



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP  
**CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM**

# **Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum**

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY**

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## **Abbreviations**

CoEC	Code of Ethical Conduct
EaP CSF	Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
GMS	Gender Mainstreaming Strategy
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NP	National Platforms
SC	Steering Committee
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics
WG	Working Group



## **Introduction**

### **Background to EaP CSF**

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) brings together CSOs from the six EaP countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) and EU-based CSOs active in the EaP region, providing a platform for experience-sharing and partnership building. The EaP CSF works to make the Eastern Partnership a democratic, prosperous and peaceful region committed to European values and standards, where civil society is an integral part of democratic governance and an active participant in democratic reforms. The EaP CSF strives to ensure the effective participation of the civil societies of the Eastern Partnership and the EU in the process of planning, monitoring and implementation of the Eastern Partnership policy in constructive dialogue with the EU and EaP decision-makers, in the direction of the democratic transformation and European integration of the partner states.

### **Background to EaP CSF Gender Mainstreaming Strategy**

In 2018, EaP CSF adopted its Code of Ethical Conduct (CoEC). The document outlines the fundamental values and principles to which all members of the Forum should adhere to. Despite progress in terms of the implementation of the Code of Ethical Conduct, some of the measures still remain to be fully adhered to and internalised. One of the dimensions requiring careful attention is the promotion of gender equality and equity, to which the Code of Ethical Conduct refers as one of the Forum's fundamental values.

The EaP CSF's Gender Assessment, conducted from June to September 2020, revealed that despite its cross-cutting dimension – touching on statutory, communication, policy, advocacy and project work – currently, gender equality is only to a limited extent integrated in the regulations and practices of the Forum. While its full integration remains an important step towards gender mainstreaming, a stronger commitment from both the membership and the leadership structures of the Forum is needed to ensure the promotion of gender equality as an expressed value of EaP CSF.

### **Methodological framework**

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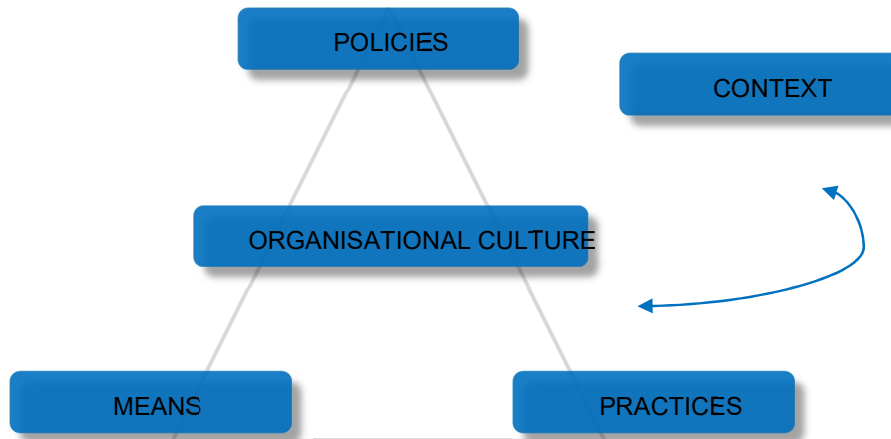
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This document presents the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (GMS) of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF).

The working plan, breaking down the strategy in different actions with corresponding results, indicators, responsibilities and timeline will be developed shortly after the adoption of the present strategy.

The strategy was developed on the basis of the methodological framework that is presented below, covering all key aspects of an organisation. The proposed strategy incorporates the results of the EaP CSF Gender Assessment (June-September 2020), by addressing points of attention and by optimising strong points of relevance. This gender assessment was carried out through a documentary study, a survey and interviews.

The Strategy is organised around five pillars, stemming from the organisational triangle as developed by INTRAC.



POLICIES	•What an organisation <i>wants to do</i> . Its vision, its mission, and its strategies
MEANS	•What an organisation <i>can do</i> . Its structure, its procedures, its human resources, its methodologies and tools, its financial and technical resources, etc.
ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE	•What an organisation <i>is</i> . Its values, the attitudes of staff and direction, management style, rituals and symbols, etc.
PRACTICES	•What an organisation <i>does</i> . Activities, projects, services, results, products, etc.
INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT	•The environment of the organisation. Its target groups, funders, national/regional politics, etc.

## 1. Gender mainstreaming strategy

### 1.1. Policies

**Develop a vision and identify objectives on gender equality, embed these in all EaP CSF policies, ensure active support of the leadership, and monitor implementation**

A substantive reflection on *what* the EaP CSF will be striving for regarding gender equality will be conducted. The Forum will develop a **shared vision** on gender equality that will be actively implemented.

- **Develop a vision note that outlines the vision, mandate, and objectives of EaP CSF on gender equality**

Taking into account the diversity of members and agendas, a vision note is a necessary first step to ensure there is a common base and framework all members and structures can reference to when developing policies and actions. In the same way, such a document should make sure that there are no repeated debates each time gender equality is addressed in discussions. This vision note should use a careful language and clarify all concepts used.. The vision note will look at gender equality in a norm-critical sense, as a concept inclusive of diverse gender identities and expressions. The same principle will be reflected in the working documents and actions plans that will be further developed to support the implementation of the GMS.



It is important to keep in mind that gender mainstreaming is a positive and constructive process, one that can only improve internal functioning as well as outputs and outcomes of EaP CSF's work.

By communicating clearly on this vision (i.e. by posting it prominently on EaP CSF's website, by referencing it in all statutory, policy, strategic documents and action plans), this engagement will be clear for internal and external stakeholders, which is likely to enhance accountability.

As this vision speaks for EaP CSF's engagement towards gender equality, it also reflects the vision NPs are sharing.

The vision note shall be reviewed regularly along with the GMS action plan.

- **On the basis of the vision note embed the identified objectives in all new policies and strategies and revise existing policies and governance documents when needed**

To ensure mainstreaming, existing documents need to be revised to integrate gender equality objectives more strongly than is the case at the moment. For policies and strategies that are to be developed, the vision note will serve as a constant reminder and reference to include gender objectives at all stages. While initially this will require additional work and reflection, over time this will become more and more of an automatism and any conscious efforts and additional efforts can gradually be reduced.

Gender equality needs to be mainstreamed in all EaP CSF's strategies. In its membership strategy the EaP CSF will target to reconcile the current pluralistic composition of the Forum with its valuescentred on human rights and develop approaches ensuring that the new and the current members are in alignment with the Forum's explicit gender equality agenda.

The review of safeguarding policies (the Code of Ethical Conduct, the rules regarding the Compliance Committee) to ensure that any cases of harassment and gender discrimination can be reported in all confidence will be conducted.

To ensure equal representation of men and women at all levels of the Forum, its members will decide on gender quotas ensuring equal representation .

- **Develop gender equality roadmaps/action plans**



The gender equality roadmaps outline the integration of gender in a more specific way, adapted to the work of different structures (notably the WGs, the NPs and EaP CSF's advocacy work) and their subject matters.

- **Seek/reaffirm the engagement of the leadership**

To ensure that the gender mainstreaming strategy efforts are taken seriously at all levels and within all structures, the active support and engagement of the leadership is needed. The Steering Committee will discuss and validate the vision note and will take a leading role in addressing any issues that may arise at any level of the Forum throughout the GMS implementation.

- **Monitor implementation**

The EaP CSF leadership will monitor the implementation of the GMS at all levels (including Working Groups and National Platforms) and, as a result, of the integration of gender in EaP CSF's governance, policies and strategies. Annual reporting will enhance accountability and follow-up.

## **1.2. Means**

**Valorise, use, and develop internal expertise available within EaP CSF membership. Put in place the necessary structures and internal mechanisms allowing for support and exchange of expertise.**

In addition to the necessary internal work on policies and strategies, concrete means are to be developed to enhance the implementation of the newly developed vision and strategy on gender equality.

- **Sensitise all members on gender equality**

EaP CSF's vision on gender equality will be shared regularly with existing and new members. Again, great care should be taken to clarify concepts and to use a careful language.

- **Create a gender task force**





The gender task force is an advisory group that will be created in the first year of implementation of the GMS. The task force will advise on changes in practice and actions that will allow the Forum to push forward the objectives of the current strategy and will answer to an increased need for coordination of the GMS action plan and objectives. The current members of the gender subgroup could be part of the gender task force upon availability and expressed interest.

- **Train all stakeholders on gender equality and gender mainstreaming**

EaP CSF will organise gender trainings at specific intervals. Different trainings can cater for specific audiences. For example, one training can cover the basics (concepts, approaches, debunk myths and stereotypes in relation to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC)., discuss case-studies); another one can be conducted for actors more experienced in gender, discussing upcoming themes and evolutions or recent studies linking gender with the areas of work of the EaP CSF.

For leading structures/actors (the SC, the Secretariat and WG coordinators (on the level of the Forum and on the level of the NPs), and NP coordinators, a mandatory gender training is to be provided.

- **Appoint a gender focal point at the level of the Secretariat**

A gender focal point at the level of the Secretariat is to coordinate gender mainstreaming efforts and to provide or organise additional support or training where needed.

- **Valorise and use internal expertise**

The knowledge and expertise of the gender sub-group can be put to use to a far greater extent than currently is the case. The sub-group can take on an advisory function for other structures (NPs, WGs, the SC, or the gender focal points, see below) to provide support in any question or issue that may arise. In the same way, they could play a leading role in the monitoring of the gender action plan, and in developing/ providing trainings. The subgroup will need to be provided with the support required for their activities.

In addition, it is important to carry out a Forum-wide mapping exercise to identify specific gender expertise that can be called upon.



- **Appoint a gender focal point within each NP**

Within each NP, a gender focal point should be appointed. Responsibilities of the gender focal point can be summarised as monitoring and supporting the implementation of gender mainstreaming. The mandate and responsibilities of the gender focal points are to be described in terms of reference.

While it is important that the gender focal points have a certain level of knowledge and expertise with regard to gender, the EaP CSF will provide the necessary additional training and support.

- **Identify and attract new members active in gender equality**

At a national level, the NPs will identify to what extent relevant and/or strong organisations active on gender are already members or could be attracted. This should only be done after the necessary internal adjustments.

- **Develop a database of instruments and tools that is accessible for all members**

The already developed instruments under the re-granting scheme can be adapted where needed to come up with concrete and practical tools that can be implemented by all structures.

Other tools, such as a gender checklist for policy and advocacy work and a glossary, are to be developed. SOGIESC matters may also be considered. All instruments and tools are to be included in a database that is easily accessible for all members, so that any efforts to include gender in EaP CSF structures' work are facilitated.

- **Develop mechanisms allowing members to exchange expertise or questions**

At periodic intervals the Forum could organise online interventions (peer coaching) on gender accessible to all members. During these interventions, members can present good practices and success stories, discuss any issues they encounter during their work, and support and advise one another. When persisting questions or issues are identified, EaP CSF could call on external expertise to assist and advise.

- **Financial means**

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The necessary financial means are to be provided to facilitate the process of implementing the GMS, most importantly to support all capacity-building efforts.

### **1.3. Practices**

#### **Mainstream gender in *all* aspects of EaP CSF's work**

Once the necessary frameworks and means are put in place, gender mainstreaming efforts can be translated into practice. In this way, EaP CSF will move from an approach whereby gender is integrated in limited parts of its work to a thorough gender mainstreaming of all its practices.

- **Develop policy and advocacy efforts on the basis of the roadmap and a gender checklist**

The mainstreaming of gender in EaP CSF's general strategy and its advocacy strategy will facilitate the process of integrating gender in policy and advocacy actions and will allow to streamline efforts.

The gender roadmaps will allow to define and orient gender integration efforts in line with specific subject matters.

- **Mainstream gender in the re-granting scheme**

Specific projects focusing on gender equality should continue to be supported. In addition to that, gender should be mainstreamed in all selected projects. When necessary, the EaP CSF should provide the necessary support for organisations to do so.

- **Implement gender audits**

To identify specific challenges at these levels, gender audits are to be implemented at all levels on a triannual basis. These audits will lead to specific action plans of which the implementation is to be followed up by the Secretariat/the Steering Committee.

- **Ensure equal representation at all levels**



The definition of gender quota is to ensure equal representation of men and women at all levels, events and on all platforms. All male-panels should not be tolerated. A thorough mapping of EaP CSF's internal expertise should ensure that adequate choices can be made for each occasion that arises.

Speakers are to be briefed on EaP CSF's commitment to gender equality and encouraged to develop a gender-sensitive presentation. The EaP CSF (Secretariat, gender subgroup) develops the necessary tools and provides support where necessary to facilitate this.

- **Monitor and evaluate**

All practices and activities are to be monitored and evaluated from a gender perspective, to ensure they contribute to the gender equality objectives as outlined in the vision note and as further defined in the project and advocacy strategies, on the basis of gender indicators.

#### **1.4. Organisational culture**

**Ensure the promotion of gender equality as a key value of the EaP CSF at all levels**

The organisation culture is not something that can be changed from one day to another. Nonetheless, various actions can be undertaken to ensure that an enabling environment is created for a gender-sensitive organisational culture to flourish.

- **The EaP CSF needs to be a working environment that is free from harassment, violence or intimidation**

It is a priority for the EaP CSF to ensure that all members can freely participate in meetings without the fear of being harassed, discriminated or intimidated. The EaP CSF is to encourage all members to report any such cases at the Compliance Committee. Members should have the assurance they can do so freely and anonymously. The right mechanisms need to allow for accurate analysis and follow-up.

In the same way, by-standers are encouraged to actively speak up against inappropriate behaviour and put EaP CSF's commitment for gender equality into practice.



- **Speak up for the values that are the core of EaP CSF**

The values of the EaP CSF need to be defended and propagated. This also means standing up for women's rights activists and civil rights activists in Eastern Partnership countries when they are confronted with intimidation, violence or oppression.

- **Revise membership and the membership strategy in view of the values EaP CSF wants to defend**

As mentioned before, an internal reflection is needed to assess current membership and membership strategies in light of EaP CSF's renewed ambition in striving for gender equality.

### **1.5. Context**

**Systematically analyse the social, political and institutional context to identify and connect with actors and processes that can further EaP CSF's gender equality objectives**

- **Carry out a stakeholder mapping of the Eastern Partnership social, political and institutional context from a gender perspective**

This analysis will identify potential allies and/or partners for collaborations, as well as stakeholders that EaP CSF should engage with through advocacy work to promote gender equality, as an important drive for democracy, within the Eastern Partnership.

- **Monitor the context for opportunities and threats with respect to gender equality**

A systematic analysis of the social, political and institutional context will allow for the EaP CSF to: capitalise on the opportunities that present themselves (ex. policy processes, opportunities to present EaP CSF's work on gender on various platforms, funding for projects on gender, ...), and contribute to countering threats to gender equality within the Eastern Partnership (ex. speaking up when specific cases arise, become an active actor in the analysis of the rise of anti-gender movements (cf. re-granting project, take an explicit stance against national policies that go against gender equality, ...).



## ANNEX

### **Glossary<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Gender**

A social and cultural construct that determines the roles, responsibilities and opportunities women and men have in a society. Gender relations vary from one place to another, can change and are further influenced by other factors such as class, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity.

#### **Sex**

Biological and physiological characteristics that define humans as female or male

#### **Gender identity**

Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

#### **Nonbinary gender identity (enby)**

A spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine.

#### **Gender budgeting**

Gender budgeting is a gender based assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of the proposed definitions are taken from EIGE's Gender Equality Glossary & Thesaurus (<https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/overview>).



### **Sexual orientation**

Each person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender, the same gender or more than one gender.

### **Gender equality**

A situation in which women and men have the same access to rights, opportunities, services (health, education, etc.), economic and productive resources, decision-making power and participation in public and political life, among other things.

### **Equity**

An approach that seeks to correct unequal starting positions so as to ensure that men and women have a level playing field. As such, it might call for a different treatment of women and men

### **Gender discrimination**

Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of gender which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

### **Gender blindness**

Failure to recognise that the roles and responsibilities of women/girls and men/boys are ascribed to, or imposed upon, them in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts.

### **Gender bias**

Prejudiced actions or thoughts based on the gender-based perception that women are not equal to men in rights and dignity.

### **Gender Audit**



Assessment of the extent to which gender equality is effectively institutionalised in policies, programmes, organisational structures and proceedings (including decision-making processes), and in the corresponding budgets.

### **Gender sensitivity**

Aim of understanding and taking into account of the societal and cultural factors involved in gender-based exclusion and discrimination in the most diverse spheres of public and private life.

### **Gender mainstreaming**

A strategy towards realising gender equality, involving the integration of a gender perspective in the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and programmes.

