

1 INSTITUTIONAL AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND MAINSTREAMING

To effectively implement a whole-of-government gender equality and mainstreaming strategy, a country needs a strong institutional framework and solid mechanisms whereby institutions are available and equipped for promoting gender equality in an effective and co-ordinated manner. When these institutions, policies and programmes fully integrate gender considerations into their work, they produce better and more equitable policies for men and women, therefore contributing to good governance. This section of the Toolkit provides a strategic framework and instruments to help craft, implement, monitor, and evaluate public policies from a gender equality perspective. It analyses various elements needed to promote gender equality and mainstreaming. It focuses on whole-of-government strategic plans for gender equality; institutional mechanisms for gender equality and mainstreaming; assessment of gender impacts of various public governance dimensions; and accountability for gender equality and mainstreaming.

1.1. WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Key Provision of the *OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*

Secure leadership and commitment at the highest political level, at the appropriate level of government, to the development and implementation of a whole-of government strategy for effective gender equality and mainstreaming, which would enable:

- setting a rationale, action plans, priorities, timelines, objectives, expected outcomes and/or targets, and effective policy planning across public institutions for promoting gender equality. These measures should be accompanied by information and awareness campaigns, media strategies and regular reviews;
- engaging relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders with a view to ensuring an inclusive and comprehensive coverage of gender equality issues;
- and adopting a dual approach to narrowing equality gaps through both gender mainstreaming and specific targeted actions to promote gender equality.

1.1.1. Priority checklist for a “whole-of-government” strategic plan for gender equality

- A. Government has a clear vision for gender equality that is anchored in key government documents
- B. Government has made a clear assessment of where it stands in relation to its goals for gender equality and which interventions are necessary to achieve its vision
- C. Government has a results-oriented strategic plan to achieve its gender equality vision that is endorsed by senior leadership, and developed through broad consultation with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders

1.1.2. Self-assessment tool

A. Government has a clear vision for gender equality that is anchored in key government documents

Self-assessment questions

- Is there a medium- to long-term gender equality vision that is anchored in the government’s programme or vision statement and/or development goals?
- Does the vision for gender equality consider that other identity factors may compound gender inequalities?

Why is it important?

A medium- to long-term vision statement on gender equality, especially as part of a broader national development plan, can convey a country’s commitment towards achieving a gender-equal society. The vision statement can be used to set new standards around the attitudes and behaviour of both men and women and be used as a benchmark for measuring progress.

International benchmarks such as the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth UN World Conference on Women; the United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) – especially Goal 5 on gender equality – can provide excellent starting points for developing a national vision statement.

Recognising that the effectiveness of policy responses in reducing gender inequality and achieving broader policy outcomes would strongly depend on the ability to understand that discrimination can be experienced through a combination of multiple, intersecting factors, it is also important to ensure that the vision on gender equality is coherent with other equality-related goals.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Build a short, compelling vision statement for gender equality that connects to citizens' lives and portrays a specific result towards societal change;
- Ensure that the vision statement is aligned with international benchmarks and national policy and/or development objectives, anchoring the gender equality vision statement into the broader government policy and/or national development objectives;
- Ensure that the vision for gender equality has a clear focus and provides directions for both the public sector and citizens;
- Widely disseminate and communicate the gender equality vision statement in simple terms both within and outside the government, including at the highest levels of politics and society at large;
- Ensure that the gender equality vision acknowledges that discrimination can be experienced through a combination of multiple, intersecting factors.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Formulating a narrow objective that is not focused on the ultimate goal of gender equality;
- Establishing a theoretical vision that does not portray a specific societal change;
- Defining a vision that is in contradiction with or disconnected to the government's policy or development vision;
- Insufficient communication of the gender equality vision statement to policy makers;
- Failing to consider crosscutting and overlapping mechanisms of discrimination faced by diverse groups and not consulting other groups facing barriers and potential discrimination.



Box 1.1. Good practice example(s): Vision-setting for gender equality

Germany's Feminist Foreign Policy

Through the coalition agreement 2021-2025, the German government is pursuing a "Feminist Foreign Policy" (FFP). The German Feminist Foreign Policy is based on the conviction that gender equity and equal participation are preconditions for long-term peace and security. It recognises that not all social groups around the world have the same access to political participation, opportunities, and resources. It strives to dismantle the obstacles responsible for this discrepancy, such as power structures that disadvantage certain groups. The German FFP is an inclusive policy aimed at all parts of society that seeks to strengthen the rights, resources and representation of women and girls worldwide and to promote social diversity. Along this framework, and as part of the efforts to materialise the objectives of the country's Feminist Foreign Policy, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development intends to pursue a "feminist development policy". In addition, the feminist foreign policy will also be integrated into the National Security Strategy under the direction of the Federal Foreign Office acting as a general framework of the countries international interventions.

Australia's Women's Budget Statement

The Australian Government has expressed its commitment to advancing gender equality through adopting the 2022-23 Women's Budget Statement, as part of the 2022-23 October Budget. This document puts into action the leadership's commitment to recognise equal opportunity for women as a national economic and social priority. The document underlines the government's decision to put gender equality at the heart of policy and decision making through the introduction of gender responsive budgeting, which aims to run the objective of delivering gender equality across the whole Budget process. In line with this commitment, the 2022-23 October Budget has undergone gender impact assessments for key measures and includes significant commitments and investments to support structural changes to systematically advance gender equality.

Lithuania's strategic documents providing gender equality as a horizontal principle

Lithuania's Law on Strategic Management (Article 4) calls for the principle of gender equality to be considered in the preparation and implementation of planning documents at the stages of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, in order to prevent the creation of obstacles or limitations of opportunities that may cause negative consequences for women or men. Moreover, the National Development Programme for 2021-2030, the main strategic planning document at the national level, identifies equal opportunities for all as one of its horizontal principles. According to this principle, all persons, regardless of their sex, nationality, racial or ethnic origin, citizenship, language, religion, faith, beliefs or views, disability, state of health, social status, age or sexual orientation and etc., must have equal rights and opportunities to participate in public life. This implies that all central government institutions are obliged to consider the principle of equal opportunities for all when developing public policies or drafting regulations. As the co-ordinator of this principle's application, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour acts by systematically co-ordinating the inclusion of horizontal principle in national development programmes, monitoring the progress indicators of the implementation of horizontal principle, providing expert assistance to other ministries, promoting the co-operation of institutions on the implementation of horizontal principle, in order to promote changes in behavior and attitude in public sector institutions.

Source: (Federal Foreign Office, n.d.^[1]; Commonwealth of Australia, 2022^[2]; ABC News, 2022^[3]; Government of Lithuania, 2021^[4]; Government of Lithuania, 2020^[5]); Information provided by the Government of Lithuania in 2022.

B. Government has made a clear assessment of where it stands in relation to its goals for gender equality and which interventions are necessary to achieve its vision

Self-assessment questions

- Did you undertake a situation analysis which would allow you to identify evidence-based priorities and track progress in gender equality?
- To the extent possible, did you undertake an analysis of the existing evidence to identify the crosscutting and overlapping mechanisms of discrimination?

Why is it important?

A sound knowledge base and analysis of where the country stands in terms of gender equality are crucial for defining gender equality objectives, designing a strategic plan, setting policy priorities and sequencing, and measuring their potential impact.

In parallel, it is equally important to understand the human and financial resources required to meet the identified gender equality needs. A literature review can be undertaken to gather available qualitative and quantitative evidence. In preparing the situation analysis, it is crucial to involve a wide range of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to ensure it is comprehensive and reflects the expertise and insight from different policy areas (e.g. education, health, housing, infrastructure, etc.). A “SWOT” analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) can also facilitate effective implementation of gender equality strategies.

Recognising that the effectiveness of policy responses in reducing gender inequality would strongly depend on the ability to understand the intersectional experiences of people, it is important to identify the crosscutting and overlapping mechanisms of discrimination and specific needs of diverse groups.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Develop an analytical framework and a related plan of action for assessing the present situation of gender equality in the country;
- Undertake specific assessments (targeting crosscutting and overlapping mechanisms of discrimination, insufficiently explored gaps, or exploring in-depth priority areas);
- Conduct broad consultations with diverse stakeholders from both inside and outside the government, and with target groups from the public;
- Conduct a SWOT analysis of proposed strategies for further information on the expected impact of gender equality strategies;
- Include action-oriented recommendations to any assessment actions supporting policy makers in translating the findings in government responses within policies, programmes, and budgets.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Collect and analyse information without a clear analytical framework;
- Rely on outdated or unverifiable data sources, as well as only on secondary data;
- Insufficient involvement of government and non-governmental stakeholders in the assessment and verification of findings phase;
- Lack of adequate expertise to analyse the data;
- Failing to consider crosscutting and overlapping mechanisms of discrimination faced by diverse groups.

Box 1.2. Good practice example(s): Slovenia's intersectional approach to equality strategy

The evaluation of Slovenia's National Programme 2005–2013 resulted in the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2015–2020). An analysis of the impact of the austerity measures (introduced following the financial and economic crisis) on the status of women and men in Slovenia underlined that the crisis and austerity measures have a more permanent adverse effect on women, in particular specific groups such as elderly women, women in single-parent families, middle-class women and women from ethnic minorities.

The National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2015–2020) acknowledges that an intersectional approach is required to comprehensively address the issue of social inequality. This plan recognised that women and men form heterogeneous groups and that some people are positioned beyond binary sex and gender models due to their gender identity or sexual expression. As such, it emphasised intersectional analysis of social inequality factors (i.e. the status of women and men in relation to other personal circumstances such as age, disability, nationality, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and gender identity). Notably, it considered status assessments and available data, on the basis of which greater attention was devoted to specific disadvantaged and/ or excluded groups, such as women from ethnic minorities, women from rural areas, women with lower socio-economic status, and homosexual men.

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (2016_[6]), Resolution on the national programme for equal opportunities for women and men 2015–2020, <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MDDSZ/Dokumenti/Enakost-spolov/Publikacije/3183724836/NFMP>.

C. Government has a results-oriented strategic plan to achieve its gender equality vision that is endorsed by senior leadership, and developed through broad consultation with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders

Self-assessment questions

- Have you identified government-wide gender equality and mainstreaming objectives that are results oriented and clearly aiming to address the identified gaps through the situation analysis?
- Have you defined clear roles and responsibilities across the government for implementing, monitoring, and overseeing gender equality and mainstreaming objectives? (Refer to Section 1.2 on institutional mechanisms).
- Does the strategic plan for gender equality enable the integration of gender – and to the extent possible, intersectional equality – perspectives in all areas of policy making?
- Have you involved non-governmental stakeholders in the elaboration of a strategic plan for gender equality?

Why is it important?

Making progress in gender equality – a goal that involves all government policy – is much easier with a whole-of-government strategic plan. Enacting a law to define the country's approach to gender equality is the first crucial step. Many countries rely on the CEDAW as a starting point for designing a comprehensive gender equality approach.

To be effective, the strategic plan needs to reflect the needs of different groups in society. It also requires collective commitment and ownership by all governmental actors. A network of

“champions” across the government can help effectively communicate and mainstream the strategic plan across different policy areas. Strategic planning for gender equality involves a dual approach: 1) mainstreaming gender in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of all public policies and budgets, and 2) adopting targeted actions to eliminate gender discrimination and enable progress in specific areas. Requiring gender analysis or gender-based impact assessments for government planning and strategic documents can help ensure that gender equality issues are not marginalised and may reduce “red tape” in the long run.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Define measurable goals and indicators linked to high-level outcome targets to achieve gender equality priorities;
- Define a clear set of responsibilities, timelines, action plans and monitoring mechanisms to achieve identified priorities;
- Ensure that the strategic plan is endorsed by senior leadership within the governmental structure (e.g. at the cabinet level);
- Undertake systematic consultation with all stakeholders both inside and outside the government during the development of the strategy (e.g. in the form of roundtables, online consultations etc.) and validate the strategic plan with involved stakeholders;
- Incorporate gender mainstreaming requirements in broader government planning;
- Translate the whole-of-government gender equality objectives to ministerial and departmental plans to outline how ministries should contribute to its achievement;
- Incorporate gender equality objectives in individual staff performance assessment objectives;
- Ensure that the strategy explicitly acknowledges that discrimination can be experienced through a combination of multiple, intersecting factors;
- Clearly identify crosscutting and overlapping mechanisms of discrimination that may lead to relatively higher vulnerability of certain groups.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Define objectives that are not directly linked to gender equality priorities;
- Define objectives that are unrealistic or vague;
- Focus only on output results (e.g. number of awareness raising events) rather than also incorporating outcome indicators;
- Duplicate another country’s strategy without adapting it to the country’s own context;
- Insufficient involvement of diverse stakeholders in the development and dissemination of the strategy;
- Lack of feedback to diverse stakeholders who took part in the development of the gender equality strategy;
- Roles and responsibilities are vague and/or not specified at the institutional and individual staff level;
- Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are missing;
- Broader country strategic documents do not include gender mainstreaming requirements set out in the government’s gender equality strategic plan.

Box 1.3. Good practice example(s): Strategic planning for gender equality

Portugal's intersectional approach to equality strategy

The National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 (ENIND) is aligned with the 2030 UN Agenda and focuses on three major areas: 1) promoting equality between women and men; 2) preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence - including harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and forced and early marriages; and 3) combating discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.

ENIND is the first instrument for the implementation of public policies in Portugal which explicitly refers to intersectionality as a premise in the definition of measures directed to the disadvantages that occur at the intersection of sex with other factors of discrimination, including gender identity, age, racial and ethnic origin, disability, national origin, sexual orientation, and sexual characteristics.

ENIND contains a number of measures specifically seeking to promote a multi-ground approach to equality, including through the production of tools, the development of information, awareness and training actions, the integration of a gender perspective in the services of the national network of support to the integration of migrants, and the improvement of national statistics related to gender violence and domestic violence, by integrating an intersectional perspective.

Under ENIND, the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality and the High Commission for Migration have been carrying out a number of actions embedded in the intersectional approach, such as developing and implementing gender-sensitive policies and measures for the integration of migrants – including refugees and asylum seekers – and Roma, with a focus on intersecting inequalities and issues such as violence against women and human trafficking. Projects are also ongoing to raise awareness of the situation of Black women and women of African descent (and their families) in Portugal.

Chile's participatory consultation

Chile's Ministry of Women and Gender Equity has launched the fourth Plan for Equality between women and men (2018-2030). This plan aims to strengthen and give political, technical, and operational sustainability to Chile's gender institutional framework. It aims to install gender equality as a cross-cutting topic in all public institutions, policies, plans, programmes, and public budgets; eliminate all forms of inequality and discrimination based on gender; and promote the full participation of the diversity of women in the country's cultural, political, economic, and social life. The main objective of this plan is to overcome gender inequalities and achieve the whole exercise of the rights and autonomy of the diversity of Chilean women through the recognition, respect, and guarantee of women's rights in their diversity.

The Plan for Equality was developed through a participatory methodology that involved different public organisations, state agencies, and civilian women from different social and professional backgrounds. Finally, the plan established concrete goals, deadlines, and responsible institutions to ease monitoring.

Italy's wide stakeholder consultation

In 2021, the Italian Government adopted a National Strategy for Gender Equality to offer a perspective and a path toward gender equality and equal opportunities. The national strategy provides a comprehensive framework for gender equality through integrated policies and programmes that bring concrete, defined, measurable initiatives in growth and social and economic development to life. The strategy was developed with contributions from central administration, regional and local authorities, and social partners and associations actively promoting gender equality collaboratively. It ensures women's empowerment and full, meaningful, and equal participation in social, economic, and public life.

Mexico's comprehensive and consultative strategy

In December 2020, the National Women's Institute (Inmujeres) in Mexico, launched the National Program for Equality between Women and Men (Proigualdad) 2020-2024. Inmujeres developed this programme through a comprehensive consultation process that included more than five thousand women from diverse contexts in the country's 32 states.

Proigualdad articulates the efforts of the different agencies and entities of the Mexican Government, in co-ordination with the three branches of Government, to respond to women's demands and guarantee their rights and well-being. This programme presents a strategy of change based on establishing six priority objectives, 37 strategies, and 267 specific actions. Proigualdad aims to establish a national policy to substantively advance in achieving equality between women and men through concrete actions to be implemented by all institutions of the public administration.

The six priority objectives of Proigualdad are:

1. Strengthen women's economic autonomy to close historical inequality gaps.
2. Generate conditions to recognise, reduce and redistribute domestic and care work among families, the State, the community, and the private sector.
3. Improve the conditions for women, girls, and adolescents to access welfare and health without discrimination from a rights-based perspective.
4. To combat the types and modalities of violence against women, girls, and adolescents, preserving their dignity and integrity.
5. Combat the types and modalities of violence against women, girls, and adolescents, preserving their dignity and integrity.
6. To build safe and peaceful environments for women, girls, and adolescents.

Canada's Gender Results Framework

The Canada's Gender Results Framework (GRF) was introduced in the 2018 federal budget, as a strategic framework for advancing gender equality. The GRF represents the Government of Canada's overall vision for gender equality, and it is a whole-of government tool designed to:

- track how Canada is currently performing;
- define what is needed to achieve greater equality;
- determine how progress will be measured going forward.

Under the GRF, the Federal Government has identified 6 key pillars where change is required to advance gender equality:

1. Education and skills development
2. Economic participation and prosperity
3. Leadership and democratic participation
4. Gender-based violence and access to justice
5. Poverty reduction
6. Health and well-being; gender equality around the world.

The GRF is used annually in the federal budget to identify measures that contribute to the advancement of one or more of the GRF pillars. Annually, in the federal budget, the Government of Canada publishes a status report on progress related to the indicators in the GRF, from an intersectional perspective.

Source: Information provided by Governments of Canada, Italy and Portugal as part of the OECD (2021), Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance (unpublished); (INMUJERES, 2020^[7]) and (Ministerio de la Mujer y la Equidad de Género, 2020^[8]).

1.2. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND MAINSTREAMING

Key Provision of the *OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*

Establish an institutional framework to ensure the effective implementation, co-ordination and sustainability of the gender equality and mainstreaming strategy, by:

- establishing clear roles, responsibilities, mandates and lines of accountability of key governmental and oversight bodies in implementing gender equality and mainstreaming initiatives;
- bolstering the capacities and resources of gender equality institutions to facilitate a consistent response at appropriate levels of government and to develop, implement and monitor gender-sensitive programmes and policies throughout the government, based on gender-disaggregated statistics and indicators. Effectiveness of gender equality institutions can also be strengthened by placing them at the highest possible level in the government;
- ensuring the capacity and resources of public institutions to integrate gender equality perspectives in their activities; for example, by identifying gender equality focal points across governmental bodies, by investing resources in training and promoting collaborative approaches with knowledge centres to produce gender-sensitive knowledge, leadership and communication, by ensuring the collection of gender and gender-disaggregated statistics in their areas of responsibility, and by providing clear guidelines, tools, communication and expectations to public institutions in this area; and strengthening vertical and horizontal co-ordination mechanisms for policy coherence across governmental bodies and levels of government that involve relevant non- governmental stakeholders to ensure synergies and effective implementation of gender equality initiatives.

1.2.1. *Priority checklist for institutional mechanisms for gender equality and mainstreaming*

- A. Roles and responsibilities to implement gender equality and mainstreaming are clearly assigned across the government
- B. Government has an institution for gender equality with an adequate level of responsibility and authority within the governmental structure
- C. All government institutions are equipped and responsible for integrating gender equality in their policy making processes and programmes
- D. Gender equality initiatives are effectively co-ordinated across institutions at different levels of government

1.2.2. Self-assessment tool

A. Roles and responsibilities to implement gender equality and mainstreaming are clearly assigned across the government

Self-assessment questions

- Have you identified the institutions, mechanisms and co-ordination channels that will be responsible and held accountable for the realisation of government-wide gender equality and mainstreaming objectives with an intersectional lens?
- Are all affected institutions across the government aware of their roles and responsibilities for gender equality and mainstreaming, including of the resources required?
- Have you ensured that senior management in government institutions agree on gender equality and mainstreaming objectives and demonstrate a shared commitment for their implementation?
- Are political and administrative accountability structures in place (e.g. through objectives, rules and procedures) for the implementation of governments' gender equality and mainstreaming objectives, including through an intersectional lens where possible?

Why is it important?

To effectively implement a government vision and strategic plan for gender equality and mainstreaming, various institutions need to promote, produce knowledge on, implement, monitor and evaluate gender equality. This institutional framework generally consists of:

- Central gender equality institutions, which promote gender equality and facilitate the implementation of gender equality and mainstreaming programmes across government;
- Centre of Government (e.g. Cabinet and the Ministry of Finance), which is responsible for promoting gender mainstreaming in government policies and ensuring that ministries comply with gender mainstreaming requirements;
- Line ministries and agencies, which are responsible for designing, implementing and reporting on gender mainstreaming in their policies and initiatives. Gender focal points and/or delivery units within line ministries can provide information on how laws or regulations are administered, data are collected, sectorial plans are developed and personnel are trained on gender-sensitive policies.
- Data-collecting and -producing bodies, which ensure that high-quality gender-disaggregated evidence is available to support decision making;
- Accountability and oversight structures that encourage compliance with gender equality policies, pinpoint deficiencies and redress remaining inequalities.
- Robust co-ordination is needed to ensure policy coherence across bodies at all levels of government. Intersectionality calls for greater co-ordination across all teams/departments/agencies within the government dealing with equality and anti-discrimination issues, along with clear roles and responsibilities.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Responsibilities for gender equality policies are shared across the government and involve the highest possible level of government;
- In doing so, ensure that the roles, responsibilities, objectives and procedures for implementing an intersectional lens in gender equality and mainstreaming are clearly outlined;

- Clearly define and widely disseminate requirements indicating the actors in charge of implementing gender equality-related tasks and mainstreaming policies, wherever possible with an intersectional lens, and which resources will be allocated for this purpose;
- Ensure the centre of government is willing, tasked and equipped to promote gender mainstreaming across government and provide a challenge function to ministries who do not comply;
- Establish gender support mechanisms in line ministries and agencies to administer specific laws or regulations on gender equality, collect data, and develop sector-specific plans, training and gender-sensitive personnel policies;
- Ensure that decisions on the implementation of gender equality and mainstreaming strategies are made on the basis of gender-disaggregated evidence and data;
- Ensure leadership of co-ordination efforts and that an effective co-ordination mechanism for gender mainstreaming is in place;
- Introduce incentive/sanction systems to encourage institutions' compliance to gender equality requirements.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Responsibility for gender equality policies are placed at a low level of government or outside government;
- Government institutions' mandates, authority, resources or mechanisms for executive functions are partially defined and insufficiently publicised leaving space for misinterpretation, overlapping, and implementation gaps;
- Gender equality institutions and focal points/units are under-resourced and far from the apex of power;
- Gender equality programmes are under-resourced;
- Line ministries and government agencies work on gender equality in silos, with insufficient capacity, planning and accountability;
- Gender mainstreaming strategies are co-ordinated and supported at the national level, but not at the sub-national level;
- Lack of sanctions for institutions which do not comply to gender equality requirements/lack of incentives encouraging compliance;
- Lack of tailored gender expertise in policy areas targeted with mainstreaming strategies (i.e. gender in agriculture, gender in justice, etc.);
- Failing to create mechanisms to facilitate coherence and overcome silos in gender and equality mainstreaming; for instance, through co-ordination mechanisms/efforts that are fragmented or responsibilities lie with multiple institutions risking duplication, overlapping and missed opportunities.

Box 1.4. Good practice example(s): Canada's institutional framework for gender equality and mainstreaming

In Canada, the Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) oversees the advancement of gender equality policies. It also plays a central role in the implementation of the Canadian Government's intersectional tool: Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus). As GBA Plus is the responsibility of all public employees, WAGE provides knowledge, technical assistance, and tools and training for its implementation. All federal departments and agencies must integrate GBA Plus in their work routinely, as well as monitor and report on its implementation. For example, the Department of Canadian Heritage created a GBA Plus Responsibility Centre to ensure the integration of GBA Plus in all its work. Furthermore, Canada has in place a Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Forum of Ministers for the Status of Women, chaired by WAGE, which facilitates knowledge-sharing, collaboration and exploration of avenues for the advancement of the gender equality agenda, including GBA Plus. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, a new Taskforce on Equity-Seeking Communities and COVID-19 was launched to provide an interdepartmental forum for sharing information; aligning strategies, policy and initiatives; and engaging with representatives from equity-seeking communities.

Source: Information provided by Government of Canada as part of the OECD (2021), Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance (unpublished).

B. Government has an institution for gender equality with an adequate level of responsibility and authority within the governmental structure

Self-assessment questions

- Is there a permanent government institution/body at the national level which is responsible for promoting gender equality and supporting government-wide gender equality policy?
- Is the level of responsibility and authority of the gender equality institution within the governmental structure adequate for promoting gender equality and supporting government-wide gender equality policy?
- Does the gender equality institution have the sufficient mandate and resources for promoting gender equality and supporting a government-wide gender equality policy?

Why it is important?

Central gender equality institutions, which take many forms, help ensure that the public sector fosters gender equality and mainstreaming across government policy and within society as a whole. They can be a separate ministry, paired with other portfolios within a single ministry, or located within the office of the head of government or state. Sometimes, gender equality councils or commissions function as autonomous bodies with an independent status or in consultation with the government.

Whatever their form, such institutions should not be given the exclusive responsibility within the government for promoting gender equality. Rather, they should provide advice and guidance to the whole of government including line ministries and monitor improvements in relation to gender equality. They need sufficient resources, visibility and authority to co-ordinate a government-wide initiative. Finally, they also need access to gender-disaggregated statistics and data on the gender equality outcomes of government policies and initiatives (for more, see Section C. Data and information disaggregated by gender are available and used to inform gender analysis).

What are the key actions to consider?

- Locate the central gender equality institution within the highest possible level of government (e.g. Cabinet level) to ensure it has adequate visibility and authority to co-ordinate and monitor the government-wide gender equality strategic plan;
- Establish a clear, legal mandate for the central gender equality institution to deliver as expected;
- Assess whether available resources (e.g. time, staff, budget, skill sets, equipment, training, etc.) of the central gender equality institution are adequate to effectively execute its mandate, strategic goals and work plans;
- Allocate and systematically review resources to meet the strategic goals and work plans of the central gender equality institution;
- Ensure that central gender equality institutions are staffed with expertise in policy, analysis, advocacy, communications and monitoring to implement their mandates.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Central gender institutions do not have the leverage necessary to co-ordinate a whole-of-government approach across policy fields regardless of their institutional designs;
- Central gender equality institutions have limited capacities, inadequate or non-existent budgets and/or unclear responsibilities;
- Central gender equality institutions lack expertise in policy development, analysis, advocacy, communication and/or monitoring to fully implement their mandates;
- Central gender equality institutions are unable to effectively ensure gender mainstreaming at the sub-national level.



Box 1.5. Good practice example(s): Institutional responsibility for gender equality

Sweden's Gender Equality Agency

In Sweden, the Minister for Children, the Elderly, and Gender Equality is responsible for co-ordinating, developing, and following up on the work on gender mainstreaming. In 2015, a Gender Equality Inquiry which aimed to assess the effectiveness of the governance of Swedish gender equality policy concluded that "more coherent management of gender equality policy is required to provide the conditions for monitoring and analysing gender equality progress in society." To overcome this challenge, the inquiry proposed that a government agency for gender equality be set up with responsibilities to analyse gender equality progress in society, co-ordinate gender equality policy tasks, support gender mainstreaming efforts, and assist the government in other matters concerning gender equality policy.

In light of this, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency was established on 1 January 2018 to contribute to the effective implementation of the Swedish gender equality policy. The main task of the gender equality agency is to co-ordinate, follow up and provide various forms of support and knowledge to reach the gender equality policy goals. The agency's work requires close co-operation with other government agencies, municipalities, regions, civil society, and businesses and industries.

United Kingdom's streamlining of equality-related work

In recent years, the United Kingdom has pursued several institutional changes to streamline work on the broader equality agenda, notably on gender, race and disability. For example, in 2007, the Government opened a unified Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), replacing separate commissions dealing with gender, race and disability. The EHRC enforces the Equality Act of 2010, including its public sector equality duty (brought into force in April 2011), monitors human rights, and aims to protect equality across nine grounds: age, disability, sex, race, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, and gender reassignment. The general duty applies to England, Scotland and Wales, while the latter devolved nations have implemented additional specific duties. In Scotland, there is a specific duty to mainstream equality; in England, there is a specific duty to publish information demonstrating how compliance with the general duty is managed.

More recently, there has been a move to reshape the Government Equalities Office (GEO), which takes the lead for the Equality Act as well as for improving equality and reducing discrimination in the United Kingdom more generally, and bring it closer to the cabinet office units (i.e. Racial Disparity Unit and Disability Unit) to create the equalities hub.

Source: Information provided by the Governments of Sweden and United Kingdom as part of the OECD (2021), Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance (unpublished); (Government of United Kingdom, n.d.^[9]).

C. All government institutions are equipped and responsible for integrating gender equality in their policy-making processes and programmes

Self-assessment questions

- Do legal and policy documents that govern public institutions identify concrete objectives for integrating gender perspectives in policies and services?
- Have institutions developed action plans at the institution level to implement the government-wide gender equality policy and monitor organisational performance?
- Do institutions have the capacity, support mechanisms (e.g. gender advisors, gender focal points, gender units) and resources to integrate gender equality perspectives in their daily policy and programme related activities?
- Are senior management and staff members held accountable for integrating gender equality perspectives in their daily policy and programme related activities?
- To the extent possible, do institutional capacities, resources and daily policy and programme related activities integrate intersectional perspectives?

Why is it important?

Assessing where a government institution stands in terms of implementing gender mainstreaming (generally with the support of central gender equality institutions or gender experts) is an important step toward achieving results and can help establish a baseline for future performance monitoring. Such assessments allow institutions to develop the most appropriate work plan and tools to implement and monitor gender mainstreaming. Gender equality results that are linked to or built into ordinary systems or structures tend to have a better chance of becoming permanent.

Gender equality and mainstreaming support mechanisms (e.g. gender focal points, gender units, gender advisors) can help government institutions fulfil their responsibilities. In order to introduce an intersectional approach, these support mechanisms should have the necessary know-how.

The effectiveness of these support units will depend on their degree of authority, functions, resources and reporting mechanisms. It is important to make a clear distinction between gender mainstreaming support units for sectoral policies and those for human resources management (e.g. responsible for ensuring gender balance in recruitment and promotion, work-life balance, a gender-sensitive work environment). Confusion of these two very different positions can seriously hamper the achievement of gender equality through public policies and services. Finally, gender equality competences, with an understanding of intersectional identities, should be developed and fostered among policy makers and within government at all levels, to ensure sustainability and effectiveness in the implementation of a country's gender equality and mainstreaming strategy (also see Section A. Roles and responsibilities to implement gender equality and mainstreaming are clearly assigned across the government).

What are the key actions to consider?

- Ensure Centre of Government institutions are committed to the country's gender equality and mainstreaming strategy and they are able and willing to challenge line ministries and agencies which are not mainstreaming gender in their work;
- State concrete gender equality and mainstreaming objectives in documents that govern institutions;
- Translate the whole-of-government gender equality objectives to ministerial and departmental plans to outline how ministries should contribute to its achievement (also see

Section C. Government has a results-oriented strategic plan to achieve its gender equality vision that is endorsed by senior leadership, and developed through broad consultation with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders);

- Introduce specific indicators (at performance and outcome levels) to ensure that senior management holds the responsibility for achievement of institutions' gender mainstreaming objectives;
- Ensure that gender support mechanisms bring questions of gender equality and mainstreaming to the executive table and support the executive in exercising its leadership on this issue;
- Incorporate gender equality objectives in the individual staff performance assessment objectives;
- Clearly demarcate responsibilities between providing support for internal gender mainstreaming (e.g. in human resources management) and gender mainstreaming at the policy level (e.g. in policies, budgets, services);
- Provide line ministries and agencies with sufficient capacity (e.g. training and knowledge) and resources (budget and staff) to implement gender initiatives and analyse the gender impacts of their work (for more on gender impact assessment, see Section 2.1. Assessment of gender impacts of various public governance dimensions);
- Ensure data is collected on the impact of policies and programmes on gender equality (for more, see Section C. Data and information disaggregated by gender are available and used to inform gender analysis);
- Promote the development of gender competence at all levels of government through trainings, awareness campaigns and dissemination of data and information on impact of public governance and policies (for more on measuring progress and disseminating information on gender equality, see Section B. Data and information on the outcomes of gender equality policies and programmes are collected, accessible and actively disseminated);
- Gender expertise in specific policy areas (i.e. gender in justice; gender in agriculture; etc.) is available and accessible to support gender mainstreaming efforts across government institutions;
- Ensure that objectives, institutional capacities, data and statistics and related competencies for gender equality and mainstreaming incorporate an intersectional lens to the extent possible.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Line ministries, gender focal points, Centre of Government institutions do not have clear roles, mandates, resources and capacity for implementing gender mainstreaming and equality within key institutional actors;
- The whole-of-government gender equality objectives are not translated into ministerial and departmental plans;
- The whole-of-government gender equality objectives are translated into ministerial and departmental plans but they are not (adequately) resourced and they are not linked to staff (including senior managers) performance indicators and outcome indicators;
- Necessary gender expertise is not available/accessible;
- Line ministries and other government institutions targeted with gender mainstreaming do not collect data on the gender impact of policies and programmes;
- Failing to consider crosscutting and overlapping mechanisms of discrimination faced by diverse groups.

Box 1.6. Good practice example(s): Institutional objectives and capacities for gender equality

Germany's gender mainstreaming requirements

In Germany, the principle of gender mainstreaming is enshrined in law and is an official policy in all federal and regional/local ministries. In a Cabinet Resolution in 1999, the Federal Government recognised the aim of gender equality as a guiding principle for its policies and actions, adopting gender mainstreaming as a joint strategy of all federal ministries. Furthermore, to make gender mainstreaming a reality, Article 2 of the Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries (Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Bundesministerien – GGO) provided for every department the obligation to comply with this approach in all political, normative, and administrative measures taken by the Federal Government. Article 2 states that equality between men and women is a consistent guiding principle and should be promoted by all political, legislative, and administrative actions of the Federal Ministries in their respective areas. Gender equality should therefore be ensured, secured, and promoted in all government's political, agenda-setting, and administrative measurements at the national and regional levels.

In this sense, and according to the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend – BMFSFJ), all ministries of all policy areas are obliged to enforce equal rights for women and men and to work towards eliminating existing disadvantages.

Finland's "Gender Glasses in Use" project

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, responsible for gender mainstreaming in the country, provides training and guidance across the central government on operational gender equality and non-discrimination. In support of gender mainstreaming, the Ministry has developed a handbook to develop methods and orientation training related to gender mainstreaming. This is practical guidance on gender impact assessment, legislative, and planning of the ministries' operations and finances. It was drawn up in 2009 as part of the national gender mainstreaming project Gender Glasses in Use. The handbook and project aimed to equip national administration staff with a basic "understanding of gender mainstreaming principles and how to evaluate the gender impact of policy making."

The Gender Glasses project consisted of three phases:

- Phase one: consisted of large-scale seminars to raise awareness of the issue. In addition to a background brochure on gender mainstreaming was prepared; this provided tools, a checklist, and key questions useful when integrating the gender perspective into the work of ministries.
- Phase two: consisted of holding thematic seminars for members of the equality working groups in each Ministry.
- Phase three: Consisted of training and consulting services provided to three specific ministries (Education, Social Affairs, and Health and Interiors). The training sessions were designed based on the previous consultation with the Ministry's needs.

In a self-evaluation exercise, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health highlighted some key factors that contributed to the success of this programme and some lessons learned:

- The training sessions were short.

- Training sessions were designed in a progressive manner, where basic concepts were covered in the first phase (e.g. gender mainstreaming), and then, the advanced training sessions were tailored to each Ministry's needs.
- Training in gender mainstreaming in national administrations must attract senior officials and those directly drafting budgets, laws, and programmes to ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated into the policy cycle.
- Training programmes on gender mainstreaming must take the evolving needs of participants.
- Gender training benefits from including practical examples, which should be linked as closely as possible to participants' work.

Currently, the handbook of the Gender Glasses project is available online to support the work of ministries on gender equality. Moreover, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, jointly with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare and the government digital learning environment eOppiva, developed an online training session on gender mainstreaming. This is intended for personnel of the Central Government. Its purpose is to train government staff on the importance of gender equality and equity. It is free and open in the government digital learning environment eOppiva website.

Source: (EIGE, 2022^[10]; Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2022^[11]; Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2013^[12]; EIGE, 2022^[13]).

D. Gender equality initiatives are effectively co-ordinated across institutions at different levels of government

Self-assessment questions

- Is there a government-wide mechanism across governmental bodies and with non-governmental stakeholders (e.g. civil society organisations) to ensure gender equality initiatives are co-ordinated effectively?
- Is there adequate level of representation within inter-ministerial committees tasked with advancing the political agenda and monitoring gender equality?

Why it is important?

Since gender equality work spans a range of policy areas, mechanisms are needed to co-ordinate this work. Such mechanisms or groups can help to keep gender issues on the political agenda, prevent duplication, and allow stakeholders to collaborate and share expertise and experience. They can involve a broad array of stakeholders and levels of engagement (e.g. senior management across government institutions, gender focal points, advisory councils, gender ombuds, committees and working groups).

It is important to ensure the right level of representation for the task required. For example, an inter-ministerial commission tasked with promoting the political agenda and monitoring gender equality would require cabinet level representation, rather than representatives from different units within government institutions (e.g. human resources or administrative departments), who might be less able to influence broader policy and priority setting or to translate the decisions of the commission into concrete follow up actions.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establish co-ordinating bodies or committees within government and issue regulations or legislation to ensure vertical and horizontal co-ordination on gender equality and mainstreaming;

- Define the role of central gender equality institutions within the co-ordinating bodies or committees to promote effective leadership;
- Ensure that any decision undertaken by co-ordinating bodies or committees are reflected in decisions of line ministries and other government institutions;
- Establish and regulate meetings and committees where non-governmental stakeholders can participate and provide feedback on the government's implementation of its gender equality and mainstreaming strategy;
- Ensure that diverse institutions are represented within co-ordinating bodies or committees with the right level of competences and authority within the government at all levels.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Vertical and horizontal co-ordination mechanisms for gender equality and mainstreaming within government are missing; co-ordination efforts are informal and fragmented and lack clear leadership;
- Lack of effective co-ordination between governmental institutions, social partners and civil society, which weakens the overall implementation of the gender equality strategy;
- Decisions, orientation and guidelines provided within co-ordination bodies are not implemented and followed up at the level of individual institutions;
- Members of co-ordinating bodies or committees are not sufficiently influential within the co-ordinating body.

Box 1.7. Good practice example(s): Co-ordination for gender equality

Austria's Inter-Ministerial Working Group

In Austria, the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming/Gender Budgeting (IMAG GMB) supports and facilitates the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in all federal ministries and at all political levels. Chaired by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and composed of ministry experts in gender mainstreaming, the group is tasked to exchange information on initiatives and experiences, engage with federal provinces offer evaluation support in ongoing projects and measures. Another important mechanism to co-ordinate gender equality is the dialogue among all ministries and supreme organs which is called the inter-ministerial co-ordination of the equality between women and men within the instrument of performance informed budgeting. The Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport is responsible for this co-ordination and monitors, supports and develops the methods, processes and results of the gender equality objectives and activities. The efforts undertaken and the progress in respect of the inter-ministerial co-ordination are evaluated and reported annually to the parliament and the public.

The Czech Republic's Council for Gender Equality

In the Czech Republic, the Government Council for Gender Equality is the permanent advisory body in gender equality attached to the Office of the Government. It comprises of the representatives of line ministries, representatives of other central organs (e.g. the Czech Statistical Office, the Public Defender of Human Rights), representatives of non-governmental sector, and experts. The member of the Government (i.e. Cabinet Member) responsible for the gender equality agenda – currently the Prime Minister – is the Chair of the Council. The Department of Gender Equality, the central gender institution of the Czech Republic, serves as the Council's Secretariat. Its mandate includes co-ordinating the main directions of ministerial policies in gender equality; providing recommendations to the government on

conceptual directions and policy and initiative proposals regarding policies in various areas of gender equality; and, monitoring the implementation of strategic documents and evaluating the effectiveness of measures taken in this regard. The Council can also establish committees and working groups as needed, dealing with specific issues in the area of gender equality.

Iceland's Ministerial Committee on Gender Equality

Established in December 2017, the Ministerial Committee on Gender Equality co-ordinates the work of the Prime Minister's Office and the government in the field of gender equality in Iceland. The Committee brings together the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International and Development Cooperation, the Minister of Social Affairs and Children, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. Other ministries take part in the meetings of the Committee based on the needs and in accordance with the decision of the Prime Minister, who chairs the meetings.

Spain's Inter-ministerial Commission for Equality between Women and Men

Regulated by Royal Decree 1370/2007, the Inter-ministerial Commission for Equality between Women and Men actively supervises the integration of the principle of equality in the actions taken by the Central Government, while co-ordinating line ministries with regards to the implementation of policies aimed at promoting gender equality and tackling gender-based violence. In particular, the Commission co-ordinates and oversees the preparation of the government's periodic report on the application of the equality principle in all its actions, as established by Spain's Organic Law on Equality, and monitors and guides the development and implementation of the gender impact reports and other actions of the equality unit established at ministerial level. Representatives of all line ministries have a seat in the Commission, which convenes at least twice a year.

Source: (OECD, 2022^[14]; OECD, 2023^[15]); Information provided by the Governments of Iceland as part of the OECD (2021), Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance (unpublished); Information provided by Government of Spain in 2021; (Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial del Estado, n.d.^[16]).

1.3. ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND MAINSTREAMING

Key Provision of the *OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*

Consider establishing or strengthening capacity of independent institutions (such as Independent Commissions, Supreme Audit Institutions, Ombuds Offices), and advisory bodies (e.g. Government councils) to monitor the implementation of gender equality strategies, integrate gender issues in policy making, and facilitate regular reporting, audits and measurement. To be effective, such oversight should be undertaken in a balanced manner and avoid prescriptive approaches to foster continuous improvement while enabling to track progress in gender equality.

1.3.1. Priority checklist for accountability for gender equality and mainstreaming

- A. Oversight institutions and advisory bodies are mandated and able to monitor implementation of government wide gender equality and mainstreaming policy
- B. Government takes appropriate actions to implement the recommendations of oversight institutions

1.3.2. Self-assessment tool

A. Oversight institutions and advisory bodies are mandated and able to monitor implementation of government wide gender equality and mainstreaming policy

Self-assessment questions

- Do oversight institutions and advisory bodies have a clear mandate to monitor and provide recommendations to government with respect to the implementation of national gender equality and/or mainstreaming strategies?
- Is gender expertise available – within institutions themselves or through co-operation with specialised gender quality institutions – to support oversight institutions and advisory bodies in effectively monitoring the implementation of gender equality and/or mainstreaming strategies?
- Do oversight institutions and advisory bodies have a framework and a mechanism to measure progress vis-à-vis the implementation of gender equality and/or mainstreaming strategies?
- Can oversight institutions effectively communicate gender equality outcomes and disseminate the results of audits and gender equality measurements to citizens?

Why it is important?

Sound accountability and oversight that involves reporting to the highest possible level of government increases the likelihood that gender mainstreaming initiatives will be successful and sustainable, and that gender equality will remain a legislative priority. In many OECD countries, oversight institutions play both a pre-emptive and “corrective” (or recourse) role. Oversight institutions can include parliaments, supreme audit institutions or ombuds office. Independent oversight institutions and advisory bodies have a unique view of government and can provide neutral, objective evaluations on policy formulation, implementation, evaluation and outcomes.

Oversight and accountability institutions can also play an important role in communicating to citizens about gender equality outcomes, gender mainstreaming strategies and gender equality concerns such as violence against women or the gender pay gap.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Ensure oversight institutions and advisory bodies are mandated and given sufficient authority to monitor, oversee and promote the implementation of gender equality over all of government;
- Provide independent oversight institutions and parliamentary bodies with the capacity (resources, staff, expertise) to monitor, oversee and promote the implementation of gender equality over all of government;
- Oversight institutions and advisory bodies established a framework and a mechanism to measure progress of the implementation – including a regulated process, an analytical framework and specific indicators.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Oversight responsibilities lay within government institutions instead of independent bodies – therefore compromising reliable results;
- Oversight and advisory institutions have vague/weak mandates and authority with regard to monitoring gender equality strategies;
- Oversight and advisory institutions are inadequately staffed and resourced;
- Gender equality strategies' monitoring efforts are conducted without a clear analytical and measurement framework - therefore producing results which are not robust and comparable through time;
- Monitoring efforts are not conducted regularly.

Box 1.8. Good practice example(s): Providing institutional oversight for gender equality goals

Ireland's Joint Parliamentary Committee

In December 2021, the Parliament of Ireland (Oireachtas) established a Joint Committee on Gender Equality consisting of members from both Houses of Parliament. The Joint Committee is tasked to consider the recommendations in the Report of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality, and it is to report to the Parliament within nine months of its first public meeting. The key functions of the committee are related to reviewing draft legislation, monitoring the work of government departments, and advising on policy issues related to Gender Equality. Among its powers is the power to invite submissions, hold hearings with the Minister for Justice, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science; Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth; and Minister of Health. It is also empowered to hold hearings with diverse stakeholders and publish reports.

European Court of Auditors' Audit on Gender Mainstreaming

In 2021, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) published an audit report which assessed whether the Commission had used gender mainstreaming in the European Union (EU) budget to promote equality between women and men. More specifically, it looked if gender mainstreaming had been applied in the EU budget, assessed if the Commission's framework for supporting gender mainstreaming was appropriate, and analysed if the EU's budget cycle took gender equality into account.

Among the conclusions, it is possible to highlight that the Commission has not yet lived up to its commitment to gender mainstreaming in the EU budget. Contrary, the Commission's institutional framework does not yet fully support the implementation of gender mainstreaming, and the Commission's gender-equality strategy did not sufficiently promote the use of gender mainstreaming. The Auditor's report also launched a series of recommendations for improving the Commission's framework and translating its commitment to gender mainstreaming into specific actions. Some of these recommendations are: clarifying roles regarding gender mainstreaming in all policy areas and making training on gender mainstreaming available to all staff.

Source: (OECD, 2022^[14]; European Court of Auditors, 2021^[17]).

B. Government takes appropriate actions to implement the recommendations of oversight institutions

Self-assessment questions

- Is there an established mechanism to address the findings and recommendations of gender equality monitoring and auditing reports?
- Are there clear responsibilities for the implementation of responses to gender equality monitoring and auditing results?
- Are line ministries and other government institutions equipped and accountable to undertake appropriate actions to implement the recommendations made by oversight institutions?

Why it is important?

Regulatory mechanisms are needed to ensure that the recommendations of oversight institutions are implemented throughout the government. These mechanisms should clearly define procedures, timelines, actors involved, objectives and measurement for tracking the implementation of the recommendations and addressing existing gaps.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Identify a response mechanism – including procedures, methodology and timelines, and indicating actors involved and their responsibilities – for tracking the implementation of the recommendations and addressing existing gaps;
- Ensure financial and human resources are allocated for the implementation of the recommendations at the level of individual institutions.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Lack of a response mechanism – results and recommendations of gender equality monitoring and auditing efforts remain overlooked;
- The response mechanism does not involve all relevant actors, rendering it ineffective;
- The response mechanism does not translate into individual institutions' responses – also lacking adequate resourcing.

Box 1.9. Good practice example(s): Implementing recommendations from oversight bodies

Canada's Audits on Gender-based Analysis Plus

In Canada, the Office of the Auditor General, has undertaken several audits on the implementation of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus). The audits performed on gender-based analysis in 2009 and in 2015 found that, despite efforts to improve, significant barriers remained to GBA Plus implementation. In response to the Fall 2015 Report of the Auditor General of Canada and the gaps identified by it, the SWC, PCO, and TBS committed to work together, along with other federal departments, through a plan called "Status of Women Canada, Privy Council Office, and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat Action Plan (2016-2020)". This plan included the specific activities and deadline target to which each of these institutions committed to overcome the highlighted gaps. A follow-up audit was performed in 2022. This audit focused on determining whether the Privy Council Office, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, and Women and Gender Equality Canada advanced on the implementation of Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) in government through their responses to selected recommendations from the Auditor General of Canada's Fall 2015 reports. The overall results highlight that the three institutions have taken action to identify and address the barriers to implementing the GBA plus. Yet, the findings highlight scope for strengthening and intensifying the effort to help departments and agencies fully integrate the GBA Plus. Moreover, they found that gaps persist in departments' and agencies' capacity to perform the GBA Plus, including the availability and use of disaggregated data. The audit also found weaknesses in monitoring and reporting across the government.

Austria's Audit on Gender-Responsive Budgeting

In Austria, the Court of Audit (ACA) has the responsibility to monitor the implementation of federally mandated gender-responsive budgeting. For example, in 2017, the ACA pointed out pronounced gender differences in earned income as part of its audit on gender aspects of income tax law. In 2020, the ACA's follow-up audit showed that the Federal Ministry of Finance had fully implemented 2 of the 11 assessed recommendations fully, and 7 in part (2 remained unheeded). It recommended the ministry to pursue the implementation of adequate measures to reduce the gender pay gap.

Source: (Government of Canada, 2022^[18]; Office of the Auditor General of Canada, n.d.^[19]); Information provided by the Government of Austria as part of the OECD (2021), Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance (unpublished).

1.4. MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY PERFORMANCE

Key Provision of the *OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*

Strengthen the evidence base and systematically measure progress towards gender equality performance, based on gender impact indicators and measurable outcomes, by:

- developing and implementing evaluation, measurement and accountability frameworks and indicators and collecting data to regularly assess and report on performance of gender equality and mainstreaming strategies, initiatives, public policies and programmes at appropriate levels of government. Consider building capacity of public institutions based on these evaluations;
- actively promoting data dissemination and ensuring affordable, effective and timely access to performance information on gender equality and mainstreaming, that allows for tracking results against targets, monitoring progress towards socio- economic development and for comparison with international and other benchmarks; and
- increasing co-ordination among data collecting and producing bodies and collaboration with relevant stakeholders with a view to developing better gender impact indicators.

1.4.1. *Priority checklist for measuring progress towards gender equality performance*

- A. Government performance on national gender equality goals is regularly assessed and monitored at appropriate levels of government
- B. Data and information on the outcomes of gender equality policies and programmes are collected, accessible and actively disseminated
- C. Relevant data collecting/producing bodies work in co-ordination and based on agreed upon gender impact indicators

1.4.2. *Self-assessment tool*

A. Government performance on national gender equality goals is regularly assessed and monitored at appropriate levels of government

Self-assessment questions

- Does the national gender equality strategy establish a monitoring mechanism which tackles different levels of government?
- Does the national gender equality strategy include impact indicators?
- Have line ministries and other government institutions developed institutional indicators to translate national gender impact indicators into sector specific indicators?
- Have line ministries and other government institutions' monitoring and evaluation units been trained on reporting on the implementation of gender equality goals;
- Do line ministries and other government institutions regularly engage in monitoring requirements?

Why it is important?

Robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are vital for ensuring that gender equality strategies achieve their intended impacts. Monitoring assesses progress, improves decision making, allows programmes to be adjusted for greater impact, and enhances accountability and institutional learning. It also helps policy makers understand where resources are needed. The first step in monitoring is developing indicators and data (see Section C. Relevant data collecting/producing bodies work in co-ordination and based on agreed upon gender impact indicators).

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establish a national monitoring mechanism as part of the national gender equality strategy indicating institutional responsibilities for measuring progress;
- Establish and adequately resource a capacity development plan to strengthen government capacity to collect relevant data and information against set gender impact indicators;
- Strengthen the capacity of monitoring and evaluation units within line ministries and other government institutions to collect, manage relevant data and regularly report on gender equality indicators;
- Line ministries and other government institutions adopt (sector) specific gender impact indicators in line with national gender equality indicators and international benchmarks.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Gender equality monitoring mechanism remains vague and roles and responsibilities inadequately defined;
- Insufficient allocation of (financial and human) resources to empower institutions' monitoring capacity, assuming that adding a "gender focus" would not require additional resources;
- Focus only on "input indicators", like amount of training and number of beneficiaries, instead of "outcome indicators", that describe and measure the outcomes of these efforts;
- Lack of clear leadership and accountability frameworks makes monitoring efforts ineffective and fragmented.



Box 1.10. Good practice example(s): Monitoring performance on gender equality goals

Austria's Performance Management Mechanism

Austria has put in place a performance management process including *ex ante* strategic planning and *ex post* internal evaluation processes. This ensures that all ministries and supreme organs (e.g. the constitutional court, the court of audit) define at least one and maximum five medium-term gender-related outcome objectives with at least one and maximum five indicators on the budget section level as well as at least one and maximum five measures on the global budget level in order to ensure pursuing the goals set. These, along with planned measures, are in turn translated into a performance mandate, which determines the actions taken in relation to gender equality by the ministries and supreme organs. Results of self-evaluations and monitoring processes of the policies are ultimately compiled in a standardised 'gender' report and submitted to Parliament and the public.

The Czech Republic's Gender Equality Strategy and its Indicators

The Czech Republic adopted the Gender Equality Strategy for 2021-2030 in 2021. The document provides a solid foundation for implementing gender equality commitments as it sets out high-level goals and complements these with concretely defined measures and corresponding indicators. It identifies roles and responsibilities for entities across the whole-of-government. The strategy also puts in place an annual reporting and monitoring mechanism, requiring ministries and other co-operating entities to report to the Office of the Government (more specifically to the Department for Gender Equality) regarding its implementation. This mechanism consists of a self-assessment of the level of implementation by the responsible entities and an assessment by the Department for Gender Equality.

Source: Information provided by the Government of Austria in 2022; (OECD, 2023^[15]).

B. Data and information on the outcomes of gender equality policies and programmes are collected, accessible and actively disseminated

Self-assessment questions

- Are specific institutions/departments/units mandated and able to collect relevant data and information based on agreed upon gender impact indicators?
- Are data and information (regularly) collected at different levels of government with their accessibility centralised within a specific institution?
- Are data and information collected adequately circulated to relevant actors and awareness raised on remaining gaps and challenges?
- Is the national statistics bureau engaged in collecting gender disaggregated data and supporting data collection against national gender impact indicators?

Why it is important?

For decision and policy making to be gender-sensitive and evidence-based, it must rely on high quality, readily accessible gender disaggregated data. Without such data, it is very difficult to understand the impact of gender equality and mainstreaming strategies and initiatives or the consequences of such policies. Data on gender equality and mainstreaming in a country should be easy to access and allow results to be tracked against national and international targets and

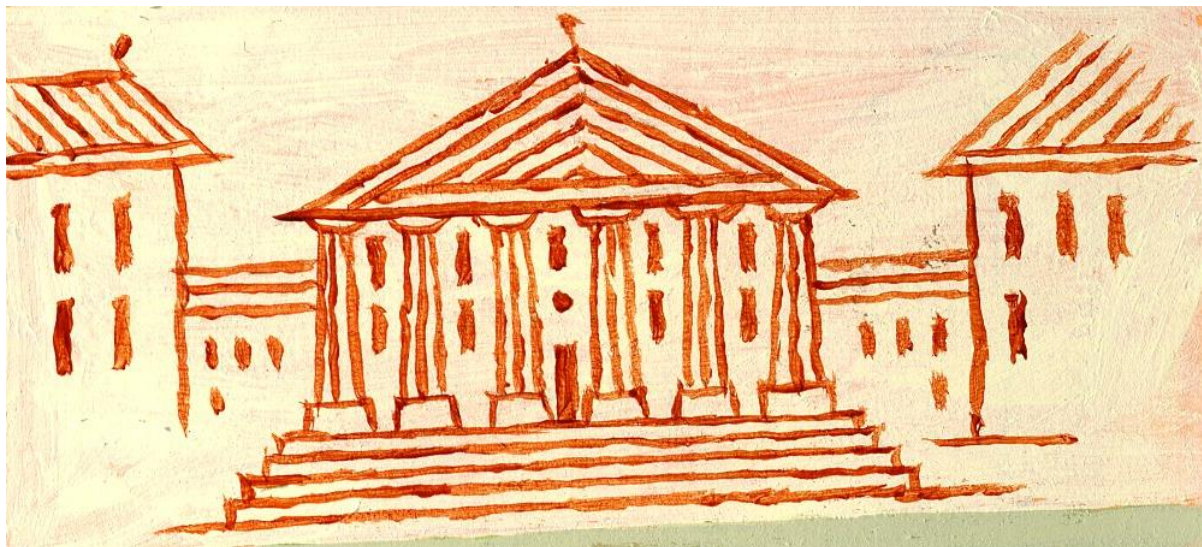
benchmarks. Although information to measure empowerment of women and men is increasingly available in most countries, significant gaps remain in areas such as gender bias and gender-based discrimination, gender-based violence, opportunities to reconcile professional and private life and entrepreneurship. Developing common regional or international indicators could encourage countries to use such measurement tools.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Involve and engage the National Statistics Bureau to ensure collection of gender-disaggregated data across all sectors and in line with national gender impact indicators;
- Work with relevant stakeholders (including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), service providers, etc.) to collect gender-disaggregated data against national gender impact indicators and in fields relevant to measure progress regarding national gender equality goals;
- Promote national, regional and international co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms to promote consistent gender equality data collection and measurement;
- Require data disaggregation by gender, as well as the incorporation of a gender perspective within national statistical legislation;
- Ensure that reliable data management systems are in place for collecting gender-disaggregated data.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Gender impact indicators are vague and do not allow for tracking results against targets or for comparison with international and regional benchmarks;
- Data collecting and producing bodies lack the necessary resources to strengthen gender focus and standardise sex disaggregation (training, specialised expertise, budget) to produce gender-disaggregated data;
- Relevant data and information are collected not regularly and not across all sectors;
- Data and information collected remain stored across multiple institutions and are not easily accessible.



Box 1.11. Good practice example(s): Production and dissemination of gender statistics

Australia's approach to gender statistics and indicators

The Australian government, through the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), collects sex-disaggregated data sets (through over 20 national surveys) to track progress towards gender equality. The data sets provided by these surveys assist the Australian Government in its public policy development in areas of public safety and justice, health service provision and infrastructure, housing, socio-economic factors, and economic affairs.

Additionally, the ABS publishes the Australian Gender Indicators annually which comprise 56 key indicators and a further 96 related or detailed data series across 6 domains of interest, namely: 1) economic security; 2) education; 3) health; 4) work and family balance; 5) safety and justice; and 6) democracy, governance and citizenship. The Gender Indicators are drawn from a wide range of ABS resources and statistics from other sources, including the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

Portugal's project on gender statistics

In 2019, Statistics Portugal launched the National Statistics System on Gender Equality project to review, update and enhance the content and coverage of the Gender Database (GDB), so that a more comprehensive system of gender statistics and information on various dimensions of (in)equality between women and men can be made available for policy users and for society in general. The GDB aims to monitor a set of actions and strategic instruments, to help in the promotion of a more profound knowledge of the situation of women and men in Portugal and serve as a basis for political and economic decision making through a set of updated indicators on Gender Equality.

The Czech Republic's annual gender statistics publication

The Czech Statistical Office (CSO) is the main body responsible for collecting gender-related data in the Czech Republic. Its leading role is to be the national co-ordinator on methodological and technical aspects to ensure the continuity, reliability, and validity of collected statistical data. It is also in charge of processing data collected by ministries to produce national statistics related to gender equality. Moreover, the CSO co-operates with various stakeholders, including line ministries, in collecting gender-disaggregated data. Since 2001, the CSO has been publishing an annual comprehensive publication called "Focus on Women and Men", which presents the latest statistical data on women and men in various spheres.

The 2021 CSO annual publication "Focus on Women and Men" included varied data on different topics such as population, health, families, education research, innovation, and information technologies. This and all past reports are available online for public consumption.

Source: (OECD, 2021^[20]; OECD, 2022^[14]; OECD, 2023^[15]).

C. Relevant data collecting/producing bodies work in co-ordination and based on agreed upon gender impact indicators

Self-assessment questions

- Are data collecting and producing bodies collaborating with one another and with relevant stakeholders to gather data against national gender impact indicators?
- Is there alignment between indicators utilised at different levels of government to monitor outcomes of gender equality strategies and initiatives with international gender equality indicators?
- Is there an agreed strategy or mechanism to convey relevant data collected in the country to measure progress concerning the realisation of national gender equality goals?

Why it is important?

To ensure that the most relevant data and indicators for gender equality are collected and disseminated effectively, data collecting and producing bodies (such as national statistical offices) co-ordinate their work with other relevant governmental (gender focal points, line ministries, etc.) and non-governmental (such as civil society organisations, universities, think tanks and experts) stakeholders. Central gender equality institutions also play an important role in working with ministries to define and co-ordinate their needs for gender-disaggregated data (see Section above for the roles and responsibilities of various institutional actors to measure and evaluate the performance of gender equality and mainstreaming strategies and initiatives on the basis of data and indicators).

What are the key actions to consider?

- Promote formal co-ordination mechanisms among national statistical offices and key institutions and stakeholders tasked with implementing gender equality and mainstreaming throughout government (line ministries, central gender equality institutions, etc.);
- Promote co-ordination at the regional and international levels to align national gender impact indicators with regional and international ones;
- Increase data accessibility.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Limited co-ordination between national statistical offices and civil society representatives for the identification of effective gender indicators;
- Lack of alignment and comprehensive/co-ordinated engagement among data collecting and producing bodies;
- Insufficient co-ordination mechanisms among national statistical offices and key institutions tasked with implementing gender equality and mainstreaming throughout government (line ministries, central gender equality institutions, etc.).

Box 1.12. Good practice example(s): Developing gender impact indicators

Israel's Gender Equality Index

The Gender Equality Division at the Civil Service Commission of Israel works to promote and implement gender equality in the public service – Government ministries, the Defense and the Health systems of approximately 80 000 employees. To support this initiative, the Gender Equality Index has been developed to measure gender equality in the various areas in every government ministry and in the civil service in general. An interactive dashboard presents data and gender equality projects of each ministry such as the number of women within tender candidates and onboarding employees, salary components, organisational climate, percentage of women within the senior ranks and more.

United Kingdom's Gender Equality Monitor

The Gender Equality Monitor (GEM) of the United Kingdom brings together a suite of 24 indicators in a single place to monitor gender equality across five key areas:

- Economic participation and progression
- Attitudes and leadership
- Education and skills
- Crime and justice
- Health and well-being

Moreover, in December 2020, the Government launched the Equality Data Programme to gather data to better understand the barriers people from every background face across the United Kingdom.

Source: (OECD, 2021^[20]); Information provided by the Government of United Kingdom as part of the OECD (2021), Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance (unpublished).

1.5. COMPLAINT AND APPEAL MECHANISMS TO PROTECT RIGHTS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Key Provision of the *OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*

Establish or maintain effective, independent, impartial and efficient complaint and appeal mechanisms to protect rights for gender equality and consider complaints in an efficient, competent and impartial manner.

1.5.1. Priority checklist for complaint and appeal mechanisms to protect rights for gender equality

- A. Effective, independent and impartial complaint and appeal mechanisms exist to protect rights for gender equality
- B. Complaints are considered in an efficient, competent and impartial manner

1.5.2. Self-assessment tool

A. Effective, independent and impartial complaint and appeal mechanisms exist to protect rights for gender equality

Self-assessment questions

- Are independent complaint mechanisms in place to protect women's rights and cases of gender-based discrimination?
- Does your country have an Equality Body assisting victims of discrimination, monitoring and reporting on discrimination issues, and promoting equality?
- Are government institutions and their staff aware of those complaint mechanisms?
- Are complaints dealt with in an efficient and impartial manner?

Why it is important?

Independent monitoring mechanisms, such as gender equality or human rights commissions, provide independent recourse for complaints related to gender-based violation of rights and discrimination and oversee the implementation of gender equality commitments of the government. Such independent oversight bodies need sufficient authority over national government institutions to be truly independent and impartial. They can help provide checks on various government entities, and also contribute to the longevity and sustainability of gender equality reform during periods of change in the political environment. Equality bodies can provide reliable information about the challenges faced by victims of gender-based discrimination and gender-based crimes (including gender-based violence) and on the challenges in the actual implementation of gender equality policies in the country.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establish an independent complaint and appeal mechanism to protect rights for gender equality and consider complaints related to gender-based discrimination;
- Ensure that there is political commitment to ensure the independence, impartiality and sustainability of gender equality complaint and appeal mechanisms/bodies;
- Conduct communication and information campaigns regarding gender equality complaint and appeal mechanisms to promote their existence and accessibility.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Absence of complaint and appeal mechanisms or bodies to protect rights for gender equality;
- Gender equality complaint and appeal mechanisms are not known or accessible.

Box 1.13. Good practice example(s): Independent complaint and appeal mechanisms

Norway's Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud

Since 2006 Norway has had an Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet) that represents the interests of those who are discriminated against. Its main task is to promote equality and fight against discrimination based on "gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and age." This independent agency, with tribunal, promotional and litigation faculties, actively engages in public hearings, provides comments on laws and public plans, engages in public debates, and provides information to the media. The Ombud is free from instructions from the Government as it is obliged to monitor Norway's human rights fulfilment and offer guidance to individuals' employers, and organisations with the vision of contributing to the creation of a society where "power and influence is equally distributed, freedom is available to all, and dignity is inherent to each individual."

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud was established in January 2006 by an act of the Parliament and is a result of a merge between the former Gender Equality Ombud, the Gender Equality Center, and the Center for combating ethnic discrimination. The Ombud's mandate has been increased throughout the years, including a wide range of discrimination grounds such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Spain's Defensor del Pueblo

In Spain, the Defensor del Pueblo (Ombudsperson) is the High Commissioner of the Parliament responsible for defending the fundamental rights and civil liberties of citizens by monitoring the activity of the administration and public authorities. It is an independent institution that performs its duties with independence and impartiality, does not receive orders or instructions from any authority and performs its duties with discretion. It reports to the Parliament and is included in the General State Budget within the budget of the Parliament.

Citizens can request the intervention of the Ombudsperson, free of charge, to investigate allegedly irregular action. This office is also able to intervene *ex officio* in cases that come to its attention despite the lack of a formal complaint. In the area of equal treatment, the institution carries out actions "in relation to any type of discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, disability or any other personal or social condition or circumstance". Among different actions related to gender equality, the Ombudsperson, in its 2021 annual report, it strongly highlighted the need to pay more attention to the issue of violence against women.

Source: (The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, n.d.^[21]; Defensor del Pueblo, n.d.^[22]).

B. Complaints are considered in an efficient, competent and impartial manner

Self-assessment questions

- Are gender equality complaint and appeal mechanisms accessible to a broad spectrum of potential users?
- Are cases of gender-based discrimination always addressed?
- Are cases of gender-based discrimination dealt with by competent staff?
- Are gender equality complaint and appeal bodies independent in their legal framework, functioning modality and resourcing mechanisms?

- Are gender equality complaint and appeal bodies given the right level of authority and influence to effectively deal with cases of gender-based discrimination?

Why it is important?

To fulfil their mandate, complaint and appeal mechanisms need to have sufficient human and financial resources, as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The reporting mechanisms should be tailored to the needs of the potential users, and the complaint handling procedure should be publicised to ensure transparency and accountability. The complaints review process should be timely, independent, objective and impartial. There should also be an appeal process whereby an independent panel reviews the result of a complaint or of a decision on a complaint.

What are the key actions to consider?

- Ensure that independent gender equality complaint and appeal mechanisms/bodies have access to the necessary funding and expert staffing;
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible, and inform the complainant on potential follow-up steps and timeline;
- Widely disseminate information on how the complaint mechanism works, including timelines; who, where and how can a complaint be submitted; what outcomes can be expected; what rights and protections are guaranteed, including confidentiality and anonymity; where and how the complaint can be followed up, including appeal process, etc.;
- Establish an independent appeal panel, as well as criteria on its independence and operations.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Insufficient human and financial resources available to complaint and appeal mechanisms/bodies;
- Unclear timelines and procedures for how complaints are handled;
- Lack of clear information on who to turn to and how the complaint will be handled (responsibilities, timelines, outcomes) by the appeal mechanisms/bodies;
- Absent or insufficient safeguards to protect independence of an appeal mechanism/body.

Box 1.14. Good practice example(s): Sweden's Equality Ombudsman

The Equality Ombudsman (DO) works to combat discrimination on grounds of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. The Equality Ombudsman examines complaints concerning discrimination and harassment, and assesses how employers, higher education institutions and schools work to prevent discrimination.

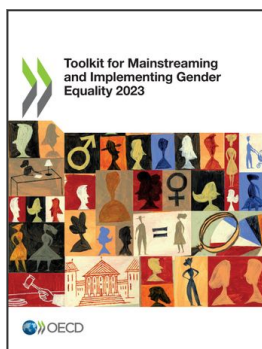
The Equality Ombudsman – an independent government agency - was formed on 1 January 2009. The Ombudsman was established by an Act of Parliament (Discrimination Act 2008:567). As set out in the Act (2008:568) concerning the Equality Ombudsman, the Ombudsman shall supervise compliance with the Discrimination Act. To this end, the Ombudsman may, inter alia, receive and consider complaints from individuals asserting that they have been the victims of discrimination. Following such an investigation the Equality Ombudsman may bring a legal action for damages on behalf of the individual concerned.

Source: Information provided by the Government of Sweden as part of the OECD (2021), Survey on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance (unpublished).

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