initiatives (including the work done on the new law on domestic violence; the emergence of women police officers specialized on domestic violence; government-led training centres; and the EU-funded worldwide Spotlight Initiative against gender-based violence)⁴⁵. As a result, the WRCs have transitioned from a (sometimes challenging) relationship of co-existence with traditions, religions and government structures, towards a partnership in which they enjoy recognition, thus making their beneficiaries' empowerment more acceptable to society. Yet, the evaluation found that many of these achievements depended on the individuals involved in the respective Centres, particularly the directors. In tightly bound communities, some interlocutors reported cases of nepotism. Questions were raised about the 13 Centres' ability to bright about change on a larger scale for a population of close to 10 million people in regions where women's economic and social empowerment remains a challenge. Finally, the evaluation did not see evidence of lessons learned from the WRCs experience being actively communicated to other field operations in terms of knowledge and

reproducible practices. This is a missed opportunity for the OSCE to leverage the rich experience gained through the WRC project for use by other field operations.

In parallel with the WRCs, POiD runs other projects supporting women's political participation and youth engagement in political dialogue, which offer great complementarities to the Resource Centres. The evaluation team found concurring testimonies that the conjunction of all these projects helped keep gender equality high on the agenda of POiD, and maintain its dialogue with local authorities and with representatives of the Government of Tajikistan.

OSCE gender-mainstreamed projects with high results potential

The evaluation also identified a few gender-mainstreamed projects with high results potential.

In **Central Asia**, the OSCE is currently implementing the second phase of its **Women and Water** project. This project is an example of a lead activity on gender-responsive environmental and natural resources' governance. It implements innovative activities to support women as leaders and mediators on natural resources conflicts, and has developed a manual on gender-sensitive water governance for national representatives in Central Asia and Afghanistan.⁴⁶ The project is complemented by an online mentoring network. According to a water management expert interviewed by the evaluation team, this project is highly valuable because it is intuitive, zooming in from international standards to their application in the specific field of

water management in this region. It is also very practical, as it includes hands-on tools and checklists, and covers concrete organizational and financial issues, which increases the applicability of the manual. Importantly, in addition to equipping practitioners with a concrete tool, the **Women and Water** project approaches water management challenges from a gender perspective, which is highly relevant to the sector and the communities.

In South-Eastern Europe, the Mission to Skopje decisively contributed to the introduction of a gender-sensitive regulatory impact assessment with its UB project *Supporting Democratic Governance Processes*, providing the necessary expertise, training, advocacy and advice. However, this project ran for one year only, with a budget of around €235,000, and the gender-sensitive regulatory impact assessment was only one of seven components. While the interviewees considered this component outstanding, they were concerned that without a more systematic support for a broader variety of draft laws' assessments, there would not be sufficient capacity to generalize the practice.

“With the support of the OSCE, we had an intensive seminar to learn and adjust the approach based on a good practice from Montenegro, then we prepared the tailored manual for North Macedonia, finally we picked two draft laws to pilot the approach, and concluded with a presentation of the fine-tuned approach to the relevant stakeholders, including the relevant Ministries and the Parliament. The results were very satisfying with a variety of participants, who

became interested in applying the model in their respective fields of work.” (Local counterpart in North Macedonia)

“The new Gender Equality Law of North Macedonia foresees a new body: a Secretariat in the Government, with 15 staff members, whose role would be gender-sensitive regulatory impact assessment, and clearance of draft laws, re: gender sensitive language, gender marker regarding distribution of capacity, participation and finances. The OSCE supports the implementation of this provision.” (Local counterpart in North Macedonia)

There are many other examples of innovatively gender-mainstreamed projects in the Institutions and the field operations. For instance, in the area of anticorruption, in North Macedonia, an entire component of a project was devoted to sextortion (extortion of sexual favours in exchange for the delivery of a public service), a highly gender-specific form of corruption. This component built on Secretariat-led knowledge products, such as the 2021 GIP paper *Gender and Corruption: What do we know*, which addresses the important question of how men and women are impacted differently by corruption, focusing on areas that are relevant to the OSCE mandate.⁴⁷

Overall, all these OSCE initiatives open doors for agents of change locally. However, their achievements are often not shared with participating States, either because of uncertainty on how they might be received (e.g., on the issue of violence against women and domestic violence, which elicits diverse feedback from some States), or because staff sometimes still lack the skills to link micro-level results with higher-level outcomes. For instance, progress and self-evaluation

reports account for implemented activities, present changes (e.g., the number of uniformed police women trained, percentage of the implementation of national strategic documents, etc.) but do not always elucidate how these were achieved, or which activities have contributed to the changes.

4.3 Results’ sustainability and plausibility of impact

EQ 4: What is the likelihood that the benefits of the OSCE’s gender-targeted and mainstreamed actions will be maintained for a reasonably long period of time after the respective interventions phase out?

✓ **Finding 15:** The initiatives implemented by the OSCE over the past five years have demonstrated promising results, sometimes in the long run, but none have reached a critical size, and many lack a strategic approach, reducing the plausibility of sustainable impact.

The initiatives and projects presented above of gender equality support in the pS often constitute high-potential models. Many are replicable and highly appreciated by the counterparts, and in some instances the counterparts have made strong commitments to continue running, or to even reproduce, these models beyond the end of the OSCE interventions. For instance, in North Macedonia, the Ministry of Interior committed to taking over the mentoring programme for women police officers after several years of successful

modelling and persistent negotiations. This example demonstrates that some OSCE initiatives can be perpetuated in the long run.

“There was good OSCE expertise witnessed during the mentoring programme. It covered several topics:

- *Self-confidence of women police officers*
- *Improving interpersonal skills of women police officers*
- *Ability and determination of women not to stop at first obstacle.”*

(Local official in North Macedonia)

“The OSCE has supported mentoring for women in the public administration, reproducing the first OSCE initiative in the police service. We plan to take it over ourselves, expand it, and continue forever, under the leadership of our [responsible Ministry’s] Resource Center.” *(Local official in North Macedonia)*

For the OSCE model projects and initiatives to contribute to tangible impact, they would need to be reflected in the normative frameworks of a country, and replicated to form a body of capable individuals and institutions acting as change agents. The evaluation team did not, however, come across significant evidence or examples of scaling up of the OSCE’s gender-related model initiatives. Even when modelling was accompanied by improvements to the legal frameworks (laws and/or regulations), the link between the two was not entirely clear — especially, from the onset. Gender-equality initiatives also often failed to leverage other actions run by the OSCE in the same country/region. For instance, the work on the Women Resources Centres in Tajikistan was not taken up for the work on the domestic violence law of the country (which could have provided a legal framework to multiply and

expand the WRCs as vetted service providers), or for the support of national policies in rural development areas (which could have been an area of support with strong gender mainstreaming).

Lesson learned: *Scaling up from modelling to systemic changes requires gender mainstreaming beyond individual projects.*

The evaluation team identified a pattern of high-potential models and on-demand support to normative frameworks, which still lack the systems approach (a transformative approach, aiming for system-wide and durable changes in a given institution or sector), which is particularly suited to address gender inequalities that are often multi-structural and multi-factor. A systems approach is also best fitted to tackle some of the structural factors that endanger the gender equality work of the OSCE’s field operations, as identified by interviewees and by survey respondents: corruption, government changes, politization/lack of functional independence of the public service, prejudices and discrimination in society and in the public sector, cultural bias, and traditional gender roles.

By linking pilot models and projects (e.g., a mentoring initiative or service to women survivors and/or women entrepreneurs) to synchronized work on legal and policy frameworks, capacity-building and public outreach, the OSCE’s support would have a much higher potential for impact and

sustainability. Currently, small-scale, isolated initiatives create great precedents which may, or may not, inspire national counterparts and other international partners to take up the OSCE's models and apply them systematically. The OSCE, however, may have a stronger comparative advantage than other international organizations to take the lead and capitalize on the success of some of its projects, leveraging its long-term presence and well-established partnerships from the leadership to the technical levels in many institutions.

Another shortfall of these relatively isolated modelling initiatives is that they sometimes fail to initiate genuine, cross-cutting mainstreaming, or to integrate a robust gender perspective in the support of policy- and law-making in all sectors where the OSCE is active. Modest as it is, the gender-sensitive regulatory impact assessment project in North Macedonia comes closest to a genuine gender mainstreaming support provided to a participating State. However, this project was not applied as a method by all branches of the Mission, or for all laws and policies which it supports in the country.

“The OSCE has provided very relevant advice on the legislative framework, especially on the draft gender equality law. It is, however, weaker in terms of mainstreaming gender in its support to all national policies and strategies.” (Senior civil servant in a pS)

Most of the interventions, which the evaluation team analysed within the framework of this evaluation, were found to be gender-responsive but not gender transformative in design. Many OSCE interventions,

including gender-targeted (GM-3) projects, support women in coping with and/or overcoming the damages and inequities caused by structural barriers and prejudices. While this is an inherent part of the gender equality work, which is highly valued by the partners and by the end-beneficiaries, the OSCE and its partners could work further towards the elimination of these barriers and their root causes.

Lesson learned: Supporting women's political participation dissociated from violence against women considerations can have unintended effects.

In one location, the evaluation team found that a field operation implemented a successful initiative to promote inclusive governance and the participation of women in political life. However, one beneficiary reported having been exposed to gender-based violence due to her political activity. Despite the strong leadership and familiarity with OSCE-led training activities on women's empowerment, and on remedies to violence against women and domestic violence, she found herself unable to seek redress, because she was not supported by the political and professional environment where she worked. She also felt that using formal remedies would expose her to repercussions, both personally and as a political activist.

While the OSCE was in no way responsible for this occurrence, it shows that more cross-cutting gender mainstreaming and **cross-pollination** with **OSCE's support to inclusive**

governance, to gender-responsive policing, and to the services for victims of violence against women at the community level, which was missing in this case, could have generated practicable avenues for remedies.

The OSCE mentoring programmes for women were found to be particularly valuable in the short run for their beneficiaries. Yet, most of them are still focused mainly on training of women only, even though the problem is not always created by women. Interviews indicated that women in some locations often face difficulties with acceptance, unlike their male colleagues, within the institutions where they work. The evaluation team found that partner institutions appreciated the OSCE's responsive support offered to women in dealing with, and sometimes bearing, such behaviours but do not seem to propose meaningful avenues to suppress them.

According to interviewees, some of the key factors that curtail the successful implementation of gender transformative approaches, aiming for system changes, are the lack of dedicated resources and skills, and the perception (often, but not always grounded in facts) that such approaches would require large-scale interventions that are beyond the funding and management capacities of the OSCE. Unlike other areas, where the OSCE's field operations sometimes run large and high-budget projects, there seem to be some reservations at the leadership level to invest in gender transformative projects, even when resources might be available for such initiatives. (e.g., through the WIN project).

“Tying the mentoring-for-women programmes with support for the prevention of discrimination and corruption in the civil service would require the kind of funding which we cannot obtain, and it would be a complex project we cannot handle.” (OSCE staff)

Another factor relates to some shortfalls in the gender analysis (despite the prescriptions of the Gender Action Plan, even in its preamble). Such analysis and gender-mainstreaming considerations often appear too late in the programming process. Monitoring of, and maintaining the focus on the gender angle during project implementation is also lacking. This increases the risk that even projects marked as GM-2 or GM-3 might be ill-informed. They may respond to wrongly identified gender-related challenges, or involve the wrong actors.

“In the OSCE, the main weakness is the gender-sensitive thematic sector analysis. What other organizations do, typically, is hire an expert to do the analysis for programming. They try to ensure that these thematic experts have a gender background, or that they have a gender expert in the team (...) But in the OSCE, we have staff in place who do this job, and they don't have seed funding to pay for a study before developing a programme. Gender Equality and Women Empowerment is not always coming naturally to the majority of the staff, nor to the partners with whom they negotiate the project concept.” (OSCE staff)

“The needs assessments are just not done (or not done properly), because the demand comes from the host country extremely late, then each project builds on the previous one (to keep the posts and

the people their job) within a very short timeframe: OSCE staff don't have time to (re)assess and redirect, including to mainstream gender equality)." (OSCE staff)

Finally, another adverse factor is the difficulty for OSCE projects to adjust to a rapidly changing environment and emerging needs. According to 42 per cent of the survey respondents, this is particularly important as gender equality is facing contradictory trends in their area of work (regressing in some ways, progressing in others): this is characteristic of fluid environments requiring agility. Flexibility is also required to promptly react to the opportunities created by the gradually increased interest and awareness of partner authorities, civil society organizations, and societies, as well as by the emergence of gender leaders among them — a decisive but fluttering trend, if not promptly supported. One third (35 per cent) of the survey respondents found that gender equality was mostly progressing, and quoted conducive factors such as awareness, followed by leadership-related factors. The programmatic staff members who took the survey assessed that 88 per cent of their counterparts were sensitized to gender equality.

"Mainstreaming/targeting; sensitive/responsive/transformational: these concepts are not really used, but overall, colleagues recognize the difference. (...) It is difficult to match these concepts with our daily work; we need to work more on these issues." (OSCE staff)

"The situation in Tajikistan is changing rapidly and new ideas and requests are coming all the time from the government and donors. Doing amendments to project proposals,⁴⁸ however, is very time

consuming. The mission works with a lot of high-level officials, and there is not a lot of room for re-negotiations of the project proposal..." (OSCE staff)

Benchmarking: The EU's "cushion" and CoE's Action Plan-level funding

CoE

The CoE has an agreed Action Plans with a number of Member States hosting field operations. Within this Action Plans, the CoE and the (recipient) governments agree on proposed actions, which are prioritized as the key, or secondary, action within each pillar of the CoE (human rights, rule of law, democracy). Donors are invited to contribute in a "light earmarked" fashion: at Action Plan level, at pillar level, or at thematic level. Light earmarking and prioritization enable the CoE to direct funding towards the most pressing needs as pledged. Some gender-targeted or gender-mainstreamed actions are included in the high-priority sections of the Action Plan, which enables their direct funding, with a certain degree of flexibility.⁴⁹

✓ **Finding 16:** The OSCE has generated high value-added outputs in the gender equality portfolio, but their sustainability is often subject to donor interests and proactive resource mobilization.

As indicated earlier, a key condition for the OSCE's gender-targeted or mainstreamed projects and initiatives to deliver their potential is to be

(sufficiently) funded. Without appropriate funding, they cannot be expanded to the tipping point where they would contribute to systemic changes.

With some exceptions, such as the Women Resources Centres, the OSCE-led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women (finalized in 2019), and the CHANGE project, the evaluation found that the funding of GM-3 projects was rarely commensurate with their ambition and potential.

The WIN project has been underfunded, with only 50 per cent of its budget met by pledges by the end of 2022. In the sampled countries, most of the GM-2 and all GM-3 projects are funded by the UBs, which are modest compared to the potential ExB resource mobilization. The budgets of the GM-3 projects implemented in the sampled countries range from approximately €30,000 to €500,000 annually. Even the Women Resources Centres, an exceptionally well-endowed ExB project with expenditures of €3.2 million since 2010, still has a funding gap. Within the GM-2 projects, gender mainstreaming is often related to activities with limited funding — sometimes less than €10,000 per year. Despite the modest funding, OSCE staff have generated high added-value outputs, and sometimes outcomes, thanks to their expertise and persistence.

“Overall, the GM-3 projects do great, better than others — and we need to better promote their achievements, including within our department.” (OSCE staff)

The modest scale of the OSCE’s gender-related projects is sometimes compounded by the scarcity of joint work with other international organizations (UNFPA, UNWOMEN, CoE and EU). While the OSCE’s work is coherent with that of other international actors and there are no contradictions, the evaluation found examples where the OSCE and other IOs did not co-ordinate efforts. This has led to missed opportunities to leverage expertise and scale up achievements in the recipient countries. There have been, however, cases in which strong synergies have been leveraged: a positive example is the OSCE-led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women, where several UN agencies have been very active and directly contributed both as donors as well as members of a high-level advisory group, and by providing expertise and joint messaging on social media.

Examples of good periodic meetings and discussions between OSCE programme officers and representatives of UN agencies were witnessed by the evaluation team in Tajikistan. These have been initiated and pro-actively implemented by POiD project officers. This OSCE initiative has been greatly appreciated by the UN partners as a helpful forum for co-ordination and experience- and information-sharing.

Transitioning to fully-fledged gender mainstreaming also requires donor support. The OSCE has not always strongly advocated with donors for gender equality. Contrary to an assumption often made in international co-operation, gender equality and gender mainstreaming have not proven to be effective arguments for donor mobilization, especially for security programmes. Gender-targeted

projects have been challenging to fund, and gender-mainstreamed projects are deemed “good to have”, but this is not always a decisive argument for attracting donor funding.

“Prioritization is the choice of the donors, who have political motives, and gender equality often drops to the bottom of the list. We depend on donors to actually implement our GE planned results.” (OSCE staff)

In some countries with OSCE field operations, these facts could be explained by the perception that projects which strongly support gender equality may not be well accepted by local authorities or by society. The positive precedents and celebration of successful GM-2 and GM-3 projects could and should, however, help temper this perception, but results need to be promoted and receive sufficient visibility.

“My former field operation had no ExB projects targeting gender as a topic. I tried to do that, and was not successful (i.e., a project proposal on women’s inheritance rights was not supported by donors). I thought that it would be successful, but found no donors interested in it. Probably, the way forward is stronger GM-2 rather than GM-3 projects.” (OSCE staff)



5. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of evidence and identified findings, this chapter brings together some broader reflections on the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan.

Relevance and added value

CONCLUSION 1: The OSCE's commitments to gender equality are enshrined in a policy framework that guides the Organization (the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality) and has been further operationalized by the executive structures in gender-action roadmaps. However, leadership roles and accountabilities for fostering gender-equality awareness and understanding among staff need to be further encouraged and strengthened.

While the 2004 GAP is not optimal and may be considered outdated in comparison with some benchmarked gender action plans of other international organizations, it remains a valid guiding document for the OSCE.

The roll out of the Action Plan through gender roadmaps by the OSCE executive structures remains uneven because it is contingent on individual champions, and largely because the existing structures (e.g., PESU, GIP, DHR) lack authority, as well as financial and human resources, to strictly follow up on the quality and regular updates of the GAPs.

There is a need for middle managers, heads of departments and units to take responsibility and be accountable for the periodic updates of their respective units' gender action plans and roadmaps. There is also untapped potential and underutilization of the Gender Focal Points and GFP network.

Effectiveness and coherence

CONCLUSION 2: The OSCE has achieved tangible results on gender mainstreaming in its projects, but progress is often hindered by differences in the understanding and the level of priority placed on gender-equality considerations by some managers, as well as by some shortfalls in the gender-specific knowledge among staff members. The resources in the specialized units (the Gender Issues Programme and the Programming and Evaluation Support Unit) and the governance systems for the implementation of the Action Plan commitments are not aligned with the ambitions and not always used to their full potential, which impedes deeper and more sustainable changes.

There has been good progress in the gender markers' statistics, and there is now a general consensus among OSCE staff that gender mainstreaming is part of any OSCE job. There have also been sustained efforts to build the knowledge and capacity of staff to implement the OSCE's gender commitments and to support the participating States in doing so. However, the understanding of some fundamental concepts, such as gender sensitivity, gender responsiveness, gender transformative results, as well as capacity for gender analysis, are still lacking in some executive structures.

The OSCE management structures and governance systems have increasingly facilitated the integration of a gender perspective in the OSCE's policies, programmes and projects. However, some of them are under-resourced to consistently follow up on commitments by all executive structures. For example, the support functions of the PESU and the GIP are not always effectively engaged by the executive structures, and usually are consulted or intervene too far down the line in the project development process with gender mainstreaming advice. While PESU staff review the ExB projects of the organization, they do not oversee the Inclusion of gender-related considerations in the UB programmes of the executive structures

CONCLUSION 3: The OSCE has helped participating States and their civil society organizations with pioneering programming approaches that meet their gender-related commitments by designing high potential models (e.g., models of service delivery, of legal and regulatory work, or of public policy planning) jointly with partners and beneficiaries. However, the low enthusiasm of some donors to fund gender-related projects limits the full utilization of the OSCE's potential.

The OSCE Secretariat, Institutions and field operations have modelled innovative, high value-added approaches, building on the comparative advantage of the Organization. These are highly appreciated by counterparts and beneficiaries, presenting a high potential for expansion and generalization — provided the Organization and its partners could manage a transition towards a comprehensive/systems approach, increased coherence and

information sharing/cross-fertilization between dimensions and thematic areas in terms of gender mainstreaming.

Plausibility of impact

CONCLUSION 4. The ambition to achieve sustainable change related to gender awareness within the Organization has led to gradual progress among OSCE staff in embracing gender equality as part of their mission; however, the impact of this increased gender awareness on changes in the organizational culture of the respective executive structures, and on achieving gender equity, has been uneven.

As foreseen by the Action Plan, gender-equality training, sustained efforts to hire and retain women in all locations and at all ranks, as well as sensitization towards and promotion of the OSCE's commitments, regulatory frameworks and recent Staff Instructions, have all contributed to progress towards gender parity within the Organization, and to a lower tolerance for gender-specific misconduct.

The gender parity in the Organization, where achieved, needs to be sustained, and further improved at the middle management and Heads -of-institution level, as well as in the first dimension where women remain under-represented. The organizational culture in certain locations and executive structures also remains vulnerable to abrasive management styles and to gender-based abuses, which disproportionately affect women. The zero-tolerance policy requires better promotion and staff sensibilization in order to achieve its objectives.

Results sustainability

CONCLUSION 5. The OSCE's gender-related projects and initiatives have demonstrated promising results, sometimes in the long run, but none have reached a critical size, and many lack a strategic approach, reducing the plausibility of sustainable impact. Sustainability of achieved results is further dependent on donor interest and proactive resource mobilization.

The OSCE has implemented strong flagship gender-targeted projects and has applied various innovative approaches to gender mainstreaming. These, however need to be scaled up, shared and promoted across executive structures. Achieved results and success stories also need to be better demonstrated and gain more visibility in the participating States to showcase the OSCE's capacity, potential and reliability to promote gender equality.



6. Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made for the Gender Issues Programme and other departments and units in the OSCE Secretariat (DHR, PESU and Legal Affairs).

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Secretary General should strongly encourage heads of Institutions and field operations to establish a mechanism for regular updates and follow-ups on the implementation of the gender roadmaps/action plans of their respective departments and units.

This could be done via an IOM to all Heads of Institutions and of field operations, specifying accountabilities for periodic reports and links to the performance discussions and appraisals.

Reasoning

The gender roadmaps, thanks to their overall quality, form a sound basis to plan and programme in a gender transformative way, in accordance with the OSCE 2004 Gender Action Plan. Even though all executive structures claim to have developed gender roadmaps or action plans by 2022, there remain some shortfalls, especially in terms of baseline data and specification of targets to allow for reporting on progress. The OSCE structures need to address these shortcomings, to equip themselves better, and on a level playing field, for programming with gender transformative vision wherever applicable.

Expected benefits

Following up regularly, beyond annual reporting on the 2004 Action Plan to the Gender Issues Programme, would ensure that gender equality remains high on the agenda of the OSCE's staff, and that roadmap commitments are implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Gender Issues Programme as well as ODIHR should step up the existing practice of developing knowledge products and good practices related to gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the OSCE-specific areas of expertise in collaboration with relevant thematic departments, and better promote these internally.

Reasoning

The OSCE has developed excellent knowledge and knowledge products (e.g., publications) through individual projects (WIN, CHANGE, projects by RFoM, HCNM, Secretariat departments, and projects led by some field operations). However, and bearing in mind the high turnover, staff are not always well aware of the existing expertise in the Organization, nor of the developed knowledge products. Meanwhile, OSCE staff, although having the enthusiasm for gender mainstreaming, often find themselves short of specific, tested ideas on how to mainstream gender in fairly specialized and technical topics, as well as in male-dominated programming areas. The Gender Focal Points are not used to their full potential by project officers. There is an untapped potential for the GFPs for more effective horizontal collaboration and knowledge-sharing at a regional level.

Expected benefits

The GIP (possibly through the WIN project), is well equipped to serve as a repository and animator of publications and learnings. Broader availability of such knowledge materials would support the development of training modules. By further promoting relevant knowledge products among staff, the WIN project would gain more visibility. Issue-specific gender capacities would gradually progress: when analysing problems through a gender lens, OSCE officials will acquire deeper understanding. As they then deploy and test gender approaches within their respective areas of expertise, they will further develop gender-related know-how.

Such progress would in turn contribute to increased coherence in messaging across the OSCE and better co-ordinated fundraising approaches towards donors and partners.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The PESU should advise executive structures, in line with their specific mandates, to develop internal processes and procedures (e.g., SOPs, or other internal instructions or processes), for both UB programmes and ExB projects to allow for the integration of gender analysis and gender consideration early in the programme and project design stages.

Reasoning

This approach would provide managers and programme officers with space and capacities to institutionalize gender mainstreaming in the planning and design processes, rather than to only address it at the

project level and implementation stage. The current organizational knowledge related to gender equality does not always feed into the project designs at the right moment or early enough. The project proposals (for both UB and ExB projects) tend to integrate gender considerations too late in the process. They lack a gender lens in problem analysis, and as a result do not always link the gender-mainstreamed actions to the overall project. Currently, gender-mainstreamed actions tend to be stand-alone. This results in suboptimal gender marking, even when there is a potential for much stronger mainstreaming and marking, accordingly.

There is also limited donor enthusiasm for gender-targeted projects. Yet, donors may be more interested in funding projects that produce system-level changes based on robust knowledge. There are opportunities to build on the modelling already practiced by some OSCE executive structures and to scale up good practices (e.g., the WIN and CHANGE projects).

Systematic approaches⁵⁰ can be applied in any thematic area within the mandate of the respective Institutions, field operations, and Secretariat departments and units. The Heads of the respective executive structures should bear the accountability for the implementation of gender-related commitments with regard to the organizational culture, ExB project and UB programmatic work.

Expected benefits

If projects are gender mainstreamed from the start, building on robust gender analysis and integrating transformative actions which affect

the structural reasons for gender inequalities, they may be more attractive for donors due to the potentially higher impact and sustainability. This could yield more fundraising opportunities for larger projects, including cross-dimensional ones. It would also boost increased, more relevant, and more powerful gender mainstreaming — and in turn, better results on gender markers: such projects would qualify as G2 or even G3, and could plausibly affect gender transformation.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Department of Human Resources with support from the Ethics Co-ordinator, the Office of Internal Oversight and the Gender Issues Programme, should develop a stronger training programme on Staff Instruction SI21 on a Professional Working Environment, rolled out to all executive structures, along with training on addressing violations early on.

RECOMMENDATION 5: DHR, with support from OIO, should conduct periodic surveys to monitor the level of understanding and implementation of relevant staff instructions aimed at preventing gender discrimination, sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation.

Reasoning

The evaluation identified an urgent need for specific training aimed at a better understanding and proper implementation of Staff Instruction SI21 for the achievement of an effective zero-tolerance policy at the OSCE. Regular monitoring of the level of understanding

of the SIs through periodic surveys would indicate if there is a need for eventual updates and more precise formulation of certain provisions.

Expected benefits

A dedicated training on SI21, rolled out to all executive structures, will ensure that sexual harassment elicits a clear, specific and adequate response from those responsible and concerned. SI21 should be clearly understood by all levels in the Organization. This would contribute to a more effective implementation of the zero-tolerance policy and create a safer working environment for all. It will also empower victims to speak out and correct malpractice early.

A better understanding and implementation of the SIs will have a beneficial effect for all staff and may contribute to higher performance and motivation, and to the retention of women professionals at all levels.

RECOMMENDATION 6: DHR should develop more effective strategies for achieving gender balance in the positions and levels currently lagging behind on the representation of women, coupled with incentives to attract more female candidates. The gender-equality questions for the hiring process should also be periodically updated and aligned, where necessary with the specificity of the post.

Reasoning

While an overall gender parity has been achieved in the OSCE, there are still some differences depending on the dimension, the posting

levels, and the posting locations. One of the key obstacles identified by supervisors in recruiting a gender-balanced workforce at all levels, is the lack of qualified women applicants, particularly for seconded positions. Many have opinions on the root causes and dynamics at play, but these have not been fully explored.

The thematic units within the Secretariat, the Institutions and the field operations should research and emulate successful practices applied in some field operations (e.g., POiD in Tajikistan), as well as the practices of other international organizations. Bringing the reasoning further, a more comprehensive career path mapping, using a gender lens, could help identify the factors that may lead to imbalance or inequity between male and female staff members, at all stages of their engagement with the OSCE.

Expected benefits

An increased number of women applicants and stronger messages sent to seconding authorities would not preclude the final selection results, as men continue to stand the same chances.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Gender Issues Programme, supported by DHR and the human resources departments

across the FOs and Institutions, should strengthen the existing gender equality training courses and modules tailored to the specific needs and expectation of the OSCE's employees. Priority should be given to systematic training of the Gender Focal Points.

Reasoning

Existing gender equality training activities represent a sound foundation and have wide outreach. However, the evaluation found that some fundamental elements of gender equality and gender mainstreaming — such as the concepts 'gender-sensitive', 'gender-responsive', 'gender transformative', or 'gender mainstreaming vs. gender targeting' — are still not well mastered by staff. The evaluation showed the complementarity between gender advisers and other GFPs in supporting activities with gender-specific knowledge, skills and competencies. It also showed that the GFPs require more training (not all are trained as GFPs, or even in gender equality) and recognition.



7. Management Response and Action Plan

Area/Issue	Recommendation	Client	Accept (Yes/ No/ Partially)	Implementation Plan (if not accepted, add managements comments)	Implementation Date (estimate)
Accountability	1) <i>The Secretary General should strongly encourage Heads of Institutions and field operations to establish a mechanism for regular updates and follow-ups on the implementation of the gender roadmaps/action plans of their respective departments and units.</i>	SG	Yes	<p>The Secretary General will continue to exercise strong and active leadership in building sustainable gender awareness in the Organization, including through renewed, refined or newly developed gender action plans (GAPs) or roadmaps across the Organization.</p> <p>The status of implementation of these GAPs will be regularly reviewed and included in the Annual Progress Report of the SG to the PC. Whenever necessary, the Gender Issues Programme will continue providing technical advice and support.</p>	Ongoing
Gender knowledge	2) <i>The GIP as well as ODIHR should step up the existing practice of developing knowledge products and good practices related to gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the OSCE-specific areas of expertise in collaboration with relevant thematic departments, and better promote these internally.</i>	Gender Issues Programme	Partially	<p>The Gender Issues Programme takes note of this recommendation and will continue to explore the possibility to develop knowledge products in close cooperation with other departments, executive structures and field operations. The development of new knowledge products will be based on an analysis of current needs and trends and therefore it is not possible to predict the themes and volume of new products. Moreover, the development of further knowledge products is contingent on sufficient budget allocation under the Unified Budget. The lack of an approved UB severely limits the number of knowledge products that can be delivered.</p> <p>GIP will continue to promote existing knowledge products internally in particular via by direct email to GFPs network and directors as well as through dedicated coffee briefings and webinars for staff members at the secretariat and FOS. Moreover, these knowledge products remain accessible via the OSCE external website as well as on the WIN community platform.</p> <p>The ODIHR is planning the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inventory of ODIHR knowledge products which relates to gender mainstreaming and gender equality – ensure accessibility. 	Ongoing

		ODIHR	Yes	- Establish procedure which enables regular, internal awareness raising sessions on various topics of gender mainstreaming and gender equality in order to share good practices and explore new and existing knowledge products.	By end of 2024
Integrating gender analysis in project design	3) <i>The PESU should advise executive structures, in line with their specific mandates, to develop internal processes and procedures (e.g., SOPs, or other internal instructions or processes), for both UB programmes and ExB projects to allow for the integration of gender analysis and gender consideration early in the programme and project design stages.</i>	PESU	Yes	PESU, in coordination with GIP, will advise executive structures to integrate gender analysis and gender consideration early in the programme and project design stages (such as through the UB guidelines, internal SOPs for UB EXB planning and others).	Q3 2024
Implementation of SI21	4) <i>DHR, with support from the Ethics Coordinator, OIO and GIP, should develop a stronger training programme on Staff Instruction SI21 on a Professional Working Environment, rolled out to all executive structures, along with training on addressing violations early on.</i>	DHR	Conditional Yes	<p>There are already several mandatory training programmes for all OSCE officials, touching upon the topic of concern to this recommendation, including “I Know Gender: An Introduction to Gender Equality for UN Staff”, “OSCE Ethics Awareness Course” and “Working Harmoniously Together”. Furthermore, throughout the year, following the requests from ESs and based on their needs, or using the opportunity presented by different fora (conferences, townhalls, retreats, etc.) DHR independently or jointly with Ethics Coordinator, Informal Dispute Resolution Officers, and OiO engages in training or increasing awareness of staff across the Organisation on different issues falling under the PWE umbrella. The latest joint with OiO effort has been to hold a training on conducting investigations for lay investigation teams in December 2023 (for ESs) and the forthcoming in March 2024 (for the Secretariat).</p> <p>Although DHR shares a general aspiration to develop additional, including more stronger, training programme for staff, in general, the ability of the Department to do so are constrained by the budgetary realities of OSCE. With the unified budget not being approved since 2021, DHR faces a critical lack of resources to absorb inflationary increases. In 2023, this had a significant negative implication on the learning and development area (L&D), with the budget for L&D being critically cut and several professional posts not filled in to generate the very much needed savings to close the budget deficit at the end of the year.</p> <p>Against this backdrop, DHR has initiated an independent review of its approach to staff development, the purpose of which is two-fold: a) to better align the learning offerings with the organizational priorities and related staff needs, as well as with new trends in learning and development, and particularly in e-learning; b) have a</p>	Q4 2024

				<p>basis for prioritization of spending of centralized funds for L&D, considering their scarcity.</p> <p>Furthermore, at the end of 2023, DHR created a Repository Programme (RP) with a view of mobilizing extra-budgetary (ExB) funds towards L&D, among other RP objectives.</p> <p>Conditional on the results of the independent review and success in mobilizing additional resources, DHR will implement the recommendation.</p>	
Monitoring implementation of SIs	5) <i>DHR, with support from OIO, should conduct periodic surveys to monitor the level of understanding and implementation of relevant Staff Instructions aimed at preventing gender discrimination, sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation.</i>	DHR	No	<p>DHR notes that a) it is the responsibility of each OSCE official to familiarize themselves with the OSCE regulatory framework and, where they need better understanding, to seek information from the relevant business unit, and b) efforts are continuously invested by DHR to engage key stakeholders of the Secretariat and ESs in process of consultations over the draft Staff Instructions and to provide guidance on the newly promulgated Staff Instructions through IOM, follow-up coffee/quarterly briefings, ad-hoc consultations, etc.</p> <p>In 2024, and informed by the results of the independent review initiated by DHR (mentioned above under Recommendation 4), DHR will continue with the practice of coffee briefings, including on SIs. In addition, in 2024, DHR is planning to review the list of mandatory training workshops and their regularity (if some are to be repeated). The mandatory trainings will include the pre- and post-tests to check the knowledge.</p>	
Gender parity	6) <i>DHR should develop more effective strategies for achieving gender balance in the positions and levels currently lagging behind on the representation of women, coupled with incentives to attract more female candidates. The gender-equality questions for the hiring process should also be periodically updated and aligned, where necessary with the specificity of the post.</i>	DHR	Partially	<p>DHR continues its efforts to achieve gender balance for positions at all levels, including by 1. re-circulating vacancies if they do not yield a good balance of gender, 2. ensuring shortlists of qualified candidates are balanced; and 3. ensuring gender balanced interview panels. The revisions to SI17 - currently in process aim to formalize the approach.</p> <p>In 2024, DHR will take stock of the positions at different levels currently lagging behind on the representation of women and develop a strategy paper with action points on approach to be taken in the relevant hiring process, as a guidance.</p> <p>DHR disagrees with the second part of the recommendation, related to the gender-equality questions for the hiring process. A general question on gender mainstreaming with additional probing and follow up for candidates to elaborate on their specific experience allows the desired tailoring and collection of necessary data.</p>	<p>Q4 2024 for promulgation of revised SI17</p> <p>Q3 2024 – for the strategy paper</p>

Capacity-building	7) <i>The GIP, supported by DHR and the human resources departments across the FOs and Institutions, should strengthen the existing gender equality training courses and modules tailored to the specific needs and expectation of the OSCE's employees. Priority should be given to systematic training of the Gender Focal Point.</i>	Gender Issues Programme	Partially	<p>The GIP takes note of this recommendation and partially accepts it. There are already mandatory e-learning training programmes for all OSCE officials on introduction to gender equality. Moreover, it is the ultimate responsibility of individuals to actively seek additional training opportunities, by expressing their training needs to their respective line manager and learning and development focal point.</p> <p>Upon request, GIP is regularly organizing targeted trainings and briefings for secretariat departments and missions. GIP would also point to the importance of developing and utilizing roadmaps and action plans as outline in recommendation 1. Some ES have developed GAPs with clear objectives on how to disseminate relevant knowledge products, what training and how often staff as well as GFPs should be trained on gender related issues.</p> <p>GIP is continuously reviewing and updating existing training material and steps have already been taken to develop new ones.</p> <p>Under the WIN project, 13 gender equality training modules (WIN Academy) was developed to be used across the OSCE organization and region. The modules have also been widely disseminated among the GFPs and are available on the WIN platform on the communities.osce.org page which is accessible to all OSCE GFPs. Moreover two trainings of trainers (ToTs) were completed during 2023 and a pool of specialized trainers drawn from OSCE staff (over 40 persons) was set up.</p> <p>However, based on the continues needs for more trainings on gender equality GIP will further advocate for the utilization of the gender trainers in the WIN academy pool. Moreover during Q2 2024 a third ToT will be organized which will further expand the pool of qualified gender trainers across OSCE ES.</p> <p>Currently training needs are largely supported through ExB project WIN. Additional training is contingent to the approval of UB budget. Without sufficient budgetary allocation, the ability to deliver further training is severely constrained.</p>	Training of Trainers by Q2 2024
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Annex 1: List of Evaluation Findings

Relevance and added value/comparative advantage

EQ1: To what extent does the OSCE's work on promoting gender equality achieve a match between its commitments, as defined by relevant OSCE policy documents, and its comparative advantage?

Finding 1: The OSCE's ambitions and commitments to promote gender equality in the Organization, and its programmes and activities, made during the evaluation period have been aligned with those enshrined in the 2004 GAP.

Finding 2: While there is increased understanding across the OSCE of the GAP commitments and the need to implement them across all organizational structures and in the support provided to participating States, identifying the most relevant and inclusive gender-mainstreaming remains a challenge in some programmatic areas.

Finding 3: The OSCE GAP and the work undertaken to implement its commitments are highly relevant to all three security dimensions, and this relevance has gained better recognition among OSCE staff.

Finding 4: The OSCE has a strong comparative advantage when supporting participating States with the implementation of their gender-equality commitments, however this advantage is not utilized to its full potential.

Finding 5: The OSCE has considerable assets and a comparative advantage when it comes to promoting gender-equality in the pS, however it requires gender-champion middle managers to optimize these assets and solidify the field operations' gender portfolios.

Effectiveness and coherence

EQ2: Have any OSCE gender-based policies, programmes or activities contributed to tangible changes with regard to gender equality within the Organization?

Finding (6): The OSCE has considerably improved gender parity among its seconded, professional and senior management positions. However, achieving equitable representation of women in some positions remains a challenge.

Finding (7): The Gender Issues Programme, the Gender Focal Points and the Gender Advisers are the cornerstone of gender mainstreaming in the OSCE, delivering an essential service, but they are under-resourced and under-used.

Finding (8): The resources for promoting gender equality, particularly within the Gender Issues Programme, are not commensurate with the OSCE's ambitions and commitments.

Finding (9): There has been a gradual but steady change of attitudes, with staff increasingly embracing gender equality as part of their job, but several factors within the Organization warrant a constant reiteration of the need for further investments to sustain this change.

Finding (10): Training relevant to gender equality and gender mainstreaming has achieved wide outreach in the Organization, but its fine-tuning and targeting can be further optimized.

Finding (11): The OSCE has developed a number of Staff Instructions aimed at preventing gender discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. However, the level of awareness and understanding of these Instructions among staff indicates a need for better promotion and training.

Finding (12): The staff perceptions, which have evolved, have had mixed effects on the progress towards gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violations.

EQ 3: What are the key intended and unintended results of the OSCE's activities, policies, programmes and projects on gender equality within the Organization and in the participating States?

Finding (13): The OSCE has recorded tangible results in terms of gender mainstreaming of projects during the evaluated period.

Finding (14): The OSCE has pioneered a vast number of innovative programmes and initiatives to support participating States in the implementation of their commitments, but these initiatives often lack visibility and are seldom cross-referenced among dimensions and executive structures. The lack of internal coherence and co-ordination limits the opportunities for synergies and scaling up of innovative gender equality initiatives across the Organization.

Results sustainability and plausibility of impact

EQ 4: What is the likelihood that the benefits of gender targeted and mainstreamed actions will be maintained for a reasonably long period of time after the respective interventions phase out?

Finding (15): The initiatives implemented by the OSCE over the past five years have demonstrated promising results, sometimes in the long run, but none have reached a critical size, and many lack a strategic approach, reducing the plausibility of sustainable impact at a systemic level.

Finding (16): The OSCE has generated high value-added outputs in the gender equality portfolio, but their sustainability is often subject to donor interests and proactive resource mobilization.

Endnotes

¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1995. If development is not engendered, it is endangered

² OSCE. 1999, Charter for European Security. <https://www.osce.org/mc/17502>

³ OSCE.2004. DECISION No. 14/04. 2004 OSCE ACTION PLAN FOR THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/d/23295.pdf>

⁴ OSCE. 2004. Decision No.14/04. 2004 OSCE ACTION PLAN FOR THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/d/23295.pdf>

⁵ Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #5 is exclusively dedicated to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Gender is also mainstreamed as a cross-cutting issue in some of the other SDGs, with Goal #16 on the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies being of particular relevance to the OSCE. [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development \(un.org\). https://sdgs.un.org/goals](https://sdgs.un.org/goals)

⁶ Gender-mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. The ultimate goal is achieving gender equality (Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-Second Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/52/3/Rev.1), chapter IV, paragraph 4,

⁷ Gender-targeted actions: actions, including projects and programmes, aimed at increasing gender equality. They often target women and girls, as well as men and boys involved in supporting gender equality in various thematic areas.

⁸ The Gender Marker system was introduced for OSCE ExB projects in 2020. Since then, there have been further, albeit smaller ExB gender-targeted projects (GM3) implemented by the OSCE's executive structures.

⁹ As the field visits, the survey and a larger part of the interviews were conducted in 2023, the evaluation references at times good examples from the first half of fiscal year 2023.

¹⁰ OSCE. 2018. Well-Being and Safety of Women: Facts and Figures at a Glance | OSCE. <https://www.osce.org/projects/survey-on-the-well-being-and-safety-of-women>

¹¹ [Text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm), <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

¹² At the time of this evaluation report writing (May-June 2023) the 2022 Annual Report had not yet been issued.

¹³ OSCE. 2021. Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the OSCE 2004 Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality, p.18. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/3/523263.pdf>

¹⁴ According to the 2018 Evaluation of the OSCE Gender Action Plan, as of 2017, “30% of OSCE's executive structures did not have a dedicated gender action plan”. <https://www.osce.org/oio/486454>

¹⁵ Note: The space limitation in some of the document templates may not allow for referencing all relevant Permanent Council and MC decisions.

¹⁶ OSCE, 2022. Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, p. 8. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/9/548002.pdf>

¹⁷ European Commission 2020. EU GENDER ACTION PLAN III, AN AMBITIOUS AGENDA FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN EU EXTERNAL ACTION, 2020, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-equality-strategy>

¹⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680648586>

²⁰ Mid-term evaluation of the EU Gender Action Plan III, 2023. https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/publications/mid-term-evaluation-eu-gender-action-plan-iii_en

²¹ For the purpose of this report, the term 'gender champion' refers to a person who displays both understanding of, and dedication to, transformative actions towards gender equality. Gender champions may be OSCE staff members at any level or partners in the participating States acting as donors or as recipients of OSCE support.

²² OSCE.2018. Annual GAP Progress Report, p. 7. https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/9/425687_0.pdf

²³ Staff Survey, Q. 16.

²⁵ Staff Survey, Q. 16.

²⁶ OSCE/UNWomen. 2020. OSCE Needs and Resource Assessment on Gender Mainstreaming, Data analysis and preliminary findings, p. 15.

²⁷ National contracted staff who responded to the survey have been in office longer than other categories: 60 per cent have been in office for more than seven years (48 per cent more than 10 years, and 12 per cent seven to 10 years). In contrast, 46 per cent of international contracted staff have mostly been in office for less than three years (17 per cent less than one year, and 28 per cent one to three years), while about 30 per cent have been in office for seven years or more (mostly General Service staff, according to disaggregated figures). Figures for secondees are comparable to those of contracted international staff (with slightly shorter time in office, on average).

²⁸ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d7662329-ee2c-11ed-a05c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-285825215>

²⁹ European Union. 2015. Evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Partner Countries, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/monitoring-and-evaluation/strategic-evaluation-reports-deprecated/strategic-evaluation-eu-support-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-partner-countries-2010-2015_en

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ OSCE. 2022. OSCE Men for Gender Equality. <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/OSCE-Men-for-Gender-Equality>

³² OSCE. Engaging Men in Gender Equality at the OSCE: A Toolkit for OSCE Staff. <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/524598>

³³ OSCE. GIP Annual GAP reports 2020, 2021.

³⁴ Online OSCE Ethics Awareness Course, UN course Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse for Managers, UN course Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse for Staff, UN course I Know Gender (3 modules), UN course Working Harmoniously Together, Addressing and Mitigating Unconscious Bias — as a general course and now a pre-requisite to interviewing skills, WIN — one event in the Secretariat, one regional event, and the closing event for Gender Responsive Leadership (GRL). Source: Department of Human Resources 2022 annual reporting on GAP.

³⁵ OSCE. Diversity: A Better Way of “Doing Business” <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/2/42124.pdf>

³⁶ OSCE. EMPLOYMENT, Recruitment, Selection and OSCE Competency Model, <https://jobs.osce.org/recruitment-selection-and-osce-competency-model>

³⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/UNICEF-Strategy-Prevent-Respond-Sexual-Exploitation-Abuse-Sexual-Harassment-January-2019.pdf>

³⁸ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_173038.htm

³⁹ OSCE. 2022 Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan, OSCE 13 July, 2023, p.19. <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/548002>

⁴⁰ OSCE. 2021 Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan, OSCE 2021, p.p. 17-18.

⁴¹ OSCE. WIN for women and men – strengthening comprehensive security through innovating and networking for gender equality. <https://www.osce.org/winproject>

⁴² <https://www.osce.org/projects/survey-on-the-well-being-and-safety-of-women>

⁴³ The project spans across the OSCE region with particular focus on Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia. For the purposes of the M&E framework, the following sample countries were selected for the baseline studies and mid-term evaluation: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine.

⁴⁴ Quote from the 2023 mid-term external Evaluation of the WIN Project (not published).

⁴⁵ UN, The Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls (VAWG),

<https://www.un.org/en/spotlight-initiative/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.osce.org/ocea/465531>

⁴⁷ OSCE, 2021. Gender and Corruption: What do we know? <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/507569>

⁴⁸ Note: This statement relates mainly to UB project proposals for which the project timeline is one year.

⁴⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/dio-eva2022-tor-violence-against-women-and-domestic-violence/1680a64ea5>

⁵⁰ A systems approach to programme planning and project implementation is an approach based on systems analysis, examining how complex problems interact, providing a pathway into impact, by providing instruments to bridge sectors and actors, as well as levels of intervention.

See OECD: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/4bcb6099-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/4bcb6099-en>

Applications vary, according to the field of co-operation. Good examples are provided by UNICEF research, e.g., in the field of child protection:

https://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/Adapting_A_Systems_Approach_to_Child_Protection.pdf



Office of Internal Oversight
EvaluationUnit

Wallnerstrasse 6
A-1010 Vienna, Austria
e-mail: OIOeval@osce.org
www.osce.org/oio/evaluation