

Manual for Applying Gender Audit in the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum



The project benefits from the support through the EaP CSF Re-granting Scheme. Within its Re-granting Scheme, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) supports projects of the EaP CSF members with a regional dimension that contribute to achieving the mission and objectives of the Forum.

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Introduction

This document is the result of a cooperation among the representatives of gender subgroups of National Platforms (NP) of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum from Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine and is the manual for applying gender audits.

The main **objective** of this manual is to present a tool to the National Platforms (NP) of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, which would allow them to better consider gender dimensions of their work (gender mainstreaming).

The promotion of gender equality for National Platforms (NP) of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is a fundamental element of common values for democratic transformation and European integration of Eastern partnership. Gender issues, human rights and democratization, as well as civic participation are inextricably intertwined.

In a situation of a fragmented civil society and instability that places apart the countries of post-Soviet space, gender agenda has the potential for the commencement of integration. It can be viewed as the foundation for consolidation and cooperation among the civil society organizations of Eastern Partnership countries – both within each country itself, as well as at international level, in terms of initiating and executing joint projects, conducting advocacy campaigns, as well as learning from each other's experiences. The more participants from National Platforms (NP) of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum are engaged in projects aimed at ensuring gender equality, the more probable it would be that those initiatives would experience sustained development.

Nevertheless, the study conducted within the framework of the project on the Development of the Unified Gender Policy for National Platforms (NP) of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum¹ showed that the gender theme continues to remain marginal when compared to the protection of political rights, ecology and other issues. Among the participants of National Platforms (NP) of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum there is still a lack of clear understanding of gender equality issues, as well as the role that gender agenda has in terms of it being a cross cutting issue, providing both a value based foundation and potential for collaboration and development.

In the meantime, there are positive examples of complex understanding and promotion of gender agenda, and one can find them in the activities of National Platforms and civil society organizations within each country. From a strategic perspective, National Platforms (NP) of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum for 2016-2018, gender equality along

¹ Development of unified gender equality strategy of national platforms of EaP CSF (Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia). Results of the study. Authors – Irina Solomina, Victoria Shmidt, URL:

other elements of value based foundation is declared and stipulated in the strategy document.

Women's rights and gender equality are part of the fundamental human rights that are guaranteed via various international agreements, resolutions, declarations, platforms and action programs in the sphere of human rights. The main agreement on women's rights is the UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discriminations against women (CEDAW) and its additional protocol. In the meantime, the rights of women and non-discrimination are key components of other UN norms, including the Universal declaration of human rights, International treaties on civil and political rights, International treaties on economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the Declaration on the elimination of violence against women. Other political frameworks that delineate the duties of states in the sphere of gender equality and women's rights include Venice Declaration and Program, Beijing Declaration and Platform for action, Action program of international conference on population and development, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 concerning women, peace and security, etc. The association agreement with the EU not only entails adherence to European democratic values, but also the duty to consider the issues of equality between men and women in the process of development and implementation of legislation, orders, administrative directives, policies and activities.

Although gender mainstreaming is stipulated at the level of objectives of National Platforms (NP) of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, one needs to note that there is a certain resistance to it both at the level of National Platforms, as well as at the level of organizations that are part of it. Gender equality is being excluded from the range of priorities of National platform and its organizations that view it as someone else's problem, thus, exclusively placing it on the shoulders of women's and gender specific organizations. Hence, the theme becomes marginalized

and its agenda gradually evaporates. The gender equality is, therefore, declared at the level of National Platforms (NP) of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum politics, but is not implemented in practice.

This manual considers diverse experiences of authors in conducting gender specific studies and audits on the sector of civil society organizations of countries of Eastern partnership and describes the principles of gender audit, value added of conducting it, stages and methodologies, as well as presents examples of tools that could be used or adapted during the audit itself.

The manual could be used by all interested parties when conducting gender audit in civil society organizations, but most of all it is aimed at the National Platforms (NP) of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and is based on the examples of National platforms of Armenia, Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine. Platforms in their turn are non-formal networks of civil society. Therefore, this manual can be used for conducting gender audits in organizations separately, as well as in formal and non-formal unions, networks, coalitions and associations.

Benefit of using gender approach for National Platforms OF EAP CSF

*What is EaP CSF
and what is the role
and place of National Platforms
in this structure?*

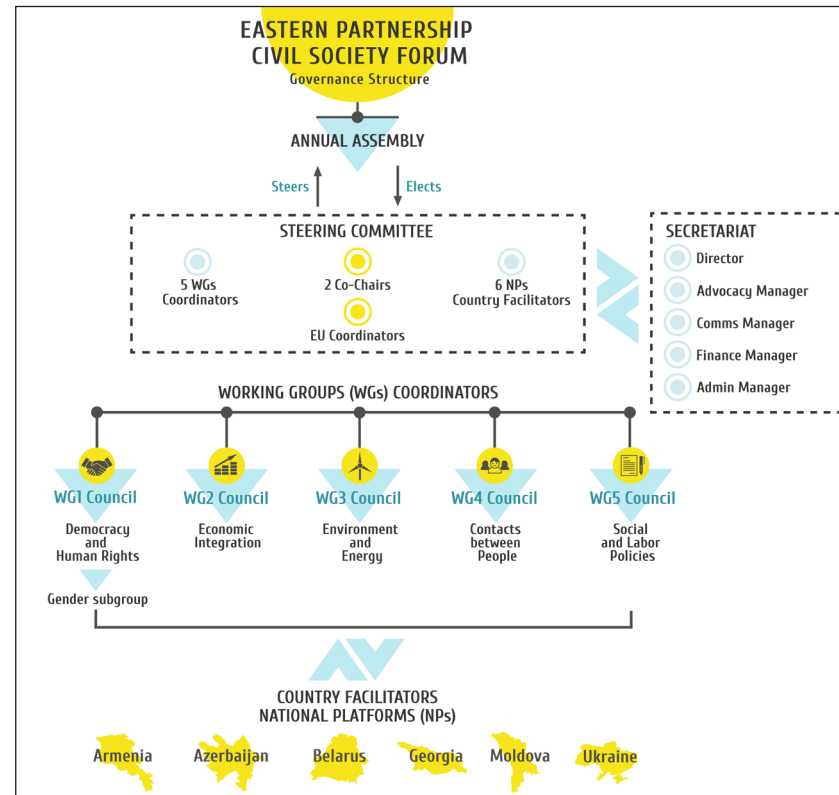
Forum of civil society of Eastern Partnership is a multilevel regional platform of civil society organizations from the EU and six eastern European countries that support the initiative of Eastern Partnership (the eastern dimension of European neighborhood politics). The EP initiative is based on the principles of international law and fundamental values (especially those that are stipulated through the European Conventions), including the following ones: democracy and supremacy of law; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; free market economy with sustained development. The mission of CSF is to advance and strengthen the participation of civil society in development initiatives of EP aligned

with democratic transformation and European integration of countries of EP, including the potential for membership in the EU.

CSF functions based on the principle of joint administration that includes national platforms, thematic working groups, Steering Committee, Secretariat. The operations of structures of CSF, including the Annual Assembly of EaP CSF is guided by the documents adopted by the EaP CSF that is agreed upon with the European Commission and ratified by the structures of CSF.

National Platforms function in all six countries of Eastern partnership, starting from 2011. Membership in the National Platforms is open to all civil society organizations. Within each national platform working groups are established, which reflect the structure of working groups operational at the Forum level, aiming at a better tracking and result generation of work groups at national level. National Platforms meet regularly and hold annual conferences, during which they analyze the role of the platform and its operation, as well as they plan the future steps.²

National Platforms are valuable instruments that contribute to reaching the objectives of Eastern Partnership in each country of it. They were created for the facilitation of active participation of the civil society of each partner country in the process of reforms.



Picture 1. Structure of EaP CSF – to be inserted

² <http://eap-csf.eu/index.php/national-platforms/?lang=ru>

Why National platforms of EaP CSF need gender audit?

Gender equality is one of the key planned results of the EaP CSF (its national platforms and working groups) policies, which is a cross-cutting deliverable.³ This result is reflected in the EaP CSF policy as a “gender equality and non-discrimination” and includes gender mainstreaming, improvement of gender politics, gender statistics and accessibility of data, development of women’s entrepreneurship and creation of jobs for women.

Gender mainstreaming entails the introduction of gender lenses in all policies and practices of all acting entities to ensure full democratic participation and absence of discrimination. This turns gender aspects into compulsory items for consideration during planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all other outcomes and objectives of National platforms’ working groups of EaP CSF and organizations that are part of it.

The main obstacles on the way of realization of goals and policies of CSF in terms of gender equality is not only manifested through the absence of political will (unwillingness to recognize gender equality as a real existing problem), but also through the absence of data that allow to approve or reject the presence of the problem in this sphere, when examining each project and organization. People doubt the existence of gender equality problems and the need to gender mainstream, while forming their opinion mainly based on the existing gender stereotypes and personal experience. The methods of evaluation, both of organizational potential, as well as of

each program and project, when special gender lenses are not applied, lead to a reality, when it is impossible to assess how those problems are perceived by women and men.

The lack of needed competences for the introduction of gender based approach in the actions of National platforms is another quite important factor, which impedes the gender mainstreaming in EaP CSF. In the previously mentioned “EaP CSF Policy Brief. Joint Staff Working Document EaP – Focusing on key priorities and deliverables – Assessment and recommendations by the civil society” (May 2017) the conclusion foresees that objectives set in the sphere of gender equality might not be reached by the set timeline.

Gender audit is a tool that helps to overcome the main obstacles, i. e. it provides data about the real situation in relation to gender equality and shows the need to introduce gender perspective in actions of all entities of EaP CSF. The methodology introduced in this manual in terms of applying gender audit allows to synchronize the positions of all stakeholders and acquire the required competences for the introduction of gender based approach.

The promotion of gender equality within National Platforms of EaP CSF is a common value based foundation in terms of democratic transformation and European integration. The acceptance of values of gender equality and prioritizing of gender agenda synchronizes the declared objectives of national platforms with their actions. This type of a congruence (when words do not diverge from actions) improves the quality of communication between National platforms and European structures, allows to implement consecutive actions towards the democratization and sustainable development. Civil society organization that are members of National platforms, start to better understand European values and standards, as well as they comprehend better the essence of recommended reforms aimed at the European integration and democratic transformation of

³ EaP CSF Policy Brief. Joint Staff Working Document EaP – Focusing on key priorities and deliverables – Assessment and recommendations by the civil society (May, 2017)

countries of Eastern Partnership.

Since questions of gender equality, human rights, democracy and civic participation are directly and irreversibly interlinked, gender agenda has the potential for integration of CSOs of countries of European partnership. It can be viewed as the basis for consolidation and development of collaboration of CSOs of countries of Eastern partnership (including at international level) in developing joint programs and projects, advocacy campaigns and exchange of good practices. The more participants of National platforms of EaP CSF are engaged in projects ensuring gender equality, the more probable it would be that those initiatives experience sustained advancement. Once gaining experience in one cross-cutting issue, the organizations will find it easier to consolidate and join in advocacy campaigns initiated by human rights, ecological organizations or entities that work for the interests of people with disabilities, who currently in the post-Soviet space find it difficult to receive support due to the fragmented and weak consolidation of CSOs.

Concluding this chapter, one may state that the value added of applying gender based approach for National platforms of EaP CSF is as follows below:

- teaching principles of democratization and its integration into the activities;
- aligning policies and practices of National platforms and organizations with the principles of democracy and growing closer to European standards;
- creating conditions for genuine equality and inclusion of women allows National platforms and organizations to benefit from the initiative, experience and competences of women, which previously could have gone non-appreciated or overlooked;

- improving organizational cultures within national platforms and organizations that are part of it;
- eliminating the gap at the level of values between the declaration of the European norm of gender equality and exhibited patriarchal norms typical of traditional societies (when words do not diverge from actions) and as a result leading to the improved understanding among partners and thematic groups;
- utilizing gender agenda as a factor unifying and integrating development cooperation and joint projects;
- advancing the solidarity and competences of consolidation among CSOs along the lines of cross-cutting issues that are of interest to all.

*The conclusions that
National Platforms and
member organization
could derive from gender audit*

Gender audit not only allows to improve the quality of the policies, strategies and actions at the level of National platforms from the perspective of gender equality, but also provides a range of advantages to the organizations that participate in the audit:

- Participation in the audit allows to better understand current challenges and tendencies, improves the effectiveness of activities of National platforms on their way to reaching the objectives of European integration and democratic transformation of their countries.

- Participation in the audit allows to better identify the connections between gender issues and democracy, gender issues and sustainable development, gender issues and economic security and use those for the planning and implementation of more effective programs and projects.
- Gender audit registers the successful experiences and practices on the way of reaching gender equality and creates conditions for the exchange of knowledge.
- Gender audit launches a process of systematic reflection and self-analysis both from the perspective of organizational potential, as well as from the side of the programmatic operations.
- The data collected during the process of organizational audit allows to identify weak points in the structures, processes, organizational culture. The activities that allow to improve the conditions of women and ensure the absence of discriminatory practices lead to the improvement for all the members of the organization (both for women and men). The organizational culture transforms into a more democratic and humanistic one.
- The data collected during the audit allows to identify weak areas in program operations and improve the connectedness of organizations with target groups and local community. “Gender blind” projects and programs often occur since organizations do not pay sufficient attention to communication with target groups in general, they do not conduct a needs assessment and do not have methods of data collection and analysis on gender segregated basis. The qualitative data collection and analysis of economic effectiveness could also help to see the shortcomings of current inequality, as well as identify the advantages of introducing gender based approach.

- The participatory approach applied during gender audit allows to improve communication and understanding among key stakeholders, which further contributes to the improved quality of programmatic and project based activities.
- Conducting gender audit provides data for the baseline in terms of gender equality issues when planning project based operations. This allows to plan concrete actions leading to change and allows to measure the change itself based on the results.
- The participation in gender audit contributes to the improvement of competences of participants and provides specific tools and methods for works in relation to gender equality. The development of plan of action based on the results of the audit allows to further enhance those competences and introduce new modern approaches aimed at the improvement of the organizational potential and quality of programmatic operations.
- The engagement of external experts in the process of gender audit allows National platforms and CSOs to receive specific recommendations concerning the introduction of gender based approaches.

WHAT IS A GENDER AUDIT?

Gender audit is an instrument and a process based on principles of active participation and engagement of interested parties. It contributes to the process of self-learning of methods of effective application of gender mainstreaming in practice for a given organization, ensures perspectives in the process of the analysis, providing reliable data for planning for change.

Gender audit is an instrument, which helps to overcome main obstacles on the way of gender equality – it gives data about the real situation of the issues and shows the indispensability of introducing the gender perspective in actions of subjects of EaP CSF. The suggested methodology of conducting gender audit allows to check the positions of all parties engaged and receive the necessary competencies for the introduction of gender based approach.

Gender audit is within the category of so called “quality audits” that is different from the “financial audits.”

Gender audit:

- Defines to what extent the rules of gender mainstreaming, as well as the system supporting its implementation existing in each organization are effective;
- Monitors and evaluates the relative progress in terms of gender equality;
- Defines initial principles and criteria;
- Identifies “narrow areas” and problems;
- Recommends methods for solving those problems and suggests new, more effective strategies;
- Registers the positive experience in the process of reaching gender equality.

Based on the principles of self-assessment and collective participation, the audit takes into consideration both objective data, as well as views of the employees about the ways to reach gender equality within their organization.

What is not gender audit?

Gender audit is not an external evaluation of actions of National platforms and organizations, that is initiated to criticize with an objective of introducing new procedures without reflection and acceptance. Gender audit is exclusively aimed at the joint efforts to search for better opportunities for

improved functioning of National platforms, their policies, strategies and their alignment with objectives and politics of EaP CSF in the sphere of democracy, gender equality and absence of discrimination. Gender audit can also be used as an instrument for the analysis and improvement of organizational culture, policies and practices, projects and programs of CSOs, which are interested in introducing gender based approaches in their operations.

Principles and ethical considerations during gender audit

Gender audit defines to what extent policies and procedures already in place are effective, as well as to what extent those are upheld in practice. Gender audit evaluates the progress of gender equality, registers the positive experience and achievements, defines the baseline principles, criteria and indicators, identifies problems, recommends methods for solving those problems.

For gender audit to be effective and useful for all, it is necessary to be guided by the following principles:

- **Voluntary participation.** Regardless of the fact, that a group or a subgroup of gender experts could initiate a gender audit, it is necessary to clarify all the gains and risks to all the interested parties that make decisions (governing bodies of National platforms) and reach their meaningful participation. The CSOs can themselves initiate gender audits, creating their own groups of audit management or they can resort to the help of gender experts from gender subgroup under the National platforms.

- **Participatory approach.** All the interested parties are invited to take part in the audit (governing bodies, thematic groups, partners). The application of this approach helps to create an atmosphere of ownership of the process of the audit, including teaching the principles of gender equality, as well as ensuring the sustainability of introduction of gender approach even after the completion of the audit.

- **Creation of realistic expectations.** The gains and advantages for the organizations and networks that decide to undergo gender audit are described above and can serve as important arguments when engaging with stakeholders in the process of the audit. However, during the preparatory stage and when inviting to participate, the audit group risks to create high expectations among interested parties and participants of the process. The risk most particularly appears, when there is an expectation that the audit experts conducting the analysis would be able to diagnose the issues and provide clear cut recommendations to improve the situation. In other words, the audit participants expect a “miracle cure” from the experts, not realizing and accepting their own share of responsibility for planning and implementation of changes. From the perspective of formulating realistic expectations and accepting ownership on the part of the organization both during the process, as well as of the results of the audit, the importance of the participatory approach cannot be underestimated.

- **Balance between the external evaluation and self-assessment.** When choosing or developing the methodology it is preferable to keep the balance between the methods that ensure group reflection of existing state of the affairs, problems, practices and the discussion of the results of the audit (self-assessment). For conducting gender audit, it is preferable to engage external experts,

which would ensure reliable data collection, their interpretation and development of recommendations along with the preparation of the report, as well as the facilitation of group discussions during self-assessment, upon completion and during the preparation of future actions.

- **Upholding the accepted ethical norms for conducting research** (informing at all stages during the execution of the audit, confidentiality, integrity, etc.)

- **Compulsory discussion of the results and recommendations** with the representatives of all the interested parties in order to validate the results and receive feedback.

- **Using the gender audit results for planning the changes** (preparation of the plan of action and result indicators).

- **Organizing the learning process after the audit.** Since gender audit can reveal the lack of competences needed for the introduction of gender based approach, it is recommended to organize trainings for the representatives of National platforms and CSOs that took part in the audit.

The application of those principles and the intention of the auditors to maximize the engagement of all the interested parties ensures the effectiveness of the audit and the sustainability of using the results. When any of the principles are overlooked the risk of resisting the application of gender audit is heightened, leading to the overall reluctance to gender mainstream.

What should be the focus during gender audit?

The main stages of gender audit are described in the following section. Here we want to highlight the two more important stages, which without the acceptance of the principles of implementing gender audit could be considered as “auxiliary” ones. Those are the preliminary and final stages. There is a certain risk that the audit group would concentrate its efforts directly on the instrumental, fact finding part, i. e. what and which aspects to assess, which instruments to choose for the assessment, how to sample it, how to write the report? Whereas, the more important results of gender audit are the creation of conditions that would increase the interest in gender mainstreaming, voluntary participation in gender audit and responsibility for the planning and implementation of changes.

The preparatory stage is very important. It is necessary to get both the political will of the governing body, as well as the support of the employees/members of the organization or structures of the National platform (it can be the secretariat, coordinating body, working group, etc.). In this process, it might be useful to consider along with the organization/structure all the benefits and risks of applying gender audit, discuss all the possible reasons for the management not wanting to conduct the audit and the employees or members not wanting to participate in it.

After the receipt of the argument from the top management to conduct the gender audit, it is necessary to provide the appropriate communication with all the interested parties (managers, personnel, members of the organization, volunteers, etc.), which are to be engaged in the process of the audit. It might be necessary to discuss/explain the following aspects:

- Explain why the organization/structure participates in the audit,

what are the stages and the schedule, what are the benefits for the organization and the personnel?

- Clarify the expectations from gender audit, explain how the results are going to be applied and used, how the plan for implementation is going to be devised and executed?
- Explain the levels of engagement in the process of audit for the personnel/members of the organization, which methods of assessment/self-assessment are going to be used, what is to be expected from the participants of the audit?

The importance of the concluding stage – *planning for the change.*

The introduction of gender based approach is based on three main principles:

Vision: policy of gender equality.

Action: implementation of the policy via the plan for actions.

Verification: gender audit with the aim of evaluating the results.

In the process of managing the introduction of gender based approach or any other change, these stages are part of the project management cycle.

For gender audit to fulfil its verification role in the cycle of introducing gender based approach, it is necessary for the organization to have a gender policy and gender action plan. However, as National platforms and member organizations in their majority do not have a gender policy or action plan for the introduction of gender equality, gender audit can serve as the first step for a better understanding of gender based approach, as well as for the evaluation of the current state of affairs. Often, the employees and the top management (the representatives of

the governing bodies of national platforms) do not realize that they have any problems in terms of gender equality. The audit helps to self-reflect upon actions through gender lenses and see the real state of things from the gender perspective. In this case, gender audit plays a role of initial analysis for identifying the problems and defining the baseline to measure the progress, once the project is implemented. Looking from this new perspective of gender equality, National platforms and organizations plan for change and after a while a new audit allows to assess the progress and plan for new actions if needed.

Thus, the **results of the audit**, are not only presented in a form of a report with recommendations, but preliminary discussions are held via presentations and working group meetings, to validate the results and receive feedback. The report itself can also be presented to the participants of the audit during the presentation with an intention to discuss the findings.

Who and how uses the report with findings of gender audit?

- The final report is the property of the structure for which it was conducted (national platform/working group/ organization);
- The structure independently decides how to use the report, i. e. how it is going to be applied among interested parties, how and to what extent the recommendations are going to be taken into account when planning for change, etc.
- The structure has a right to make the report publicly accessible.

Matter of style: positive means constructive

It is natural that reports narrated in a positive tone are valued more than negative ones. This does not mean that for compiling a valued report one needs to compromise the valid and reliable findings, instead it is about presenting those in a way that suggest possible solutions. For example,

the report can feature good practices or instead of detailing out the shortcomings of the project from the perspective of progress of gender equality, one could discuss the entry points for the introduction of gender based approach, which in the end can motivate the participants of the audit to act upon them⁴. It is preferable to design a **gender action plan** during working meetings with an engagement of an external facilitator. It can be one of the auditors conducting the audit.

Upon the familiarization with the key findings and recommendations of the audit, as well as possible future actions, the facilitators help to formulate the gender policy and action plan. Gender policy declares the goals and objectives, as well as includes the main principles upheld by the National platforms/organizations for ensuring gender equality and nondiscrimination in all their actions (decision making, public relations, human resource management, etc.). Action plan includes sections on goals and objectives, indicators, activities, deadlines and responsible people/structures, needed resources.

Facilitator makes sure that a coordinating group or responsible person is assigned for the implementation of the action plan.

It is necessary to remember that better to identify 3-4 priorities for a change within a year than prepare an action plan that tries to introduce all the recommended changes at once, which is unrealistic without the needed resources or support of the members of national platforms or organizations. For the success of the implementation of the action plan it is required to make efforts to reach consensus around the planned changes, as well as motivation to act along the lines of the activities envisaged in the action plan. It is useful to include learning activities geared towards the development of necessary competences into gender action plan based on the shortcomings that are identified in the findings of the audit.

4 Guidebook for gender audit implementation: Methodology of gender audit based on the principle of active participation

Stages and methods for conducting gender audit

*The theory of change
and approaches*

Already in 1999, the Commission on the Advancement of Women (CAW) developed the Gender Integration Framework (GIF). This guidebook is based on those theories of changes leading to gender equality. The given theory assumes that transformation can only happen when all four dimensions of organizational change are ready to integrate the gender. Those four elements are the **political will, technical potential, accountability and organizational culture.**



And they can be considered via the tree model (see pic. 2)

Picture 2. The CAW's Gender Integration Framework (GIF). Commission on the Advancement of Women (CAW) Copyright 1999⁶.

The political will is where the roots of the tree are and has an important role for the potential of an organization or a structure to change. The other three elements constitute the trunk of the tree. They are also equally needed for the successful integration of gender aspects. The components of gender integration are being examined and evaluated at each stage of the audit. Those elements are very important in turning gender blind organizations into gender sensitive ones.

When conducting the gender audit, this guide suggests to apply the participatory approach, the importance of which was earlier discussed in the document. The essence of the approach is to engage the maximum number of interested parties throughout the entire audit, including the planning for changes reflected in the results of the audit.

The specificities of conducting gender audit in network organizations

During the gender audit in network organizations, such as the National platforms, it is necessary to consider that the network type of organized operations has its specificities. More specifically, the network is comprised of basic units, divisions (in this case from member CSOs) and does not have the traditional hierarchies among member organizations. Network is a structure, which has a unified center, whereas the actions of it result from cooperative actions among its member organizations.

The main characteristics of a **network** are:

- Mostly project based operations, whereby the network is not geared towards the production of commodities, but rather at realization of projects;
- Absence of a rhythm in its operations, i. e. absence of overall patterns in its actions;
- Distantiation from vertical integration and hierarchisation among member organisations of the network;
- The operations of the network change based on events and processes;
- The global nature of links and communication (the fact that it is not bound by domain where it operates), whereby member organizations can interact from every part of the world;
- The creation of a symbolic, virtual reality during the operation of the network, which does not only reflect the “live” reality, but at times it even replaces it. In the meantime, the influence of that virtual reality is real;

- The network potential for managing conflicts, i.e. the capacity of member organizations to interact with the other elements of the network beyond the defined limits of space.

Spheres of gender audit that can be subject to this procedure:

- **Communications that are built by the network**

In general, it is the *communication strategy* that uses gender neutral language, applies an institutionally stipulated control over the language usage and over the visual materials.

Internal *communications*, are directives (and other obligatory documents and the ways of their application), that are both formal (rules of communication, for instance, in a hierarchy) and informal (for example, everyday communication and actions during off hours, network actions, teambuilding, etc.).

External communication and collaboration, could have a format of a website or be the participation in conferences and other public events (dissemination of good practices), recruitment, etc.

- **Relations created by the network** – hierarchical (decision making processes), team relations (within the team, network, etc.)
- **Corporate social responsibility**
- **Cooperation with other institutions and CSOs**
- **Volunteering practice within the network**

The main stages of the audit

The gender audit itself can be divided into 5 main stages:

1. Preparation to the audit (before the audit) and establishment of the group of auditors
2. Initial stage of the audit
3. The process of the audit
4. Conclusion of the audit
5. Post-audit period

Preparation to the audit

Before the audit. The auditors send letters of invitation to the governing body of the National platform (or to the member originations) proposing to participate in the audit (a sample of a letter is provided in the annex). Afterwards, auditors meet with the management of the platform. The main purpose of this meeting is to create an atmosphere of trust, cooperation, integrity and transparency. The representatives of the management should feel reassured that gender audit is an instrument of effectiveness for the operations of the platform. Moreover, they need to clearly understand that their suggestions and recommendations are going to be taken into consideration at all stages of the audit. It is required to set aside all the fears and suspicions among the management in relation to conducting the audit and negotiate the level of confidentiality. It is necessary also to agree upon the possibility of this kind of meetings if needed, as well as regular meetings before moving on to any other stage of the audit. It is

very important that after the meeting the management of the platform does not see the audit as a threat for the network, as it becomes clear to them that the results will be disclosed to an extent to which the management gives its consent, and that there is going to be sufficient high quality communication between them and the auditors to avoid complications. The managers of the platform present their suggestions and expectations. The spheres that are going to be audited are being identified along with the establishment of the group of auditors along with the assignment of the coordinator.

The establishment of the group of auditors

The auditor's group is formed based on the skilled experts that are invited to be in it (1 to 3 people) and representatives of the platform (1 to 3 people) that have passed a special preparation and have volunteered to take part in it.

In all of that, it is necessary to take into account the following criteria:

- gender balance of the members of the group;
- their knowledge about the technical aspects of the operations of the platform, where the audit is going to be conducted;
- their experience in conducting gender audits.

Each group includes a leader, who is an experienced specialist in gender issues or the group is managed by a coordinator. In the meantime, most of the group members could be individuals that do not have gender expertise. It would be sufficient if they exhibit interest in gender issues and undergo a training in relation to the organization of the audit.

For the successful implementation of the audit members of the group should have teamwork skills and an ability to divide the responsibilities. When establishing the group the management of the platform should:

- ensure that volunteers are included in the group after a rigorous training;
- assess the strengths and preferences of the members of the group;
- agree upon the candidacy of the leader of the group;
- consult auditors in relation to team establishment;
- discuss and agree upon the responsibilities within the group;
- invite the members of the group to a meeting as soon as possible to distribute the roles and identify responsibilities.

The group of auditors should meet and assign the responsibilities, establish the calendar for the conduct of the audit. It is very important to distribute the responsibilities among the auditors. At this stage, the leading roles are played by the group members that have management skills and competencies. Apart from that, members of the group need to identify the person that is going to take notes during discussions, who leads the working meetings, who compiles the works of members into one document, who manages the flipchart, etc. All auditors need to closely follow the reactions of the respondents during the meetings and focus group discussions, as well as assess the overall mood. All the functions could be circulated among the members. After each working day, during the process, the auditors call a meeting to sum up the results. A member of the audit group evaluates different variables that are related to the platform (it's size, number of employees, strengths, etc.) and based on that, upon the agreement with the management, the group plans for the activities.

Within two weeks before the audit, the group starts the desk review of the documents.

Initial stage of the audit

Intermediate results of the stage:

- The management of the platform agreed to conduct the audit and is ready to cooperate throughout the entire process;
- The atmosphere of trust, cooperation, integrity and transparency is established between the management and the group, as well as complex possible conflict remediation actions are agreed upon;
- The spheres and subdivisions for gender audit are agreed upon, as well as the timetable is identified, the coordinator is assigned and the entire group is fully formed;
- All the auditors, the coordinator and the management of the platform have a clear understanding of the objectives, processes and results of the audit;
- The management of the platform has directed a letter to the members, employees and experts of the platform explaining the gender audit and inviting to participate as well as fully collaborate in the conduct of the audit;
- A clear timetable of the audit is finalised.

During the initial stage of the audit the auditor group meets with the management of the platform to conduct an inquiry. The group also meets with the employees of the secretariat (or other participants of the platform, i. e. members of working groups) again for making an inquiry. The main purpose of this stage is to identify the existing level of understanding and practices of integration or neglect of gender approach in the operations of the platform, as well as to reveal the way the employees, management and members of the platform perceive those practices. It is crucial that the questionnaires for the inquiry include all the four main areas of the working concept of framework convention on gender equality (GIF) – political will, technical potential, accountability and organizational culture. To analyze the management and decision making practices, as well as other organizational aspects the following is analyzed:

- Procedures of decision making (level of gender sensitivity in organizational norms, structures, systems, processes and relations with power structures);
- Gender composition of expert groups that develop the design of decisions to be made;
- The existence and quality of formal and non-formal gender policies;
- The main aspects of communication and advertisement (quality and level of gender sensitivity in organizational communication);
- Organizational culture (practice of prevention and overcoming of discrimination, sexism, influence of gender stereotypes, etc.);

- Human capital (gender balance at all levels, is there a policy in relation to the family and is there a gender lenses when hiring or promoting the personnel?);
- Financial resources (are there funds allocated within the budget to ensure the support of gender just actions and how they are being allocated between men and women or are there differences in how women and men are being awarded?).

In order to analyse practices and organisational operations of the platform it is needed:

- Planning and design (to what extent the procedures are gender sensitive?);
- Implementation of programs (are gender factors being considered and if, yes, how?);
- Monitoring and evaluation (is there a gender disaggregated statistics and how the influence of men and women in the process of project implementation is being evaluated?);
- Technical expertise (are there gender experts and do the employees and members of the platform know the gender based theories?);
- Cooperation with partner organizations (are there gender aspects in the cooperation?).

It is very important to discuss the confidentiality before the fill out of each questionnaire. The more participants are sure that confidentiality is going to be upheld the more reliable responses they will give.

Sampling approach

Survey needs to include employees from a wide spectrum of the platform, from all levels, groups, positions, etc. It is preferable that all the representatives of the platform are questioned. If representatives of member organizations are included, then for a platform with up to 100 members there is a need to survey more than 50 percent of member organizations, for midsized and large platforms (more than 100 members) the sample must be representative with at least 25 to 30 participants. There is a need to pick a proportionate number of respondents from each group or division, as well as it is required to survey a proportionate number of men and women.

Data analysis

It is recommendaed to conduct 3 types of data analyses that are collected through the questionnaire:

- Analysis of each factor separately (when each question is analyzed separately and the percentages of answer options are considered for each question);
- Composite analysis (when results are combined and generalized based on categories, for example, results of the gender audit in terms of four organizational dimensions of gender integration);
- Multivariate analysis (the results are being analyzed based on the answers of men and women, based on the age, level of responsibility, etc.)

It is important to present the results in an inductive visual format (for example, in a form of a table, where on the left the four dimensions are

mentioned and on the right the evaluation of different respondents per their level of responsibility on gender based or age group feature the evaluation)

Developing the questionnaire for the survey (examples are provided in the annex)

In order to come up with the complete picture it is necessary to survey a maximum number of respondents from all levels of decision making and project or program implementation. Therefore, for the survey it is necessary to use all the accessible channels, such as the online format, dissemination of the questionnaires via email, personal interviews, telephone calls, etc. Before the survey, it is necessary to make sure that the respondents understand the level of confidentiality. If sampled respondents do not exceed the number of 25, a short seminar could be organized in relation to gender audit, during which the participants will fill out the questionnaires and this format would better ensure the anonymity.

The results of the analysis should be presented in a PowerPoint presentation and be available to all the survey participants during a general discussion. The comprehensive analysis of the survey should be included in the gender audit report of the platform. Before presenting the results, the preliminary findings should be presented to the management of the platform. The rationale behind this, is to make sure that the management is not surprised at any point by the positive or negative results of the audit. The presentation should be held before the following stage of the audit, so that the employees and members understand how any of the further actions lead to the strengthened plan of the platform. This is much more effective than a plan devised by an external expert. It is derived from the discussions based on participation of the employees and members of the platform.

Intermediate results of this stage:

- Questionnaires are developed and include all the four dimensions of gender integration within the platform;
- Enough employees and members of the platform have filled in the questionnaire;
- The survey data is analyzed and presented in a PowerPoint format;
- The results of the analysis are discussed with the management of the platform;
- The results of the analysis are presented to all the employees and members of the platform.

The audit

During the audit the documents and information products of the platform are being analyzed, while the results are being discussed.

The suggested documents for the gender audit should include:

Administrative documents

- The list of employees, including technical specialists, members of programs and projects along with their specializations and key responsibilities;
- The list of consultants along with the description of their responsibilities (terms of references);
- The reports of trips of the employees during the last months before the audit;

- Policies and procedures that are operational for the platform, including HR policies and procedures;
- Program documents and budgets;
- Plans of buildings.

Technical documents

- Main documents, research and publications of the platform;
- Work plans of the platform;
- Reports about key meetings, consultations, learning events along with the lists of participants;
- Learning materials that are being used;
- Other important documents that reflect the operations of the platform.

Information documents

- A document about the operations of the platform (if it exists);
- Documents that provide explanatory information, such as brochures, posters, video materials, booklets, CDs;
- Cover pages of publications with photos, pictures, etc.;
- References to websites of the platform and sites that place information about it;
- References to the pages and groups of the platform in the social media;
- Information bulletins (print and online).

Collaboration

- Project documents supported by donors;
- Descriptions of projects and reports (donor reports);
- Project evaluation reports (progress reports and completion reports).

Documents related to gender policy

- All the existing gender relevant documentation

How to analyze the documents?

The members of the audit group fill out the following:

- Tables with document analysis;
- An analytical overview of categories of documents;
- Final overview of the documents of the platform;
- The core of the report.

As mentioned before, prior to the audit, the group members collect the materials and package of documents for gender audit.

Once documents are received, the members of the group should identify to what extent those documents are gender sensitive by using the tables of document analysis:

Type (division) of document	Purpose of document	Score of gender sensitivity	Comments
		0 1 2 3 4 5	

Type (division) of document could be as follows:

- HR policy and human resources
- Programs and budget
- Trips
- Plans of office buildings
- Meeting agenda
- Consulting activities

It is recommended to analyse the documents per their typology (subgroup). For example, “selection of applicants and human resources.” In the second column, the names of analyzed documents are being registered per each subgroup. Afterwards, it is necessary to evaluate the documents that are mentioned in the second column from the perspective of gender sensitivity.

For the evaluation the following scale is used:

1. the document does not comply with gender balance (comprehensive gender based approach is not identified),
2. the document does comply insignificantly (from 10–25%),
3. the document does comply on average (from 25–50%),

4. the document does comply significantly (from 50–75%),
5. the document does comply almost fully (from 75–95%)
6. the document does comply fully (from 95–100%) (the entire document is based on the gender based approach)

Gender sensitivity in documents can be approximated according to the following criteria:

Human resource management and policy: (up to the scale of five)

- The list of actual employees in decision making positions and technical specialists exhibits signs of equal distribution based on gender.
- The positions linked to decision making (managers of subgroups and further higher up) in the platform are both executed by men and women.
- In the register of occupations or in specific terms of reference there are experts or coordinators of gender related issues assigned and their time schedule dedicated to solving gender issues is allotted.
- The records in the ledger show that the personnel attends introductory, training and development courses or seminars dedicated to gender issues.
- The documents of human resources and planning reflect the human resource policy orientation towards the progress in the gender equality.
- The rules established in member organisations of the platform

show that measures aimed at reaching gender equality among the personnel are being taken in addition to (or initiated by) HR policy approved by the platform.

- The agendas of meetings held in the platform show that gender issues are being regularly discussed.
- The building plan shows the just distribution of office space between men and women.
- In program documents and budgets gender objectives are clearly defined along with indicators for each defined by the platform.
- In program documents and budgets, it is clear how resources are being allocated towards the progress of gender equality.
- Both internal and external trips are assigned to the representatives of the platform regardless of their gender.
- In trip reports gender issues are reflected linked to the work that is being implemented regardless of the gender of those with whom the actions are taken from other organizations.
- The responsibilities of consultants hired to do work within the platform require gender relevant reporting in the context of works being implemented.
- In the projects implemented by the platform women and men participate equally.
- Consultants hired by the platform receive just remuneration regardless of their gender based on the same contractual criteria.
- When hiring and evaluating experts and consultants among

other criteria, the one on gender sensitivity is considered.

When evaluating the products of the platform it is necessary to answer the following question:

- How a given subject or issue differently impacts men and women?
- Why it impacts them differently (if so)?
- What actions are being taken in relation to this?

All products should be viewed from this angle. The so called “gender neutral” or “gender blind” materials never touch upon gender issues and problems in relation to gender equality. Thus, most gender neutral or gender blind documents indirectly contribute to the strengthening of traditionally accepted gender roles and stereotypes.

Visuals, photos and pictures should carry a message that advances gender equality instead of stereotypical roles men and women have, when for example, a man is depicted in a decision-making role, whereas a woman is showed to assist him.

When evaluating the visuals, it is necessary to remember about:

- equality
- diversity
- sensitivity

The visuals should reflect the diversity of gender roles, showing both men and women at same levels. One needs to avoid images that depict women and men, where men are portrayed in active roles, and women are in a

contrary position. Think about how to revert it. Images should follow the principle of gender sensitivity and ethnic diversity.

Language. The language must be gender sensitive, not gender blind or sexist. It means that the language must consider both men and women, boys and girls.

Content and meaning of the text. In the text both the views of men and women should be represented. It must clearly cite and/or sum up their positions and indicate to whom it pertains. Both men and women need to be surveyed and questioned equally.

For the synthesis it is necessary to fill out the template on “Analytical summary per different categories of documentation” for each category of documents and template on “Comprehensive analytical summary of documentation of the platform”, which considers the entire volume of documents. Both templates should be attached to the final report.

Both templates should be attached to the final report.

Document type	Number of analyzed documents	Overall score (sum up the scores per each category from all the similar tables filled out during platform’s document analysis)	Average score (divide the overall score by the number of studied documents)
Selection of applicants and human resources			
Agendas of meetings conducted in the platform			
Building plans			
Programs and budget			
Trips			
Consulting			
Average score for all the administrative documents (calculated based on the average scores summed up along all six categories)			

The package of documents for gender audit is the key source for information when evaluating the operations of the platform.

Analytical summary pre category (based on administrative documents)

Conducting individual interviews and focus groups

Similar tables are being devised for all other categories. The summary is formulated in a format of a table:

Final analytical summary of platform documnetation

Document category	Total number of documents (insert the number of analyzed documents per the category taken from the analytical summary)	Overall score (insert the overall score per each category of documents taken from the appropriate analytical summary)	Average score (insert the average score per each category of documents taken from the appropriate analytical summary)
Administration			
Technical and content related question			
Outreach info			
Technical cooperation			
Overall score per all categories of documents of the platform (sum up the scores of four categories of documents)			

It is crucial to complete the analysis of the survey, documentation and outreach products before embarking on conducting interviews and focus group discussions, as that analysis always highlights areas that need in-depth insight from gender perspective. Apart from that, the survey results and analysis of documentation provides reach input for planning the interviews and designing the questions. It is good to invite all the employees and members/volunteers of the studied structure within the platform to take part in interviews and focus group discussions to ensure that everyone is heard. If possible, it is good to also invite representatives of partner organizations of the platform to take part in interviews and focus group discussions.

A schedule for interviews and focus group discussions

Interviews are being conducted with those managers and employees of the platform that for some reason cannot take part in the focus group discussions. The scheme of the interview is the same as the one for the focus group discussions. The duration of the interview should not extend beyond one hour.

Focus group discussions are a specific type of a conversation with selected participants (from 4 to 10 people) with one or two persons leading the discussion and one or more observers. The purpose of those conversations is to reveal additional information based on the results of the survey and the analysis of documentation as to clarify for the audit group the perceptions of the participants about the concept of a

“just organization.” The conversation does not extend beyond two-hour span. It is important to employ methods that allow each participant to be heard. It is needed to engage participants from all units of the platform. Sometimes, it is useful to have separate male and female focus groups. Like the surveys, it is important to ensure confidentiality of the participants of focus group discussions and interviews. It is possible to ensure, if the participants are convinced that no one apart from the organizers of the audit group is going to find out the identity of the participants or the author of any of the statements availed. They should be reassured that all the statements are going to be presented in generalized format.

Discussions in focus groups and during interviews allow to find out about the most important items for the people.

Overall plan for focus group discussion:

- welcome and introduction;
- discussion of confidentiality;
- PowerPoint presentation of the overall findings of the survey;
- Overall presentation of the findings of document analysis;
- Discussion of four elements of gender integration within the platform;
- Discussion of the views of participants in relation to gender sensitive platform;
- Discussion of recommendations.

Before the focus group discussion and the interview one needs to make sure that the participants have received the printed results of document

analysis (tables), their questionnaires and the overall analysis of the survey.

Questions for the interview and the focus group discussion can be of the following type:

- Which of the questions in the questionnaire more comprehensively reflected your experience in the platform?
- Which questions were difficult to answer?
- Which of the survey and document analysis sections came as a surprise to you?
- Which would have been your recommendations for the platform, in order to take advantage of the strengths of the platform to solve the identified problems?
- What is the take of the focus group participants in relation to gender equality within the platform?

During focus group discussions it is required to make notes, which would later feed into the report on them, further being incorporated into the final report of the audit.

List of recommendations to better document focus group discussions:

- Register the date and time of the focus group, as well as the place, the name of the person that leads the discussion, the person that takes notes, the number of the focus group (if there are more than one);

- If it is agreed beforehand a recorder can be used for recording the discussion;
- Only use one side of the paper when making notes, this way it would be easier for you to organize them;
- Take short notes, it is more important to understand the discussion and make key inputs, not to try to register everything word for word.
- Write down the examples and certain details that support the discussed topics.
- In the end, when the discussion is over, mark the questions and sections you did not understand fully and clarify them afterwards.

Preparation of the report of interviews and focus group discussions

The report of focus groups and interviews is a snapshot of appropriate questions and recommendations that have been given by participants. The report must reflect the new information that highlights the agreement and the disagreement of the participants with the results of the survey and analysis. Apart from that, personnel recommendations and their ideas about the operations of the platform in realizing gender equality need to be included, including their views on how to reach a full consideration of gender aspects in the platform. It is very convenient to group into four main dimensions on gender integration (political will, technical personnel, accountability and organizational culture) the recommendations provided by the participants of focus groups and interviews.

Intermediate results of the stage:

- Documents and outreach products of the platform are analyzed;
- Tables are created, providing general analysis of documentation and covering all the four aspects of gender integration within the platform;
- The results of the analysis of documents is presented in a PowerPoint format;
- A sufficient number of individual interviews and focus groups is completed;
- The process of interviews and focus group discussions is documented;
- Enough recommendations are generated for the consideration of gender aspects within the platform along the main four blocks of organizational dimensions for gender integration;
- A draft report about the process of interviews and focus groups is completed;
- The results of the analysis are ready for discussion with the management and employees of the platform to receive their feedback.

At the end of audit, in a separate section the gender action plan of the platform should be included. The plan is for a continued action that ensures the realization of gender integration within the platform. Using the survey results, as well as the ones from document, outreach, focus group discussion and interviews, the group of auditors organizes a 1-2-day session to develop the action plan. In the process of developing the action plan key employees and other members (for example, leaders of working groups and subgroups) of the platform need to be invited to take part in detailed planning. If possible they should be engaged at all stages of plan development, either at the initial or final stages of it.

The first step in developing the Gender action plan is the consideration of key documents that were prepared at each stage of the gender audit. These documents include:

- Presentation of survey results of employees;
- Presentation of results of analysis of documents and outreach products of the platform;
- Report of the interviews and focus group discussions.

The plan has to include recommendations for actions, timeline, responsible persons and needed resources. It is necessary to identify and stipulate concrete actions that would bring the platform to a more effective gender integration. Many of the required actions would be easily identified after the audit materials are shared.

Planning session of the Gender action plan:

- Introduction (if needed) or ice breaking exercise;
- Brief presentation of the agenda (clarifications in relation to expectations and objectives);
- Overview of materials: 1) survey results' presentation, 2) presentation of the analysis of documentation and outreach production of the platform, 3) the report on interviews and focus groups;
- Working session in four working groups according to the concept of gender integration: political will, technical personnel, organizational culture and accountability (the groups should include minimum 3 maximum 7 people);
 - ▲ Each working group identifies 3-5 key recommendations for each of the four blocks of organizational dimensions of gender integration, using the documents that have been developed during the audit. In addition, the working group suggests timeframes for each recommendation (quarters 1, 2, 3, etc. or year 1, 2, etc.) responsible persons and needed resources,

▲ Each working group presents the results, which are being then discussed in the plenary (questions are being asked, corrections are being suggested, suggestions and recommendations are being provided, etc.). The recommendations that are repeated during the plenary are being combined into one. There is a possibility that another working session would be needed to take into consideration the suggestions provided during the plenary, to further work on them and again discuss in a plenary.

- It is necessary to place the recommendations chronologically (which of them should be implemented first for the others to follow suit);
- It is important to agree upon the key recommendations, timeframes, responsible person and needed resources.

The gender action plan is a separate document that is incorporated into the intermediate and the final reports of the gender audit. This plan can become the foundation for the development of the gender equality policy for the National platform.

An important element of the audit is the preparation of the intermediate report, where the key conclusions are stipulated. Although, the main report might take some time to develop, in the intermediate report only the snapshot of the gender audit is being presented. The conclusions and main recommendations for the management and employees of the platform are being used during the meeting to receive their feedback. For a balanced evaluation of the progress made to reach gender equality within the platform good examples of gender based approach need to be highlighted followed by the presentation of those areas that still need improvement. Presenting briefly the key recommendations would

greatly contribute to actions taken in the future by the management and employees of the platform.

The familiarisation of the management of the platform with the audit report and Gender action plan (intermediate report)

The conclusions reached during the gender audit at times could go against the initial perceptions of the management in relation to gender issues. It is necessary to remember that employees do not generally undergo a full training on those issues. Apart from that, they might not share the ideas of each other on the key concepts of gender equality. Therefore, some of the conclusions reached after the audit might come as a surprise for some of the representatives of the management, as well as the employees. In those cases, for them to easily digest the recommendations an additional explanation is needed.

Therefore, the audit group needs to do the following

- Before meeting with the staff for the purpose of getting a feedback, to request an initial meeting with the management to present the results of the audit and the Gender action plan;
- Suggest the management to read the intermediate report before the requested meeting for them to get updated on their own about the provided recommendations of the audit group;
- Hold a meeting with the management of the platform and the audit group with each party being able to play a specific role in presenting the conclusions and reconfirming the positive experiences of already completed actions so that recommendations aimed at improvement are formulated. The positive climate guarantees that the platform will accept and use those recommendations.

After being introduced to the results of the audit the management of the platform agrees (or suggests changes) around the action plan and is convinced that the results need to be shared with the rest of the platform

Meeting with employees of the platform to get feedback.

The feedback meeting with employees pursues the objective to present the main findings and recommendations of the gender audit to them as well as the management. This meeting should be planned towards the end of the audit and needs to have 3-hour duration (with a short break). When opening the meeting the auditors express their gratitude to the management and employees of the platform for a willful participation in the audit.

To invite the attention of the audience on the key points of the report, the findings are presented in a format of PowerPoint presentation. Good practices already applied within the platform in relation to the comprehensive application of gender based approach, as well as the areas of future action need to be reflected equally. For reaching maximum impact words such as “negative”, “shortcoming” should be avoided and 3 positive examples along with 3 areas that would need further improvement should be presented. The latter should be picked with much care and prudence, considering the meaning that they can carry for the platform, as well as allow it to implement such improvements. When highlighting the areas that need improvement, auditors can reveal what kind of practical changes and how could be applied based on the reaction of the audience. When the results diverge from the opinion of the employees of the platform, the group of auditors need to openly discuss those disagreements and be ready to introduce needed changes that would be suggested by the employees themselves, as it would be a better reflection of the situation within the platform. The leader of the audit group can also wrap up the lessons learned during the audit. It wouldn't be an extra, if the

intermediate report along with the gender action plan, earlier presented to the management of the platform, is disseminated among the participants of the meeting.

Intermediate results of the stage:

- Gender action plan is developed and it includes the action recommendations, timeframes, responsible persons and needed resources;
- The management feedback on the results is received and the report is ready to be presented to the employees of the platform;
- Intermediate report on gender audit and gender action plan is prepared and presented to the management, as well as employees of the platform;
- All the necessary changes to the intermediate report and gender action plan are made;
- Management and employees of the platform agree with the results of the audit and understand the future steps stipulated in the gender action plan to be taken in order to improve the gender integration along all the four organizational dimensions.

After the audit

After the audit. The main product of the audit is the report that includes recommendations for the improvement of the operations and specific measures aimed at the systematic implementation of the recommendations of the audit. Audit group makes the report based on activities implemented within the platform.

The report on gender audit could have the following format:

- Cover page, which has the title of the document (report of gender audit), the full title of the platform, the period of gender audit, the place of the audit, as well as the names of the auditors along with their contacts
- Contents
- Main findings and recommendations along the key four dimensions of gender integration, as well as the mechanism for the implementation of the gender action plan of the platform (including responsible person, timetable of monitoring and evaluation, progress indicators of gender equality within the platform, etc.)
- List of abbreviations and acronyms
- Methodology
- Full report of employee survey
- Full report of the analysis of documentation and outreach products of the platform
- Full report of the interviews and focus groups

- Gender action plan
- Appendix (presentations, samples of questionnaires, tables and other used materials)

Here, once again, we present some of the recommendations for conducting effective gender audit:

- use the period of the audit with maximum efficiency. Organizers need to employ maximum effort to make sure that the full audit group remains present during the entire process of the audit;
- be fully knowledgeable about the methods of conducting gender audit, especially if the organizing party participates in it for the first time. It is important that the organizers subscribe themselves for the exercises of the audit that they know well. Improvising during the process not only jeopardizes the results, but also questions the trust towards it;
- ensure that the audit reflects only the situation of that given platform. The audit group develops the report only based on the results of the activities organized in that platform. During the meeting with the employees the auditors present the key findings and recommendations of the report and receive the feedback. When the opinions diverge with the views of the employees, the group needs to openly discuss the contentious issues and be ready to introduce changes to the report, thus, further clarifying the situation within the platform;
- do not behave like a gender police and not create an impression that auditors came to assess the operations of the platform. Contrary to that, it is recommended to make others feel that auditors are there to facilitate the platform to independently

evaluate their potential in terms of gender equality and help the employees to formulate the necessary recommendations;

- ensure that auditors do not implement their default program. Those that have been suggested to be included in the gender audit group, but are in any way linked to the operations of the platform or have an interest in it, are recommended to refrain from it and withdraw from the group.

Appendix. Additional materials

*Sample of a letter of invitation
to conduct gender audit*

Letter of invitation

Dear...

We suggest to conduct a gender audit of the National platform.

Our organization is using gender audit based on active participation aimed at promoting the gender equality through the application of comprehensive gender based approach (gender mainstreaming) strategy. The methodology was developed in such a way as to target the synchronization of the gender aspects of operations of the National platforms with the European standards.

The objective of the gender audit is to facilitate the self-learning process of the organisation engaging individuals, divisions and the whole organization into the effective utilisation of comprehensive gender based approach within the platform.

Gender audit in its essence is a social phenomenon that identifies to what extent (a) existing procedures within the platform are effective in terms of advancing gender equality; (b) there is a support for the implementation of those procedures; (c) those are mutually complementary and are applied in practice; (d) set the initial principles and criteria; (d) monitor and evaluate the progress of gender equality; (e) identify problems; (f) recommend solutions to the identified problems and suggest new and better strategies, as well as records the positive experience on the way to gender equality.

Gender audit is comprised of two main components. The first is the overall analysis of all key program documents, main publications, products, processes of program and budget development, as well as monitoring and evaluation process. The second is related to joint meetings that are held within certain divisions. Those are organized by a group of specifically trained employees that have both men and women within it.

During meetings, the recommendations of auditors are being discussed and the Gender action plan is being developed. Along with it, the problems and challenges linked to the application of the strategy of comprehensive gender based approach and implementation of the plan are being discussed.

The audit report is a confidential document and is not disseminated without a prior consent. Upon the agreement, the CEOs can get only an aggregated, thus, anonymous analysis of findings and recommendations.

Our organization invites you to a meeting that will last for 1-2 hours to discuss the issues linked to the realization of gender policy and strategy of comprehensive gender based approach to identify the level of your interest in conducting a gender audit of the platform.

Thank you for your kind collaboration.

Sincerely,

Examples of questionnaires aimed at surveying the management and employees of different levels

Choose at least five most relevant for the platform issues from each section:

Political will:

1. Is gender equality integrated into the programs, projects implemented by the platform?
2. Are gender equality aims and objectives included in the programs and projects?
3. Does each program and project provide a needs analysis including disaggregated one based on gender roles?
4. Does the platform have a written gender policy that declares gender equality as a principle?

5. Does the platform have a gender policy and action plan that includes clear delineation of responsible persons and timeframe for monitoring and evaluation?
6. Is gender aspect considered during the strategic planning of the operations of the organization?
7. Does each person within the platform clearly understand his/her responsibility for gender policy?
8. Does management feel responsible for the development and implementation of gender policy within the platform?
9. Do you notice that lately the headquarters of the platform witness an increase of women in decision making positions?
10. Have female led, gender oriented or feminist organizations entered the platform lately?
11. Is there an increase in the number of women on the board of the platform lately?
12. Is there an active policy of recruiting and promoting women within the platform?
13. Did the platform allocate sufficient financial resources for the support of gender integration?
14. Are there financial resources allocated to the introduction of gender policy at all levels?
15. Is there a systematic gender equality training and preparation to conduct a gender sensitive analysis within the platform?

Organizational culture:

1. Does the platform facilitate gender sensitive behavior, for example, via language, jokes and comments?
2. Does the platform introduce gender sensitive behavior and procedures to prevent harassment?
3. Do employees feel motivated to comply with the gender policy of the platform?
4. Are gender issues taken seriously and are they openly discussed among men and women within the platform?
5. Are gender stereotypes widespread (for example, "all men are gender blind" or you hear statements like "those feminists") among employees of the platform?
6. Is there a divide between men and women on how they view gender issues within the platform?
7. Are employees of the platform enthusiastic about the gender related work that they perform?
8. Do employees think that gender equality is well integrated into the overall image of the platform?
9. Women within the platform think that the organisation is gender friendly towards women?
10. Women within the platform think that the organisation is gender friendly towards women?
11. The platform has a reputation of integrity and competency when it comes to gender issues.

12. The platform can do more than it does now to institutionalize.
13. Organizational culture of the platform gives more value of the work men do and undervalues that of the women.
14. Do men prevail during platform meetings?
15. Did working condition of women in the platform improve within the last two years?
16. It is not fair to promote more women and girls in the programs and projects of the platform than men and boys.
17. It is not fair to promote more men and boys in the programs and projects of the platform than women and girls.
18. Within the platform it is easier for men to establish personal and professional networks than for women.
19. Which are the 3 key characteristics of an exemplary employee within the platform?
20. What do you think the platform should do to consider gender equality?
21. Please describe any success or problem that you have personally come across during the integration of gender issues in the programming and other aspects of the work of the platform.

Accountability:

1. Is gender disaggregated data being collected for programs and projects?

2. Is gender relevant intervention being monitored and evaluated in programs and projects?
3. Are there thematic indicators operational within the platform and are there gender ones within them?
4. Do gender disaggregated data provide a valuable information for the evaluation of the programs and projects and planning of the future ones?
5. Do programs and project of the platform contribute to the enhancement of the rights of women and girls and changing the inequality between genders?
6. Are job descriptions gender mainstreamed?
7. Are key performance indicators gender mainstreamed?

Technical potential:

1. Does the platform have a person, division or a group responsible for gender issues?
2. Do the personnel carry a responsibility to integrate gender into all divisions?
3. Does the platform have a person, division or a group responsible for gender programming?
4. Do the employees have the skills, competencies and the approach that is gender sensitive when executing their functions?
5. Are the platform employees trained to conduct gender planning and analysis of programs and projects?

6. Do program planning, monitoring and evaluation, as well as consultations platform groups have members that are competent in gender issues?

7. Do platform groups for program planning, monitoring and evaluation, as well as consultations of programs and projects have at least one member that is knowledgeable and competent in gender issues?

Glossary

Gender means socially assigned roles, behaviors, actions and characteristics that a given society considers to be acceptable for men and women;

Gender mainstreaming (a comprehensive approach to the equality between men and women, comprehensive gender approach, gender mainstreaming, gender prioritization) is a globally accepted strategy for the realization of gender equality. Gender mainstreaming was stipulated in the Beijing Platform of action and officially approved during the Fourth World conference on women (Beijing, 1995). This strategy implies the introduction of gender equality at all layers of society through the organization of a system of its identification and political decision making. Per the definition of European Commission, gender mainstreaming is the integration of gender perspective (problems and experiences of both

men and women) in all stages of (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) political process and all spheres of programs and projects to ensure equality between men and women, as well as prevent the possible inequalities that could result from gender blindness during the process of implementation of those programs ⁶.

Gender audit is an instrument and a process that is based on the principles of active participation. It contributes to the process of self-learning within the organization in relation to comprehensive gender based approach's effective application.

Gender audit:

- Identifies to what extent are effective organizational rules for integration of gender based approach, as well as the system of support and application and to what extent those rules complement each other or are followed in practice;
- Monitors and evaluates relative progress of gender equality;
- Defines the baseline principles and criteria;
- Discovers loopholes and problems;
- Recommends methods for solving those problems and suggests new more effective strategies;
- Records positive experiences on the way to gender equality.

Organizational culture is a range of norms, traditions, beliefs and codes of conduct within the organization that either support or jeopardize gender equality through how people view gender equality, what is considered

acceptable when communicating, how people define boundaries of acceptable behavior, what behavior is being lauded, etc.

Accountability is a set of mechanisms through which the organization defines the level of engagement in ensuring gender equality at different levels (both in internally circulated documentation, as well as in external communications with donors, partners, members, etc.)

Political will is the approach of leaders to possible changes; the methods that are used by them to express their support from the power position held; enthusiasm and loyalty to ensuring gender equality within the organization.

Technical potential is the level of expertise, abilities, qualifications and skills of the personnel and volunteers in executing the practical aspects of gender integration to improve the quality of programs and the level of institutionalization of gender issues.

6 Tools for gender equality.

