

# ENHANCING CAPACITY OF NATIONAL PLATFORMS OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM TO IMPLEMENT GENDER EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES



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"Vesta" - Mothers of large families and women - entrepreneurs of Gagauzia,  
Moldova

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# INTRODUCTION

Implementation of the state gender equality policy, elimination of gender-based discrimination, as well as application of special temporary measures aimed at addressing the imbalance in the opportunities of men and women to exercise their rights, to a large extent depend on the effectiveness of a national mechanism for ensuring gender equality (NMGE).

In this publication, national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality are viewed as a streamlined system of international, regional and national organizational structures in state and public sectors, whose activities are aimed at mainstreaming gender equality principles in various spheres of public life and ensuring the implementation of the derived therefrom gender strategies and respective gender policies. These organizational structures have gained momentum after the IV World Conference on Women. They concentrate efforts on the involvement of state and public actors working with or within different branches of government (legislative, executive or judicial) on strengthening gender equality and empowering women in their countries.

On the eve of the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership policy adoption, the European Union presented an updated structure for multilateral cooperation, part of which was the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF). As a result, opportunities of civil society to influence decision-making process have increased. The Forum has reinforced its presence at various international platforms of the Eastern Partnership ranged from the meetings of Foreign Ministers of the EaP countries to panels and expert working groups. As envisaged by the internal reform of the Civil Society Forum, the new role of the Forum demands strengthening civil society participation in expert and advocacy support of the Eastern Partnership policy both at European level and at the national levels of the partner states.

Special attention is paid to the issues of gender equality and fight against discrimination that remain on the agenda of the European Union.

In the year 2020, the world community marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the IV World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), as well as the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals for the period up to 2030. In this regard, in March 2020, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will review and assess progress<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, it is proposed that all states carry out comprehensive reviews of the progress and problems encountered in the course of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the national level. This anniversary should be viewed as an impetus for focusing national efforts on engagement of young generation of advocates for gender equality and those remaining aside. In doing so, governments should cooperate with relevant stakeholders at all levels preparing the 2020 Review. Thus, experience and knowledge of stakeholders can be incorporated. By joining forces, the government and society may eradicate the root causes of gender inequality and identify path to genuine equality, which incorporates ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and girls<sup>2</sup>.

This publication is a contribution of organizations working on gender issues within national platforms of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in their countries.

<sup>1</sup> Резолюция Экономического и Социального Совета ООН (ЭКОСОС) 2018/8 <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=ru/E/RES/2018/8>

<sup>2</sup> Руководство по комплексному обзору на национальном уровне. ООН-женщины, сентябрь 2018 г. - Access mode: [https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/RCM\\_Website/Guidance\\_note\\_Russian.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/RCM_Website/Guidance_note_Russian.pdf)

It is a summary of an analytical study carried out in the framework of the project «Increasing Capacity for Implementing Efficient Gender Policy and Practices in countries of Eastern Partnership – in accordance to “Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020”. The project has been implemented by the partner organizations due to the re-grant support of the EaP CSF Secretariat (within the framework of a grant contract with the European Commission) in 2018 provided to the members of EaP CSF national platforms.

The aim of the publication is to present national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality of the Eastern Partnership countries and to provide an overview of EaP CSF national platforms' possibilities for promotion of gender equality policies on the national level (including activities within national mechanisms).

We expect that effective gender policies and practices in EaP countries will enable national platforms to successfully carry out activities based on the needs of women and men and to promote gender equality on the national levels, as well as within the Forum.

The publication consists of 3 sections. The first section is devoted to the review of national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality as a system that defines features of domestic gender policy. The second section describes gender aspects of EaP CSF national platforms' activities. The third section contains the results of the study conducted within the framework of the project and recommendations developed.

The authors express sincere gratitude to the EaP CSF Secretariat and partner-countries, whose support enabled this research.

The study «Increasing Capacity for Implementing Efficient Gender Policy and Practices in countries of Eastern Partnership – in accordance to “Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020” has been conducted by project partners representing gender subgroups of the EaP CSF national platforms of all 6 Eastern Partnership countries. The main task is to contribute to the achievement of the goals set forth in the joint staff working document Eastern Partnership - Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables for 2020 Focusing on key priorities and tangible results. The study is focused on mechanisms and strategies for achieving equality of women and men, which is one of the core values of both the EU and Eastern Partnership policies.

The text of the Joint Declaration on the Brussels Eastern Partnership Summit (November 2017) underlines commitment to gender equality and promotion of women's empowerment. It also emphasizes “importance of vibrant civil society and gender equality to release the full economic and social potential of their societies, improving economic development and strengthening social cohesion» (paragraph 5). Moreover, «Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination» is a cross-cutting goal of the joint staff working document «Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables by 2020». It focuses on key priorities and tangible results and may be viewed as a «road map» for the development of the Eastern Partnership policies.

Thus, the purpose of the study is to review gender policies and practices of Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova, as well as to provide recommendations for strengthening gender policies and practices, taking into account gaps identified by national platforms of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. These recommendations are addressed to the EaP CSF national platforms, national authorities and all interested parties. The study was presented at an international conference in Kyiv (October 11-13, 2018) and round tables held in each country.

The results of the study have shown that in recent years the Eastern Partnership countries have reaffirmed their commitment to gender equality and non-discrimination and have taken steps to improve national legal frameworks in the context of constitutional and legal reforms. Thus, the constitutions of all countries contain clear provisions prohibiting discrimination and guaranteeing equal status for all people regardless of gender, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, political convictions, personal and social status. They all claim that fundamental human and civil rights and freedoms are recognized and guaranteed in accordance with the principles and norms of international law. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have passed laws on equal rights of women and men. In addition to these laws, other important laws have been passed, such as anti-discrimination legislation, as well as laws aimed at resolving issues of domestic violence and prevention of human trafficking.

For the effective implementation of domestic policies on gender equality and empowerment of women, Eastern Partnership countries have adopted national strategies/ action plans and government programs. However, it should be noted that these policies are based on a pronounced paternalistic approach to women, emphasizing their role in the context of family, maternity and social protection.

Therefore, in order to increase the effectiveness of national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality in Eastern Partnership countries, it is necessary to focus on strengthening institutional mechanisms that will to a larger extent meet international requirements set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.

Another important aspect of promoting gender equality is the need for a greater involvement of civil society and non-governmental organizations into the functioning of national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality.



In this context, strengthening the role of national platforms in the activities of national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality may be considered as a priority objective for the near future. At the same time, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum should be seen as a platform for communication

of civil society representatives aimed at promoting European integration, reforms and democratic change.

Taking into account the above, it is very important to integrate gender perspective into EaP CSF national platforms' activities.

# CHAPTER 1

## NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY: RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

A major development since the IV World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 has been the establishment of new mechanisms, in addition to national machineries, to promote achievement of the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In accordance with paragraph 201 of the Platform for Action<sup>3</sup>, "A national machinery for the advancement of women is the central policy-coordinating unit inside government" [6]. Necessary conditions for its effective functioning include "location at the highest possible level in the Government", which ensures a possibility to "influence development of all government policies". From this point of view, national mechanisms are more than just an agency for implementing policies related to the empowerment of women. Its main function is to consistently improve gender legislation and monitor its implementation.

Establishment of institutional mechanisms for ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of women cannot be separated from the overall process of democratization, state-building and political reforms in the country. They may include:

- National machinery for the advancement of women in government (for example, ministry, department (see paragraph 201 of the Beijing Platform for Action));
- interdepartmental bodies (task forces / working groups / commissions or similar mechanisms);
- advisory bodies (including multi-stakeholder participation);
- Ombudsperson for Gender Equality;
- parliamentary committee;
- and others.

Conditions necessary for the effective functioning of such national mechanisms include:

- subordination of the mechanism to an official of the highest possible level in the government - a minister or cabinet member;
- existence of institutional mechanisms or processes that facilitate decentralized planning, implementation and monitoring, when necessary, in order to involve non-governmental and civil society organizations from grassroots level and above;
- availability of sufficient resources with regard to budgetary and staffing;
- ability to influence the development of government policy in all spheres.

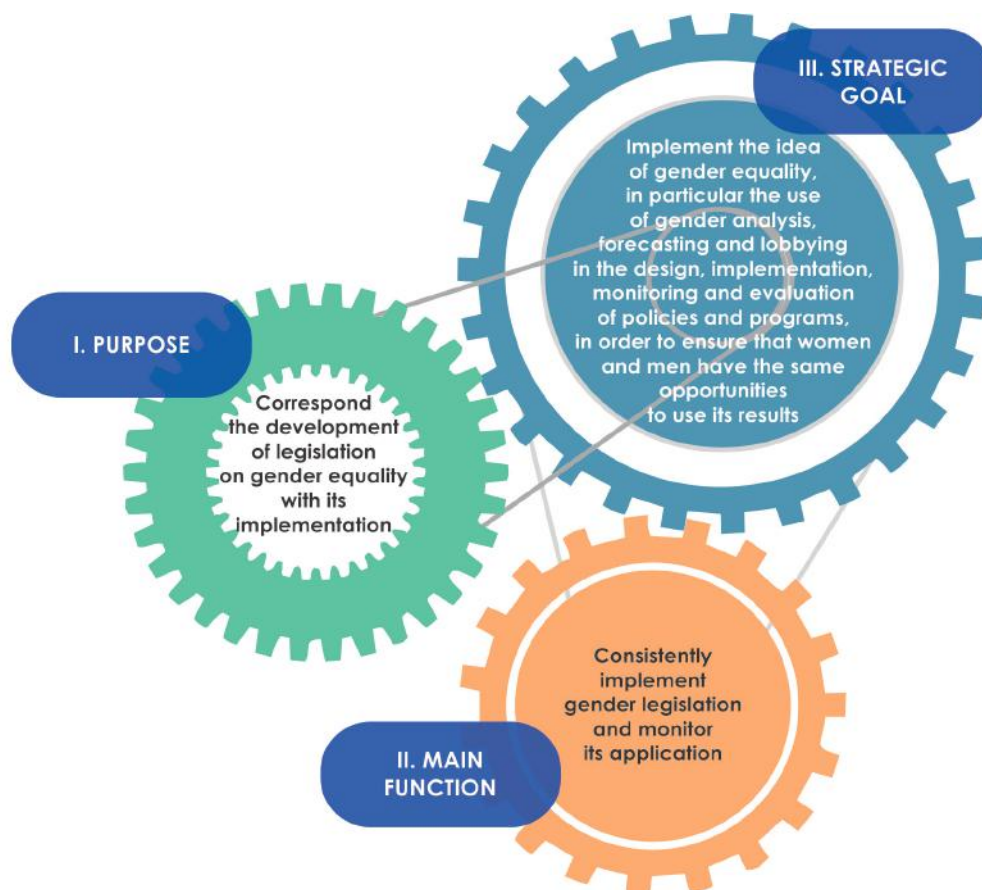
Taking into account the provisions of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the Platform for Action, the country itself is developing its own national mechanism for ensuring gender equality. The [structure and mandate of the national mechanism](#) are the [determining factor of its efficiency](#) in all the countries. Thus, national mechanisms may differ in their structure. As a rule, they are represented at the national level (both legislative and executive power), as well as at the regional and local levels.

[Supreme Legislative and Executive authorities](#). All Eastern Partnership countries have established [parliamentary structures](#), such as committees, subcommittees, commissions, etc. In some countries, these parliamentary structures have a clear focus on gender equality, and in others they deal with "women's issues" within broader portfolios.

Also, many countries have created [interfractional parliamentary associations](#) consisting of parliamentarians (both

<sup>3</sup>Report on IV World Conference on Women. - Access mode: <https://undocs.org/en/A/CONF.177/20>/ Rev.1





### Purpose, main function and strategic goal of NMGE

men and women), as well as groups and networks of female parliamentarians. These formal and informal mechanisms advocate for, incorporate and monitor gender issues in legislation and policies, and participate in mobilizing voter support for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

[Ombudsperson Offices \(Human Rights Ombudsperson\)](#), as well as [Government Commissioner for Gender Equality](#) (as in Ukraine) have been established in almost all countries of the EaP region (except Belarus), either as fully independent bodies or under the auspices of parliaments. In most countries, they are considered part of the NMGE.

In some cases, [councils or national commissions](#) are being created with consultative status with the government.

As a rule, they have broad powers and are composed of representatives of both governmental and non-governmental organizations.

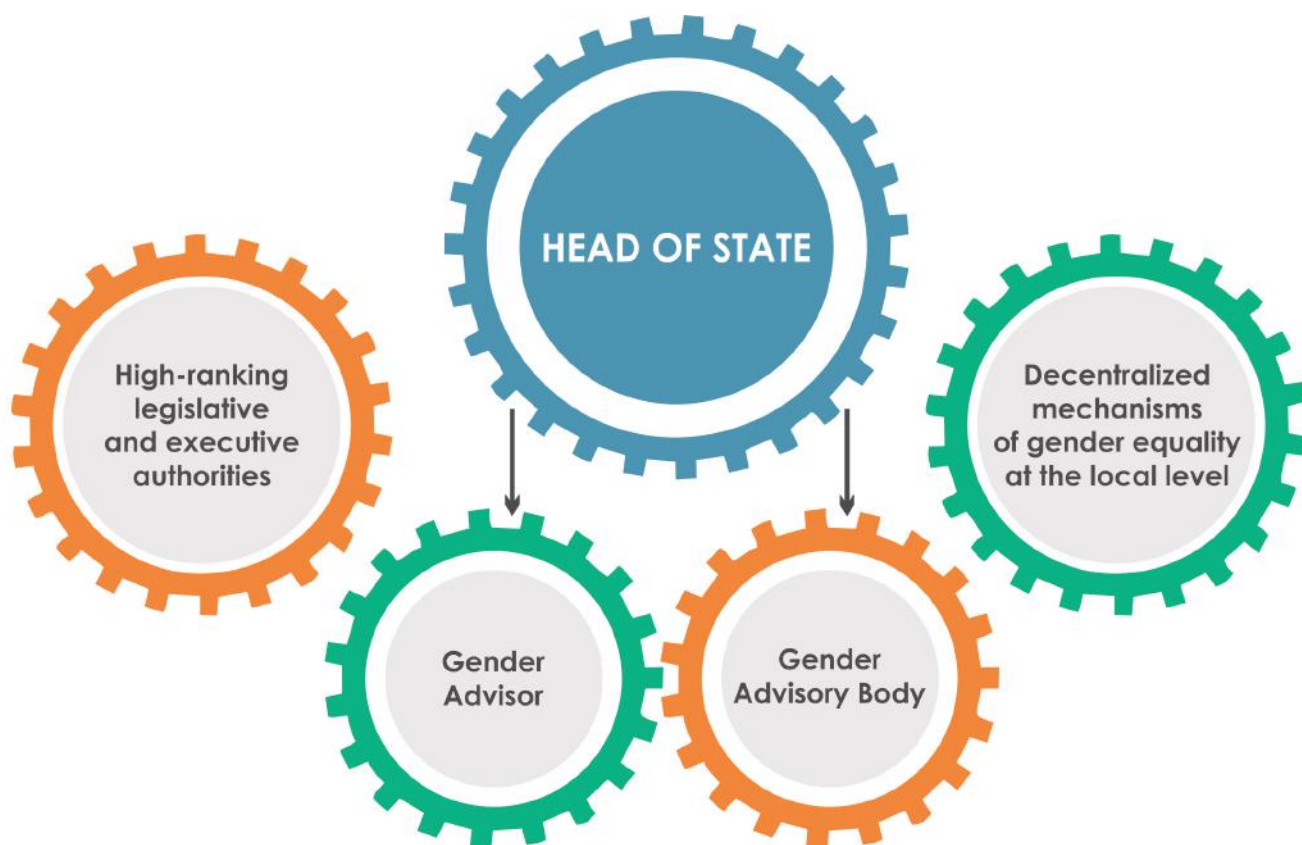
An integral part of national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality are [interdepartmental coordinating councils](#).

These are multilateral advisory bodies consisting of representatives of line ministries, researchers and representatives of civil society. They are chaired by a deputy prime minister or other high-ranking government official.

These bodies are established on a permanent or temporary basis in order to provide policy advice.

Their another objective is to ensure coordination and/or control over the implementation of state policies for the advancement of women and promotion of gender equality.

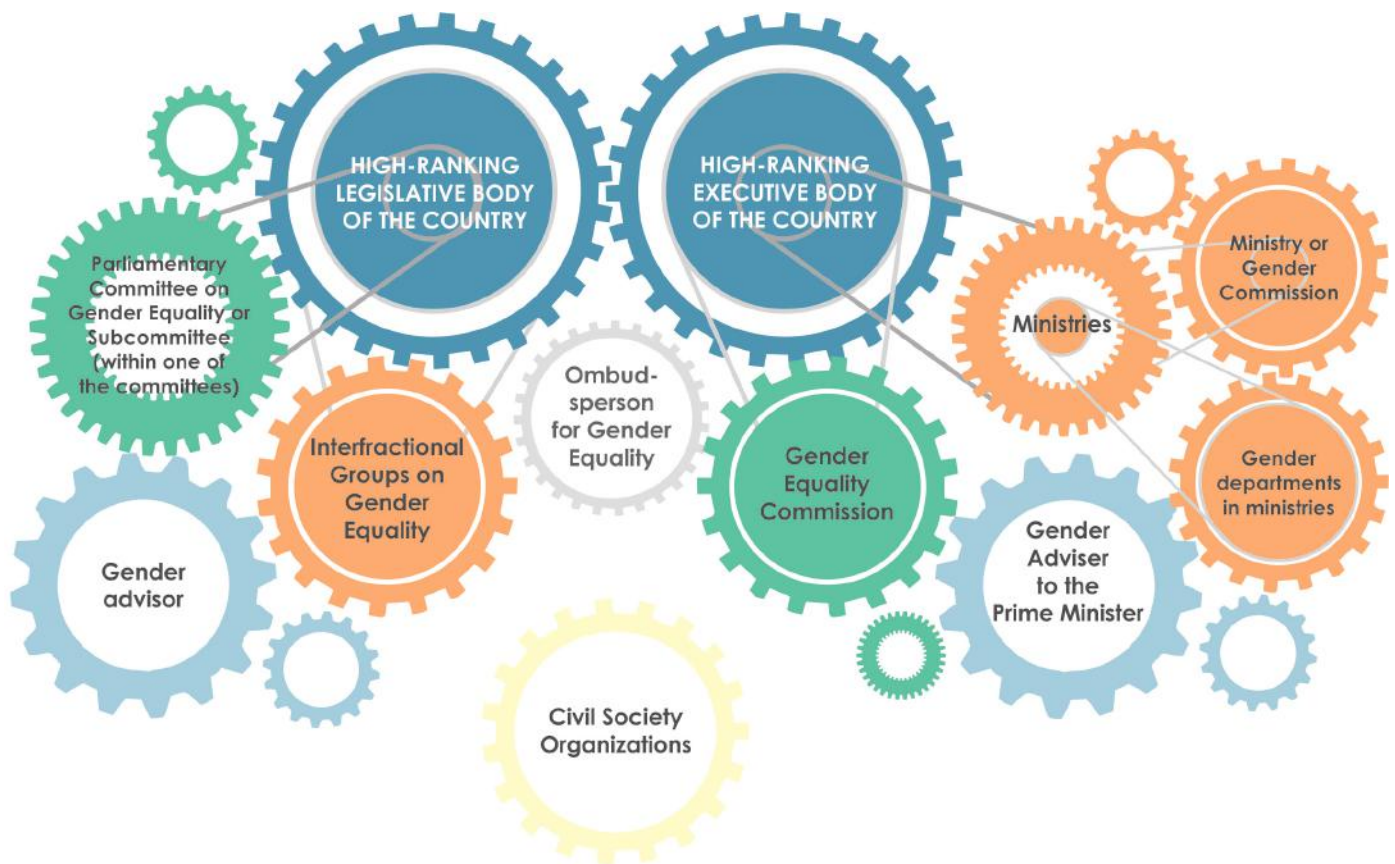
Most often they consist of representatives of ministries (at the level of deputy minister), national experts, scholars, representatives of civil society, non-governmental and international organizations.



### National mechanisms for ensuring gender equality (NMGE, basic structure)

Such councils have been formed in all EaP countries. However, some of them deal with gender issues specifically, others have broader portfolios (for example, the Interdepartmental Council on Family, Gender Equality, Demographic

Development, Domestic Violence Prevention and Countering Human Trafficking in Ukraine or the Interdepartmental Commission on Gender Equality, Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in Georgia).



**NMGE: the high-ranking legislative and executive bodies**

## NMGE: DECENTRALIZED MECHANISMS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In almost all countries, national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality have units not only at the central, but also at the local level. Decentralized mechanisms at the local level are created in administrations, municipalities and local councils. Their structure is similar to the one at the state level. They may be set as directorates or departments on gender equality, or commissioners (coordinators) in key ministries and other government agencies.

Decentralized institutions are established in all Eastern Partnership countries. In some countries, decentralization reaches community level (for example, in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine).

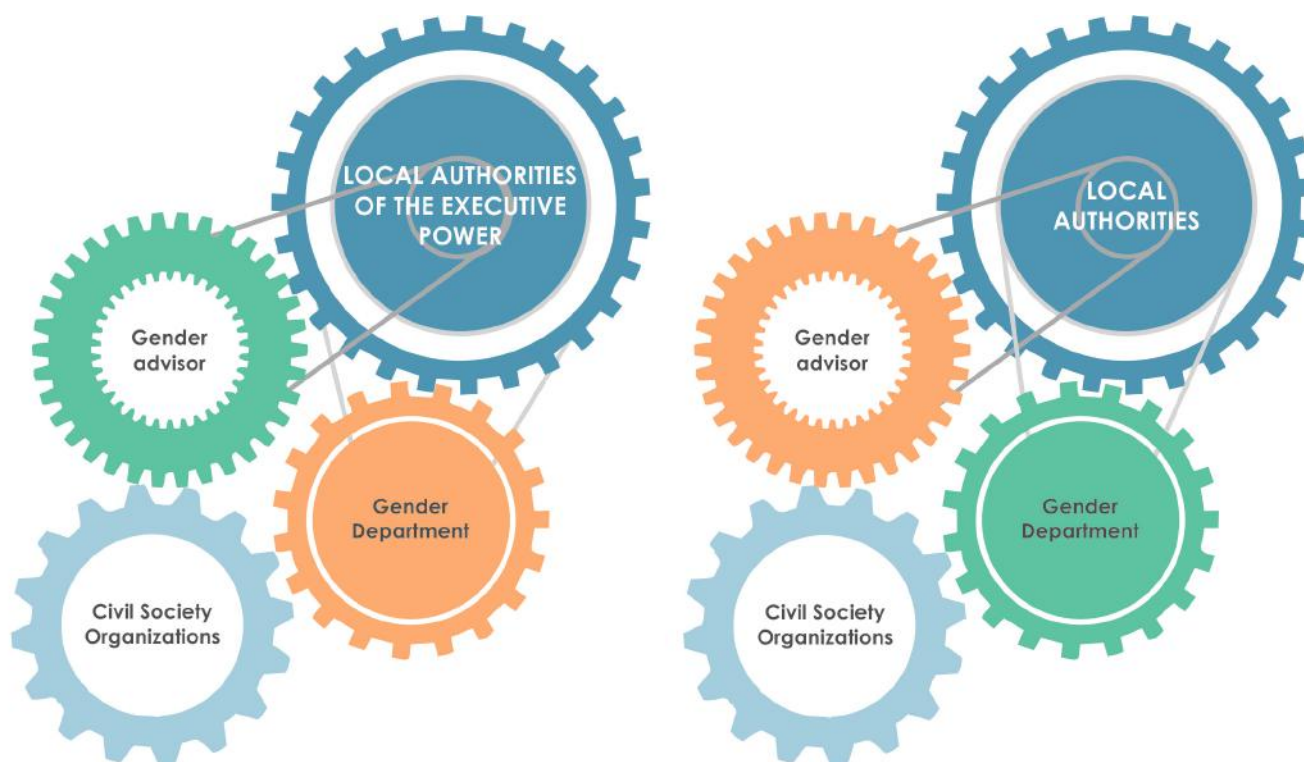
Gender commissioners (or coordinators) may be appointed to coordinate interaction among all stakeholders at the local level. They may be appointed at the level of sectoral ministries, as well as in state administrations and local governments.

Also, **gender advisers** may be appointed in key ministries and in executive and local government bodies. It is noteworthy that today gender commissioners and advisers are working in policy areas that until recently had been considered gender neutral (foreign affairs, defense, security, justice, finance, and others).

In addition, working groups on gender equality issues may be created in government bodies, both at the central and local levels.

Efficient work of gender resource centers, women's councils and mobilized women's groups at community level should be noted.

Summing up the information on NMGE general structure in the Eastern Partnership countries, the institutions listed below may be considered as progressive and ensuring efficiency of their national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality:



**NMGE: Decentralized mechanisms of gender equality at the local level**



- parliamentary committees and commissions within the legislative branch of government in the national parliament and at the decentralized level;

- Ombudsperson's Office, as well as government representatives for gender equality issues;

- multilateral advisory bodies that consist of the representatives of line ministries, researchers and representatives of civil society, chaired by the deputy prime minister or other high-ranking government official;

- gender commissioners (coordinators) in sectoral ministries, state administrations and local governments;

- directorates, gender equality departments and units in key ministries and other public institutions;

- gender advisers in key ministries and decentralized government bodies;

- working/coordination groups on gender equality issues in sectoral ministries, as well as in government bodies, both at the central and local levels;

- gender resource centers supported by local governments, women's councils and women's groups at the community level.

## MANDATE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE NMGE

The Beijing Platform for Action defines the task of the national mechanism as support to the government in mainstreaming gender perspective in all policy areas.

In practice, this may include the following actions:

- development of legislation on gender equality and control over its implementation;

- ensuring effective functioning of institutions responsible for implementation of gender policy;

- ensuring development of special programs, projects and action plans on gender equality issues;

- ensuring empowerment, capacity-building and equal access of women to all areas and sectors;

- conducting research and training on equal rights and opportunities for men and women;

- gathering reliable statistics, as well as other monitoring tools and assessment methods.

Functioning of national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of women is always closely linked to the country's political, social, economic and institutional context. That is why national mechanisms of different countries have been created with different mandates that determine their powers. Nevertheless, the key task of any national mechanism for ensuring gender equality is to coordinate activities of various institutions and to develop cooperation between them in order to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. To do so, NMGE use dual strategy for gender mainstreaming, which includes:

- specific policies and actions, including, when necessary, positive measures to ensure de facto gender equality and the advancement of women;

- monitoring, coordination and evaluation of gender mainstreaming in all policies and programs<sup>4</sup> so that gender perspective is included in all policies and at all levels;

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<sup>4</sup> Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanism  
Access mode: [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d4aa3](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d4aa3)

Special measures in gender policy include legislation or positive measures (for example, quotas). The purpose of these measures is to solve specific problems, such as wage gap, gender gap in employment, etc. (for example, 20% quota in the Electoral Code of Armenia, 40% quota for members of the government and candidates in party lists of Moldova, or quotas in the financial sector of Georgia).

In most Eastern Partnership countries, national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality focus on the following areas:

- development and implementation of national action plans and government programs aimed at improvement of the status of women and ensuring gender equality;
- coordination and control over the implementation of gender equality laws, national action plans, international treaties;
- conducting gender-sensitive studies, monitoring and assessments;
- information campaigns on gender equality and issues related to women, family and other topics;
- coordination with all governmental and non-governmental organizations working on gender issues;
- capacity building and training of gender equality advocates.

Among NMGE operational strategies applied in EaP countries are:

- targeted measures, which also include temporary special measures;
- legal reforms aimed at promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women (for example, laws on preventing domestic violence and countering human trafficking);
- collection of gender sensitive data and maintain gender-disaggregated statistics.

The results of the study also emphasized the importance of partnership, coordination and interaction between a variety of actors within national mechanisms. In addition, an important factor in the overall progress towards achieving the goals of gender equality in all countries is cooperation between the state and civil society. In this context, strengthening the role of national platforms of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum with regard to NMGE activities at the national level in their countries can be considered as a priority task for the near future. Therefore, to enhance NMGE efficiency, Eastern Partnership countries need to focus on strengthening institutional mechanisms within those structures that will to a greater extent meet international requirements set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action. Another important aspect is the need for more active involvement of civil society and non-governmental organizations into activities of national mechanisms.



## OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY IN EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES

The comparison of national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality in Eastern Partnership countries has been done based on the analysis of their structure and mandate in each EaP country.

### ARMENIA

#### *Short overview*

In 2013, Armenia adopted the Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men", which introduced basic gender terminology, established guarantees of equal treatment for officials in public administration, and defined those responsible for NMGE implementation.

#### *Structure and mandate*

- The main institutional gender focal point responsible for the implementation of National Concepts and Action Plans is the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, and in particular the Department for Family, Children and Women. The powers of this department include research on gender issues, development of programs in the field of gender equality, as well as coordination and monitoring of the mentioned programs implementation.
- The Council of Women under the Prime Minister was formed in 2000. The purpose of the Council is to increase the status of women in all spheres of public life and ensure equal opportunities for men and women.
- Gender thematic group created by the representatives of the UN and OSCE in Armenia and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. The group consists of state structures, international and Armenian public organizations.
- The Council for the Prevention of Domestic Violence was established in July 2018 by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.
- National Statistics Service, which since 2000 has been providing gender-disaggregated statistics. An expert in gender statistics assists the Service. A brochure entitled "Men and Women in Armenia" has been published annually.
- Gender commissions at the local level.

#### *Priorities of the State Gender Equality Policy (National Action Plans)*

- A draft of the National Strategy on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men for 2019-2023 has been prepared.
- On February 27, 2018 the Government of Armenia approved the National Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council for 2019-2021.

## AZERBAIJAN

### *Short overview*

The Republic of Azerbaijan adopted a number of laws promoting gender equality in the country. One of them is the Law "On Ensuring Gender Equality", which guarantees equal opportunities for men and women in the political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres of public life. It was adopted on October 10, 2006 and consists of 21 articles. The Law "On Prevention of Domestic Violence" was adopted on June 22, 2010.

Establishment of the national mechanism for ensuring gender equality in Azerbaijan took place in several stages. However, the basis for introduction of the state strategy on gender equality and the empowerment of women into political decision-making process was laid by the Presidential Decree as of March 6, 2000 "On the Implementation of the State Women's Policy" (hereinafter - the Decree). This Decree foresaw ensuring equal representation of women and men in all state structures, as well as conducting gender expertise of domestic legislation. It should be noted State Committee on Women's Issues was assigned as a body controlling the implementation of the Decree, but it was dismantled in 2006 and the State Committee on the Problems of Family, Women and Children was established instead.

### *Structure and mandate*

NMGE in Azerbaijan includes:

- State Committee on Family, Women and Children;
- The Ombudsperson's Office;
- gender focal points in ministries as well as other government agencies;
- about 150 women's non-governmental organizations and initiative groups, including 10 non-governmental organizations accredited to provide assistance (including shelter) to victims of domestic violence;
- Department on Gender Studies at the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan;
- Center for Gender Studies at Baku State University.

The key gender policy actors in Azerbaijan are:

- State Committee on Family, Women and Children;
- gender focal points in ministries as well as other government agencies;
- local non-governmental organizations.

*State gender equality policy priorities* are the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination, ensuring gender equality in political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres of public life.

## BELARUS

### *Short overview*

Measures aimed at protection of the rights of women and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women have been implemented in Belarus since 1996. The Republic of Belarus has signed and ratified a number of basic UN documents aimed at protecting the interests of women and achieving gender equality. At the international level Belarus has undertaken specific obligations to implement the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), signed the Additional Protocol to CEDAW (2004), the Declaration of the IV World Conference on the Advancement of Women (Beijing, 1995), the Millennium Declaration and other UN documents. In February 2017, the fifth National Action Plan for gender equality in the Republic of Belarus for 2017-2020 was approved.

### *Structure and mandate*

The coordinating body in the field of achieving gender equality is the National Council on Gender Policy at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, which was established by a Government decision in 2000 and acts on the basis of the Regulation on the National Council on Gender Policy at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus.

[The National Council on Gender Policy at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus](#) is a permanent body responsible for state gender equality policy. The National Council is composed of the representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, the Supreme Court, heads and/or deputy heads of government bodies of the republican level, employees of the Office of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, representatives of state administrations, local executive and administrative bodies, civil society and international organizations, as well as scientists dealing with gender equality issues. In accordance with the Regulations on the National Council, approved by the Resolution No. 613 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus on June 30, 2012, the Minister of Labor and Social Protection is the Chairman of the National Council.

Gender equality policy units in the executive branch are:

- [The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population and the Department of Population, Gender and Family Policy](#). Key objectives of the Department are the development of proposals and the implementation of the broad outlines of state policy on demographic security, improving the socio-economic conditions of families, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women, and also improving legislation in these areas.
- [Executive committees](#) have Departments of Targeted Social Assistance and Gender Issues, which are responsible for managing social support for the population and have expert working groups on the implementation of gender policy.

### *Priorities of the state gender equality policy*

International obligations undertaken by Belarus imply that the state defines gender equality as one of its priorities and shapes national gender policy. The National Action Plan for Gender Equality in the Republic of Belarus is aimed at implementing the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee and UN Sustainable Development Goals until 2030, in particular Goal No. 5 "Ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls".

## GEORGIA

### *Short overview*

Being a country that had signed documents protecting fundamental human rights, including the rights of women, Georgia has committed itself to promoting gender equality by means of gender mainstreaming into domestic legislation, strategies and programs. In 1997 the first gender equality institution was established. It was the Interdepartmental Commission, which dealt with human rights issues (including women's rights). In 2000 Presidential Decree No. 511 "Improving the Status of Women in Georgia" was published. The Decree included seven of the twelve priorities of the Beijing Platform for Action. In 2010 the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Law "On Gender Equality". The Law "On the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination" was adopted in 2014; and the Law "On the Elimination of Violence against Women and/or Domestic Violence, Protection and Assisting the Victims of Violence" came into force in 2017. National Action Plan was developed to ensure successful implementation of the Law on gender equality (the first plan was elaborated for 2011-2013, the second - for 2014-2016, and the third - for 2017-2019). After ratification of the Istanbul Convention (May 19, 2017) amendment have been made to the Law "On Gender Equality". Thus, the role of the Parliament and the Government in ensuring gender equality was identified, and an Interdepartmental Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence was established under the Government of Georgia.

### *Structure and mandate*

- [The Advisory Council on Gender Equality](#) under the head of the Georgian Parliament was established in 2004. Since 2019 the Council on Gender Equality has received independent organizational and technical support from the Parliament. The main tasks of the Council are as follows: to determine priorities of state gender equality policy; to improve gender equality legislation; to enhance national mechanism for ensuring gender equality; to assist institutional strengthening of the Council; to raise awareness on gender equality; to monitor implementation of activities aimed at promotion of gender equality; and to develop draft recommendations on ensuring equal rights and opportunities of women and men.
- [The Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#) was formed in 2017. It includes representatives of ministries, Public Defender's Office, Legal Aid Service, public broadcasting, Gender Equality Council at the Parliament, Supreme Court and National Statistics Service. The Commission's mandate includes issues of gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence, the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions "Women, Peace, Security" and the empowerment of women. In order to institutionalize a position of gender focal point, amendments have been made to the Law "On Gender Equality" and the Law "On Local Self-Governance" in 2016.
- [Interdepartmental Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#).
- [The National Statistics Service of Georgia](#) biannually publishes a compendium "Women and Men in Georgia". The statistics presented reflect key trends in Georgia that are important for developing state gender policies and raising public awareness on gender issues.
- [The Department on Gender Issues at the Public Defender's Office of Georgia](#) was established in 2013. The objectives the Department are: 1) to investigate and effectively respond to individual and systemic violations of gender equality and women's rights; 2) to promote the integration of gender equality issues into regular advocacy activities of the Public Defender's Office; 3) to raise awareness of relevant state bodies and civil society on promotion of gender equality in Georgia.

*Priorities in the field of gender equality in Georgia*, as defined by the national mechanism for ensuring gender equality, are to promote participation of women in political life and prevent violence against women and domestic violence.

## MOLDOVA

### *Short overview*

The Law “On Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men” as of 9 February 2006, namely, Article 15 of Chapter V “Institutional mechanism for ensuring equal opportunities for women and men” foresees authorities in the field of gender equality. The anti-discrimination law “On Ensuring Equality” was adopted in 2012. In the framework of the implementation of the Law a Council on prevention and elimination of discrimination and ensuring equality has been established. The Council is not subordinate to the Government and acts independently.

### *Structure and mandate*

- [Government Commission on Gender Equality](#). It is an advisory body established under the Government and acting in accordance with the respective Government's Regulation. The Commission exercises the following powers: mainstreaming gender equality; coordination of the activities of central and local authorities regarding gender equality issues; development of cooperation of state structures with civil society and international organizations, as well as stimulation of their partnership with private sector in order to promote gender equality; analysis of national and local plans and programs; evaluation of funds spending on gender equality.
- [The Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family](#) is a central Government body with authority to develop and implement gender equality policies.
- [Gender Coordination Group on Gender Issues](#) under central specialized public administration authorities.
- [State Labor Inspectorate, ministries and other central administrative authorities \(gender coordination groups\)](#).
- [local authorities \(gender units\)](#),
- [National Bureau of Statistics](#)
- [Council for Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality](#). It provides protection against discrimination and ensures equality of all persons in accordance with the law.

### *Priorities of state gender equality policy*

The Strategy for Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for 2017-2021 is being implemented, as well as the Action Plan on its execution approved by the Government Decree No. 259 as of April 28, 2017.

## UKRAINE

### *Short overview*

The national mechanism for ensuring gender equality in Ukraine provides for legislative regulation of gender mainstreaming into all spheres of public life in accordance with Article 7 of the Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" as of 08.09.2006 No. 2866-IV. Each of the authorized bodies influences implementation of gender policy within its mandate defined by the Constitution of Ukraine and Articles 8-14 of the Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men".

### *Structure and mandate*

- In the field of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men [the Ukrainian Parliament \(The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine\)](#) defines basic principles of state gender policy, mainstreams gender equality principles in legislation, and within the limits stipulated by the Constitution of Ukraine exercises parliamentary control over the implementation of legislative acts on ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men.
- On December 10, 2014 [the Subcommittee on Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination](#) was established by the decision of the Parliamentary Committee on human rights, national minorities and international relations. The Subcommittee is developing and improving legislative mechanisms for ensuring gender equality and non-discrimination, as well as adapting national gender legislation to the international standards.
- In addition, on December 9, 2014 the voluntary union of people's deputies of Ukraine ([the Inter-Fraction Deputy Union "Equal Opportunities"](#)) was created in order to support gender equality mainstreaming by uniting the efforts of the legislative and executive authorities, as well as civil society, aimed at protection of women's rights, creating equal opportunities in political, labor, cultural and educational spheres. The Union also deals with the adaptation of Ukrainian legislation to the EU legal framework.
- Within monitoring the observance of the human rights and a citizen rights, the [Commissioner for Human Rights of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine](#) monitors observance of equal rights and opportunities of men and women.
- [The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine](#) is the highest executive body in the field of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women.
- In September 2007, [the Interdepartmental Council on Family, Gender Equality, Demographic Development and Countering Human Trafficking](#) was established under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. One of its main tasks is to ensure implementation of an efficient state gender equality policy (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine as of 05.09. 2007 № 1087).
- [Government Commissioner for Gender Policy](#) (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 390 as of June 7, 2017). The main tasks of the Government Commissioner are to monitor observance of gender equality principle by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine when adopting legal acts; to ensure cooperation and interaction with civil society on mainstreaming gender equality in all spheres of life, etc.
- [The Ministry of Social Policy](#) is a designated central executive body that develops and implements state gender equality policy.
- [The Directorate on Social Services and European Integration](#) operates as a structural unit of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine. With regard to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men its main tasks are the development of domestic policy based on systemic analysis of the state of affairs in this field; monitoring and evaluating the results of the state gender policy implementation; and regulatory support.
- [Expert Group on Combating Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence, and Gender Equality functions within the Directorate.](#)



- **Gender Policy Department** (structural unit of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, but not part of the above-mentioned Directorate and not subject to it), which develops and implements the state policy on ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men.
- **Coordinators responsible for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women in central and local executive bodies.**
- **Gender advisers in central and local executive authorities.**
- **Departments and units within local executive authorities** that ensure implementation of the state gender equality policy. Departments (units) for Family and Youth Affairs have been established in all regional, district and city administrations of Ukraine.

#### *Priorities of the state gender equality policy*

On April 11, 2018 the State Social Program for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women for the period up to 2021 was approved by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine<sup>5</sup>. Over the next three years the issue of the insufficient scope of gender mainstreaming is supposed to be solved by applying an integrated approach and implementing measures aimed at fulfilling the following priorities:

1. Improving regulatory framework and mechanism for conducting legal expertise from gender perspective, as well as introducing statistical indicators in the field of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men: gender mainstreaming in economic and social development programs with regard to current needs of industries and regions; expansion of the list of gender-disaggregated statistical indicators with a breakdown by other important features (age, place of residence, disability, socio-economic status, etc.);

2. Capacity building of civil servants and local government officials on ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men: reducing gender imbalance in public service and human resource management; inclusion of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men topic in the curricula of life-long education and training programs for civil servants and local government officials; overcoming gender stereotypes.

3. Countering gender and multiple discrimination, in particular, by means of improving legal safeguards for protection against discrimination;

4. Fulfillment of contractual and other international obligations as of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, among others, to increase the number of women among people's deputies of Ukraine, deputies of regional and local councils (cities of regional importance), and to reduce the pay gap.

<sup>5</sup>It is worth noting that this is already the 4th program adopted in Ukraine (the National Action Plan for 2001–2005, the State Program for Promotion of Equality in Ukrainian Society for 2006–2010, the State Program for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women for the Period until 2016).

# CHAPTER 2

## GENDER EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY ON THE AGENDA OF THE EAP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

*The real potential of the Eastern Partnership will manifest itself only with the active participation of civil society, which is to perform three functions: to control, to introduce and to develop various projects.*

*Carl Bildt,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Civil  
Society Forum Brussels, November 16, 2009*

The Eastern Partnership is a one of the most important EU policy initiative that aims to bring the six Eastern neighbors – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – closer to the EU in order to strengthens bilateral relations between the EU and its partners. The Eastern Partnership was launched at the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit in May 2009 with the ambitious aim “to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries”. This implies support of political and socio-economic reforms of the partner countries and facilitation of approximation towards the European Union.

Reforms are most effective if they are carried out at all levels of government and cover all policy areas that ensure the smooth functioning of the state<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, civil society institutions, and especially non-governmental organizations, play an increasingly important role in the implementation of reforms and the effective control of political actions. The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is a unique multi-level regional civil society platform, whose goal is to promote European integration, reforms and democratic change in the Eastern Partnership countries.

The EaP CSF serves as a platform for civil society that fosters cooperation and the exchange of experience between civil society organizations from partner countries and the EU, designed to make European integration a feasible idea for citizens of Eastern Neighborhood countries.

The EaP CSF **mission** is to facilitate and strengthen the active and expert engagement of civil society in the Eastern Partnership and in the Eastern dimension of EU external relations policies.

At the national level, the EaP CSF aims to strengthen the diversity and plurality of public discourse and policy making in the Eastern Partnership countries by holding governments accountable and promoting fundamental freedoms, participatory democracy and human rights.

The EaP CSF achieves its objectives through:

- implementing flagship projects that monitor and facilitate democratic transition in the Eastern Partnership region;
- providing direct input and submission of written opinions and recommendations in the early stages of policy making both in the Eastern partners and the EU;

<sup>6</sup>Восточное партнерство. - Access mode: [http://fundacjanowydom.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Partnerstwo-Wschodnie\\_MSZ-PW-RU.pdf](http://fundacjanowydom.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Partnerstwo-Wschodnie_MSZ-PW-RU.pdf)

- conducting advocacy campaigns at critical junctures;

- monitoring the implementation of commitments and agreements made between the EU and the partner countries within the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

It should be noted that due to the Forum, civil society has the opportunity to influence decision-making at the intergovernmental level, as well as perform control and monitoring of cooperation between the EU and partner countries. In particular, the interaction of the Civil Society Forum with multilateral structures (thematic platforms, ministerial meetings, summits) of the Eastern Partnership implies:

- exchange of experience, knowledge and best practices;

- access to the working documents of the platforms and/or ministerial meetings;

- providing advice and recommendations to platforms;

- monitoring, control and evaluation of the platforms' performance, possibly, compiling official reports;

- preparation of written statements reflecting opinions and positions that are binding for review at relevant thematic platforms' and/or ministerial meetings;

- participation of the CSF representatives in the meetings of thematic platforms, ministerial meetings and Eastern Partnership summits.

Evaluation of the implementation of the strategy of the EaP CSF for 2015-2017 demonstrates that the Forum has managed to establish itself as a valuable participant of the EaP.

It is a credible representative body of civil society, developing a consolidating position, expressing expert opinion and transmitting it to decision-makers.

Despite the above mentioned, the EaP CSF is not fully utilizing its potential due to its complicated architecture not fully corresponding to the goals the Forum sets for itself<sup>7</sup>.

The EaP CSF structure includes Annual Assembly, Steering Committee, Steering Committee Secretariat, working groups, EU Coordinators, national platforms with similar structures on the level of their countries.

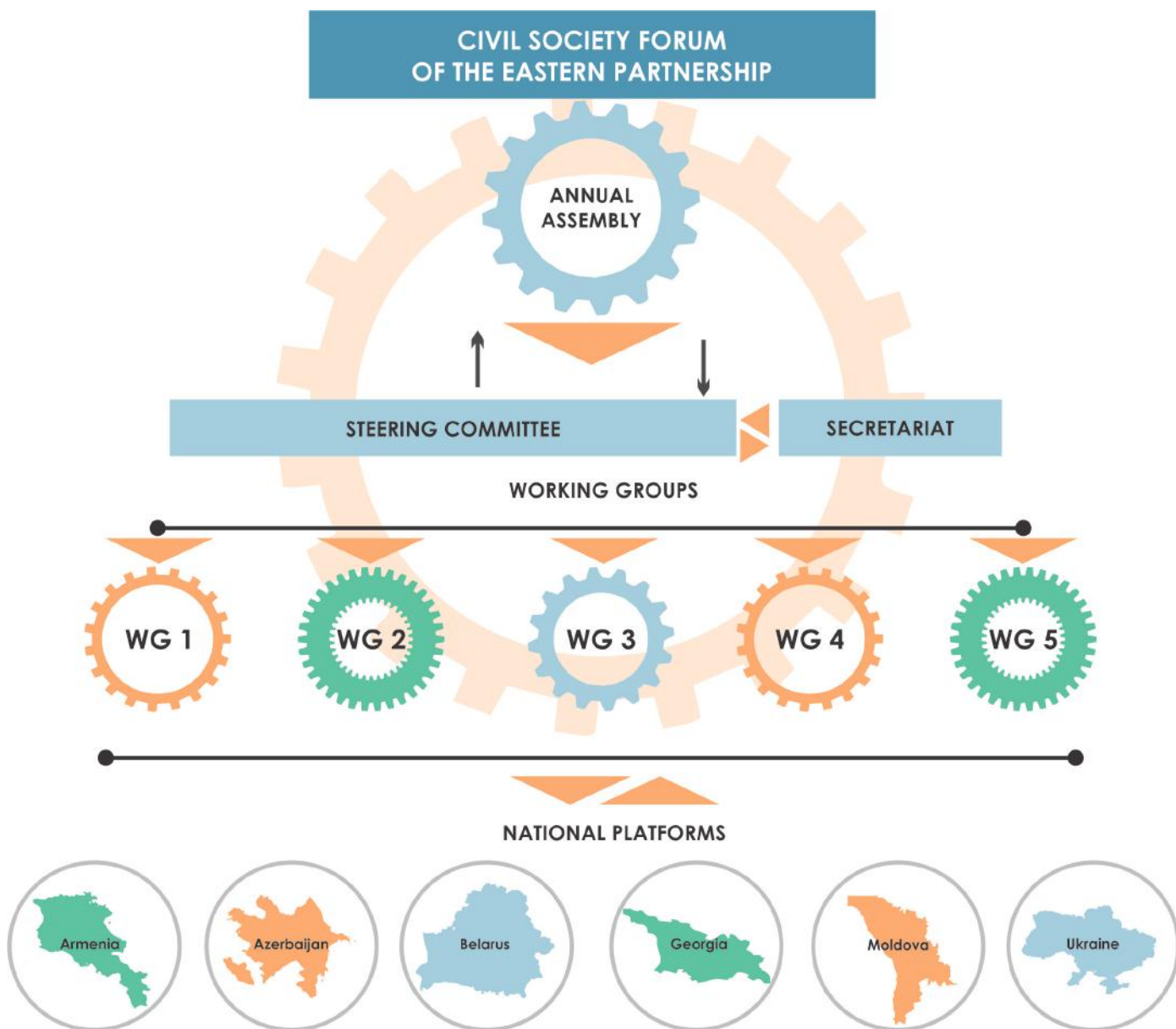
The **Annual Assembly** is a key event conducted on an annual basis. It is the highest decision making body in the EaP CSF and serves as a platform for debate on the achievements of the Forum and adoption of normative documents.

**EaP CSF Steering Committee** is a representative body of the EaP CSF with a mandate from civil society in the EaP countries and EU member states. Its main objectives are as follows: representing the Forum at the highest levels both in the EaP countries and the EU; developing concepts for further CSF development and priorities for its activities; advocating on behalf of the Forum for the matters of importance to the Forum.

**Steering Committee Secretariat** is an executive body that reports to the Steering Committee. On a daily basis it works to support the activities of the Steering Committee and the Forum in general and serves as the EaP CSF information, coordination and expertise hub for stakeholders in the EU and in the EaP countries. The Secretariat ensures greater visibility of the activities of the Forum, its National Platforms and Working Groups and increased contribution of civil society to the reform process in the EaP region. Together with the Steering Committee the Secretariat is developing advocacy and communication campaigns on matters of importance to the Forum and takes stock of the policy developments, while ensuring its further communication to the Steering Committee members, Forum participants and the general public.

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<sup>7</sup>Стратегия Форума гражданского общества Восточного партнерства на 2018-2020 гг.- Access mode: <http://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/ФГО-ВП-Стратегия-2018-2020-1.pdf>



### Structure of CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM OF EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Five Working Groups (WGs) have been established within the EaP CSF:

- WG1: “Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance and Stability”;
- WG 2: “Economic Integration & Convergence with EU Policies”;
- WG 3: “Environment, climate change and energy security”;
- WG 4: “Contacts between People”;
- WG 5: “Social & Labour Policies and Social Dialogue”.

Four of them are organized along the topics of the thematic multilateral Platforms of the EaP, while the fifth WG on Social Dialogue, set up in 2012, has no parallel thematic platform.

The linkage between the Steering Committee and the participants of each WG are provided by the WG Coordinators, two per working group – one from an EaP country civil society organization and one from the EU.

The EU Coordinators are representatives of the EU civil society in the Steering Committee elected by the Forum at its Annual Meeting.

Their tasks include strengthening advocacy and relations between EU institutions and governments of EaP CSF member-states; ensuring increased participation of EU civil society organizations and networks in the EaP initiatives; and advocating for effective and consistent support for civil society in partner countries through EU funding mechanisms.

National Platforms (NPs) function in all six EaP countries since 2011. They were created for the purpose of ensuring active involvement of each partner-country's civil society in the reform process.

## GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES AS A CORNERSTONE OF THE "NEW" EAP CSF ARCHITECTURE

The new architecture of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum contributes to strengthening the influence of civil society both at the national and international levels.

In our opinion, this also creates additional opportunities for more efficient gender mainstreaming. Moreover, the Eastern Partnership Development Roadmap, reflected in joint staff working document «Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables by 2020» identifies gender equality and non-discrimination issues as a cross-cutting "horizontal" goal that will allow partner countries to make full use of the economic and social potential of their societies.

The new role of the Forum in the multilateral dimension of cooperation also requires new directions and approaches to work.

Internal reform of the Civil Society Forum involves strengthening of civil society active participation in expert and advocacy support of the Eastern Partnership policy, both at the European level and at the national levels of the partner states.

Therefore, attracting experts and capacity building are some of the challenge facing national platforms.

In this regard, it should be mentioned that the equality of women and men is one of the goals of the European Union. The main principles of the EU Gender Equity Policy are set out in EU Council Directives.

The NPs are stakeholders in the policy dialogue within their respective countries. Within each National Platform, working groups are organized to reflect the working group structure of the whole Forum in order to better follow and influence developments within each working group at the national level.

The National Platforms hold regular meetings and annual conferences, where they analyze the role of the Platform and its activities as well as look ahead to future activities.

All of these provisions should be incorporated into legislation of EaP member states, in particular, the following directives of the Council:

— 75/117/EEC of February 10, 1975 - on equal pay;

— 76/207/EEC of February 9, 1976 - on equal treatment in the workplace;

— 92/85/EEC of October 19, 1992 - on the safety and health of pregnant workers, and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding;

— 96/34/EU of June 3, 1996 - on parental leave;

— 96/97/EC of December 20, 1996 - on implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes;

— 2010/41/EC of July 7, 2010 - on equal treatment of self-employed.

In addition, new directives relevant to the EU employment strategy require gender mainstreaming onto unpaid childcare work, emphasizing an equal distribution of responsibilities for child care and housekeeping, as well as encouraging men to take parental leave.

A list of key interventions undertaken by the EU in the field of gender equality.



As well as a brief overview of those that can be considered in the context of the CSF activities, can be found below:

- Multiannual Financial Framework program (MFF 2014-2020) and the program “Rights, Equality and Citizenship”;
- Women's Charter and Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019;
- EU Gender Action Plan II Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020;
- Sustainable Development Goals;
- Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)<sup>8</sup>;
- and others.

Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019 is a framework for the efforts of the European Commission on achieving real equality between women and men in all spheres of public life<sup>9</sup>. This strategy prioritizes five key areas for action:

- equal economic independence for women and men;
- equal pay for work of equal value;
- equality in decision-making;
- dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence; and
- promoting gender equality beyond the EU.

This Strategy defines objectives in each of the identified priority areas and describes more than 30 specific interventions. In particular, it confirms the commitment to gender equality.

For this reason, gender equality perspective is included in all EU policies, as well as in EU funding programs.

EU Gender Action Plan II (GAP II). Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020<sup>10</sup> has transformed EU gender equality policy and relative commitments<sup>11</sup> into specific objectives for achieving tangible results in ensuring girls and women's rights, including by promoting more effective coordination and implementation and monitoring of EU activities in this area. GAP II contributes to the achievement of the Development Goals, in particular, Goal 5 “Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”.

Thus, the Gender Action Plan II of the European Union contributes to building the world where the rights of girls and women are upheld, valued and respected by all the people, and where everyone can realize their potential and make their contribution to the development of a more equitable society.

The EU demonstrates full commitment to breaking the vicious circle of gender discrimination by supporting partner countries in creating more favorable conditions for fulfilling the rights of girls and women and for real and tangible improvements in gender equality.

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<sup>8</sup>Fact sheets on the European Union. – Access mode: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/59/equality-between-men-and-women>

<sup>9</sup>Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019. – Access mode: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic\\_engagement\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic_engagement_en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020. – Access mode: [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/150921\\_final\\_swd\\_gap.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/150921_final_swd_gap.pdf)

<sup>11</sup>Council conclusions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation, doc. 9561/07, 15 May 2007, the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015 (SWD, SEC(2010) 265 final), Council conclusions on the Millennium Development Goals for the United Nations High Level Plenary Meeting in New York and Beyond, 14 June 2010, Council conclusions on the 2013 Report on the Implementation of the EU GAP II, doc. 9360/14, 19 May 2014, Council conclusions on Gender in Development, doc. 9241/15, 26 May 2015



This specific framework for action covers EU activities in third countries, especially in the developing, expanding and neighboring, including in those unstable, conflict or in an emergency situation (Eastern Partnership countries among them). This is a framework for taking action. The outlined activities set background for monitoring and accountability essential for measuring progress in gender equality, as well as ensuring the rights and opportunities of girls and women.

Joint Staff Working Document "Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables for 2020" is a more comprehensive framework for cooperation, which ensures that all actions undertaken in EaP countries pursue the outreach and inclusion of civil society with a tailor-made approach, and foster gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women by following the provisions of the EU Gender Action Plan II. While the «20 Deliverables for 2020» are generally structured according to the priority areas of the cooperation identified at the Riga Summit in 2015, three issues are cross-cutting, one of which is women's empowerment and gender balance.

Stronger support to women's rights, empowerment and gender balance in the region will allow partner countries to take full advantage of the economic and social potential within their societies. Particular efforts will be made to address negative gender stereotypes, gender-based violence and pay gaps between men and women among others<sup>12</sup>.

Thus, in accordance with the Gender Action Plan for 2016–2020, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the anti-discrimination principles, gender equality and non-discrimination are the basis for interventions undertaken under the EaP to ensure full engagement of societies of partner countries. Further progress is needed at the national level to make Gender Action Plan II a tool for measuring achievement of ambitious Sustainable Development Goals, ideally in full accordance with the national strategies of the partner countries.

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<sup>12</sup>Joint staff working document Eastern Partnership - Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables for 2020 Focusing on key priorities and tangible results. – Access mode: [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/20\\_deliverables\\_for\\_2020.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/20_deliverables_for_2020.pdf)

# CHAPTER 3

## MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY INTO ACTIVITIES OF NATIONAL PLATFORMS CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

According to the joint staff working document «Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables by 2020», interaction with civil society, gender equality and non-discrimination, as well as strategic communications, have been identified as unifying or cross-cutting issues with regard to other spheres in the focus of EaP CSF attention. Moreover, these goals are directly related to human rights, democracy and civic participation.

That is why promotion of gender equality at the national level should be a priority for CSF national platforms.

The importance of gender perspective is also emphasized in the Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit (Brussels, November 24, 2017) and in the Civil Society Declaration<sup>13</sup>, which reaffirmed the commitment to promote «gender equality and non-discrimination...in line with the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020<sup>14</sup>».

A study conducted in 2016 in the framework of the partnership project “Developing a single gender equality strategy for the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum” showed that most national platforms member-organizations that participated in the survey expressed interest in gender mainstreaming into CSF activities.

Thus, an approach based on human rights, as well as gender equality and non-discrimination, should be introduced into platforms' activities for a start.

What may integration of gender approach (gender mainstreaming) bring into the work of the EaP CSF and national platforms?

It may result in elaboration of a new vision on the procedures and results of work; strengthening of cooperation between experts in different fields (which is especially important with regard to Forum's working groups); making procedures more interesting and focusing attention on impact assessment and results, which are often different in terms of impact on women and men.

This section is written based on materials presented in the Analytical Notes prepared by research groups of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in the framework of the project “Increasing Capacity for Implementing Efficient Gender Policy and Practices in countries of Eastern Partnership – in accordance to “Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020”.

These Notes reflect specifics of gender equality policy in respective countries.

According to the study results, gender issues are not a priority in the EaP CSF national platforms' activities.

Least attention is paid to gender equality in comparison to other issues in platforms' focus. Successes of national platforms in gender mainstreaming relate more to active position of specific NGOs rather than activities of working groups or a national platform itself. In addition, in the course of the study, main tools for gender mainstreaming into activities of EaP CSF national platforms have been identified.

<sup>13</sup>Access mode: [http://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/Civil-Society-Declaration\\_RU\\_13Sept.pdf](http://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/Civil-Society-Declaration_RU_13Sept.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Access mode: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31758/final-statement-st14821en17.pdf>

Based on study results, recommendations on how to enhance the influence of national platforms on the development and implementation of equal rights and

opportunities policies in the framework of the national mechanisms for ensuring gender equality have been elaborated for the countries.

## TOOLS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING INTO EAP CSF NATIONAL PLATFORMS' ACTIVITIES

Integration of gender perspective into the work of a national platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is an important component of the EaP CSF internal reform.

Gender perspective should be viewed as a systematic and planned process, which aims at ensuring compliance with gender equality principles of usual rules, procedures and activities of the Forum and national platforms. The tools that may help to improve EaP CSF performance in ensuring gender equality include:

- development and adoption of gender policy and respective action plan at the levels of the EaP CSF and national platforms;

- capacity building on gender equality

and non-discrimination for experts of EaP CSF member-organizations;

- gender audit of EaP CSF national platforms' activities and inclusion of gender perspective into strategies and projects that are developed and implemented by the member organizations of NPs within all working groups;

- introduction of special measures that promote women's representation at the level of NPs and working groups leadership.

How to ensure application of the tools in practice?

Main recommendations of research groups from EaP countries are presented below:

## GENDER POLICY AND RESPECTIVE ACTION PLAN

Elaboration and adoption of gender policy is an important step in the development of an organization, since it assumes that integration of gender perspective is becoming a key strategy at all stages of organization's activities, from planning to monitoring and evaluation. It also means that gender perspective is integrated at both the management and service provision levels.

An effective gender policy is one of the indicators of development and democracy. Such a policy should include general principles of gender mainstreaming into internal processes of NP structures, as well as their activities. However, in most EaP countries, gender policy at the national platform level has not yet been adopted (the exception is Belarus, where this policy was developed and approved by the Coordination Committee on December 30, 2018).

The development of gender policy and respective action plan by national platforms should be aimed at shaping a common understanding of the principles of gender equality, which will allow elaboration of specific approaches and tools for achieving tangible results in this area.

The purpose of these documents is to declare EaP CSF national platforms' intentions to mainstream gender equality and to plan activities targeted at increasing the ability to influence domestic gender policies. Thus, gender equality policy adoption sets standards for all participants at all levels, while gender action plan describes how gender policy principles are to be implemented at different levels of national platforms. Moreover, the action plan sets the priority areas and objectives for the country, which should be supported by relevant activities, indicators and budget.

## STRENGTHENING GENDER COMPETENCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF EXPERTS

Another important condition of effective EaP CSF work on gender equality is gender competence development and capacity building of experts from working groups and member-organizations on gender equality issues.

It requires a wide range of activities, tools and strategies for achieving individual and collective transformation towards gender equality through consciousness raising, empowering learning, knowledge building, and skill development<sup>15</sup>.

This, in turn, contributes to the democratic transformation of society: respect for human rights, non-acceptance of discrimination and humiliation of human dignity, creation of equal opportunities and conditions for the full self-realization and participation in social, economic and political life, which contributes to achieving the long-term gender equality goal.

Increasing the level of knowledge regarding gender equality and non-discrimination issues should be included in a continuous and long-term process, which has become a part of the Action Plan.

It may include trainings and seminars, information and expert advisory support for representatives of governing bodies, working groups, as well as representatives of EaP CSF member-organizations.

Gender equality education is also a prerequisite for enhancing the expertise of working group members, as it allows them not only to strengthen their analytical skills, but also to contribute to the gender-sensitive policy development.

To ensure achievement of expected results, it is important to choose an effective form of training and qualified gender experts.

To this end, it is possible both to develop cooperation with relevant organizations, and to create and maintain a coaching/expert group within the platform itself.

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<sup>15</sup>Training for gender equality: twenty years on. Un women training centre, June 2015. - Access mode: [https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/pluginfile.php/72/mod\\_data/content/18873/Paper\\_TrainingForGenderEquality+20-B%20\(8\).pdf](https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/pluginfile.php/72/mod_data/content/18873/Paper_TrainingForGenderEquality+20-B%20(8).pdf)

## GENDER AUDIT AND INCORPORATION OF GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

Gender audit allows to assess the extent to which gender equality is institutionalized in policies, programs, organizational structures, procedures (including decision-making processes) and related budgets.

Systematical conduct of gender audits at the level of national platforms may help identify critical gaps and problems in the field of equality and non-discrimination policies and find ways to solve them, suggesting possible improvements and innovations.

It also documents best practices in achieving gender equality.

Gender audit can be conducted either by external auditors, or by means of self-assessment.

In this case, the “Manual for Applying Gender Audit in the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum”<sup>16</sup> may come in handy.

Gender mainstreaming into strategies and projects developed by the CSF national platforms allows policy makers to achieve better results in terms of the impact on women and men, as well as improving internal organizational procedures.

Moreover, respective consistent efforts may facilitate the cooperation of national platforms from different countries in discussing issues related to gender equality, which is one of the planned outcomes of the EaP CSF policy at the level of the Coordination Committee and working groups.

### SPECIAL MEASURES

The equal opportunities principle presents the idea of equitable representation of men and women in decision-making, Secretariat and project staff of the Forum.

Introduction of special measures that promote women's representation at the level of decision-making is a new possible task for EaP CSF that may be achieved after the adoption of gender policy.

One of possible solutions is the implementation of quotas in elections at the level of national platforms.

Another approach to achieving gender balance is the introduction of a “reserved seats” rule (guaranteeing election of a certain number of women) when women compete for reserved seats exclusively with women.

These and other practices may be applied as special measures for holding elections to all EaP CSF bodies (including the Steering Committee), and in defining delegates of the Annual Assemblies (as was done, for example, for members of new organizations).

Moreover, actions to improve the status of women are mandatory with regard to implementing a “dual approach” to gender equality.

This means that, on the one hand, policies or programs should be aimed at ensuring gender equality, and, on the other hand, specific measures should be taken to empower women (for example, special projects).

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<sup>16</sup>Access mode: <http://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/Gender-Audit-Russian-2-1.pdf>



## OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE THE IMPACT OF EAP CSF NATIONAL PLATFORMS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NATIONAL MECHANISM FOR ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY

EaP CSF national platforms can make an important contribution to advancing gender equality agenda and influence its shaping both at the national and international levels.

To achieve this goal, cooperation of all stakeholders (including members of national platforms from various working groups) should be coordinated, cross-cutting and creative.

Here, the term “stakeholders” refers to those who influence and benefit from government policy.

Thus, organizations and institutions operating in the framework of national mechanisms

for ensuring gender equality can be considered as “entry points” for the EaP CSF in their countries.

Strengthening stakeholders’ dialogue (round tables and working meetings involving national and international experts) on the implementation of the national gender equality policy is an important task for all national EaP CSF national platforms.

Possible “entry points” for experts of national platforms of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum into the national mechanism for ensuring gender equality are listed below (based on the example of Ukraine):



### “Entry points” of CSF Ukrainian national platform experts into the Ukrainian National Mechanism for Ensuring Gender Equality

Consultations with stakeholders on gender issues may become one of the effective forms of cooperation with the national mechanism for ensuring gender equality.

Such consultations can be focused on the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender equality policies, or to mainstream gender perspective into all strategies at all stages of the political cycle.



Involvement of EaP CSF will increase gender sensitivity of member-organizations and working groups allowing to involve not only women's organizations in the development and monitoring of national gender programs and legislation.

Moreover, in accordance with the "leaving no one behind" premise, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has a separate goal to "ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels" (Goal 16 on sustainable development, sub-goal 16.7) and indicators to measure progress:

Indicator 16.7.1 – "Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions

(national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions";

Indicator 16.7.2 – "Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group".

Thus, in order to develop cooperation with authorities and institutions that are empowered to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men (NMGE), it is necessary to have a certain level of gender competencies, as well as to identify opportunities to increase impact of EaP CSF national platforms on the implementation of national policies on gender equality and non-discrimination under the national mechanism for ensuring gender equality.

# ANNEX

## Directory of National Mechanisms for Ensuring Gender Equality\*

### CSF NATIONAL PLATFORMS

#### Armenia

National Platforms		Organization-member of the national platform, Chair of the Gender Network «GeNet»: <a href="#">Women's Resource Centre</a>	
Email	armenia@eap-csf.eu	Email	gohar@womenofarmenia.org
Name	Boris Navasardian	Name	Ms. Gohar Shahnazaryan
Title	Country Facilitator for Armenia	Title	Co-founder of Women's Resource Centre
Web Site	eaparmenianews.wordpress.com	Web Site	www.womenofarmenia.org

#### Azerbaijan

National Platforms		Organization-member of the national platform, Chair of the Gender Network «GeNet»: <a href="#">Women's Association for Rational Development</a>	
Email	azerbaijan@eap-csf.eu	Email	Azerbaijan@shahla.org
Name	Zaur Akbar	Name	Ms. Shahla Ismyil
Title	Country Facilitator for Azerbaijan	Title	Chairwoman
Web Site	csfnpazerbaijan.wordpress.com	Web Site	www.ward.az

\*The Directory of National Mechanisms for Ensuring Gender Equality is maintained by UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, with the support of the United Nations Regional Commissions. – Access mode: <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/partnerships/nationalmechanisms/directory-of-national-mechanisms-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3256>

## Belarus

National Platforms		Organization-member of the national platform, Chair of the Gender Network «GeNet»: <a href="#">Organization of Popular Education "ABF"</a>	
Email	belarus@eap-csf.eu	Email	abf4activeyouth@gmail.com
Name	Mikalay Kvantaliani	Name	Ms. Julia Mickiewicz
Title	Country Facilitator for Belarus	Title	
Web Site	eng.npbelarus.info	Web Site	

## Georgia

National Platforms		Organization-member of the national platform, Chair of the Gender Network «GeNet»: <a href="#">Women's Political Resource Centre</a>	
Email	georgia@eap-csf.eu	Email	wprc.wprc@gmail.com
Name	Lasha Tugushi	Name	Ms. Ketik Kurtshkalia
Title	Country Facilitator for Georgia	Title	Project coordinator
Web Site	eap-csf.ge	Web Site	

## Moldova

National Platforms		Organization-member of the national platform, Chair of the Gender Network «GeNet»: "Vesta" - Mothers of large families and women - entrepreneurs of Gagauzia, Moldova	
Email	moldova@eap-csf.eu	Email	vesta.gagauzia@gmail.com
Name	Petru Macovei	Name	Ms. Antonina Volkova
Title	Country Facilitator for Moldova	Title	Director
Web Site	www.eap-csf.md/	Web Site	

## Ukraine

National Platforms		Organization-member of the national platform, Chair of the Gender Network «GeNet»: Bureau of Gender Strategy and Budgeting	
Email	ukraine@eap-csf.eu	Email	genderdesk.ua@gmail.com
Name	Hennadiy Maksak	Name	Ms. Tatyana Ivanina
Title	Country Facilitator for Ukraine	Title	Chairwoman
Web Site	eap-csf.org.ua	Web Site	genderburo.info