



Background note on the Monitoring of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming

Article 16 of the recently adopted Directives on standards for equality bodies ⁽¹⁾ require that a list of indicators is established for monitoring the implementation. These indicators should “cover the resources, independent functioning, activities, and effectiveness of equality bodies, as well as evolutions in their mandate, powers or structure, ensuring the comparability, objectivity and reliability of the data collected at national level.”

This note provides background to the process of defining an indicator set by summarising the work already undertaken in this area by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and some of the lessons learnt.

1 EIGE’s work on monitoring Area H of the BPfA

Article 3 of Regulation (EC) N°1922/2006 on establishing a European Institute for Gender Equality tasks EIGE (amongst other things) with the collection, analysis, and dissemination of objective, comparable and reliable information on gender equality issues, and the development of appropriate methods to ensure the consistency of that information. In doing so, EIGE became the EU’s knowledge centre on gender equality ⁽²⁾.

From its inception in 2010, a key element of EIGE’s work has been to support successive Presidencies of the Council of the European Union in monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)⁽³⁾. This work includes the collection of data and analysis of existing indicators, both for specific Areas of Concern and overall ⁽⁴⁾, the development of proposals for new indicators ⁽⁵⁾, and

¹ [European Commission, COM\(2022\) 688 final](#), Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation, and deleting Article 20 of Directive 2006/54/EC and Article 11 of Directive 2010/41/EU, and [European Commission, COM\(2022\) 689 final](#), Proposal for a Council Directive on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment between persons irrespective of their racial or ethnic origin, equal treatment in the field of employment and occupation between persons irrespective of their religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, equal treatment between women and men in matters of social security and in the access to and supply of goods and services, and deleting Article 13 of Directive 2000/43/EC and Article 12 of Directive 2004/113/EC

² <https://eige.europa.eu/newsroom/news/eige-has-successfully-established-itself-eu-knowledge-centre-gender-equality-external-evaluation-finds>

³ [EIGE Annual Report 2010 | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ For example: [Beijing +25: the fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵ For example: [Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organisations: Main findings | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#) (Area J)

the dissemination of data for all formally adopted indicators in a dedicated area of EIGE's [Gender Statistics Database](#).

EIGE first worked specifically on *Area H Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of gender equality* in 2012. The study built on the initial work of the Finnish Presidency in 2006 ⁽⁶⁾, which proposed three indicators covering two of the three strategic objectives of Area H ⁽⁷⁾ that were subsequently adopted by the Council, and the findings of the Swedish Presidency review in 2009 ⁽⁸⁾, which highlighted the need to do more in relation to gender mainstreaming. Following comprehensive conceptual and methodological reflection, EIGE undertook a data collection for all Member States. The report ⁽⁹⁾ included recommendations to improve the existing indicators and to add a fourth indicator related to the production and dissemination of statistics disaggregated by sex, thus ensuring at least one indicator for each of the three strategic objectives. The Council adopted the fourth indicator in 2013.

Further rounds of data collection were undertaken in 2018 and 2021 and a further round is currently in progress. Each collection has seen refinements to the questionnaire and data collection methodology that take into account lessons learned from the previous exercises and aim at improving the relevance, reliability, and comparability of results. The 2021 exercise, for example, took note of the Equality Directives ⁽¹⁰⁾, the 2022 proposals for the Directives on standards for equality bodies, and the 2015 OECD recommendation on gender equality in public life, which advocated more involvement of independent gender equality bodies in the mainstreaming of gender equality issues, and added two new sub-indicators on the role and mandate of independent gender equality bodies and the extent of their involvement in policy processes.

In line with EIGE's focus on data quality and transparency, the report analysing the 2021 data ⁽¹¹⁾ was accompanied by a detailed methodological report ⁽¹²⁾ that includes a comprehensive description of the measurement framework, the questionnaire, and the methods used to score indicators. All of EIGE's data on institutional mechanisms is published in a dedicated area of the Gender Statistics Database ([here](#)) where users can visualise the data in charts and tables together with comprehensive metadata (following Eurostat standards) that inform on the approach used and on issues of comparability, in particular through time, which is affected by progressive refinement of the indicators and scoring methods.

⁶ Council of the European Union (2006), [Review of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the Beijing Platform for Action – indicators in respect of institutional mechanisms](#)

⁷ The three strategic objectives of Area H are: H1. Create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies; H2. Integrate gender perspectives into legislation, public policies, programmes and projects; H3. Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.

⁸ Council of the European Union (2009), [Council Conclusions on the Review of the Implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the Beijing Platform for Action Beijing + 15: The Platform for Action and the European Union](#)

⁹ [Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Gender Equality: Report | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁰ Specifically the [Gender Equality Directive in the field of goods and services \(2004/113/EC\)](#), the [Gender Equality Directive in the field of employment \(2006/54/EC\)](#) and the [Gender Equality Directive in the field of self-employment \(2010/41/EU\)](#).

¹¹ [The pathway to progress: strengthening effective structures for gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the EU | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹² [Data collection on institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming: Methodological report | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)

2 EIGE's indicators for monitoring independent gender equality bodies

The indicators used by EIGE for monitoring of institutional mechanisms differentiate (where relevant) between “governmental” and “independent” (gender) equality bodies, the latter being the type of body covered by the newly adopted Directives. There is one sub-indicator focused on independent bodies for each of the three main indicators originally proposed by the Finnish Presidency and adopted by the Council in 2006.

EIGE's framework for the monitoring of progress on institutional mechanisms defines independent gender equality bodies as *bodies outside government that are mandated to support the equal treatment of all persons without discrimination on the grounds of sex, sometimes as part of a wider equalities remit* ⁽¹³⁾.

2.1 H1f: Mandate and functions of the independent gender equality body

Sub-indicator H1f (introduced in 2021) considers the scope of the mandate of the independent gender equality body (gender equality alone or gender together with other grounds for discrimination) and the extent of its remit. The latter is measured in terms of how many of a pre-determined list of functions the body is responsible for. In the case that a country has multiple independent bodies the indicator counts the number of distinct functions carried out by either body.

In the 2021 data (see [here](#)), scores for the remit were based on four key functions ⁽¹⁴⁾, though the questionnaire covered “additional” functions, recognising that the separation of responsibilities between the governmental bodies and independent bodies may vary across countries. The approach for recording the functions of both types of body has subsequently been reviewed with direct reference to the proposals for Directives on standards for equality bodies and the current (2024) data collection is monitoring the following list of functions for independent bodies (with a focus in the field of gender equality):

- Prevention, promotion, and awareness raising
- Assistance to victims
- Formal investigation of complaints and participation in related litigation
- Cooperation
 - International/EU
 - National/sub-national
 - Civil society
- Consultation & recommendation
- Data collection and research

2.2 H2b: Personnel resources of the independent body

Sub-indicator H2b monitoring the personnel resources of independent gender equality bodies is one of the original indicators adopted by the Council on a proposal of the Finnish Presidency. There have, however, been changes through time in both the data collected and how it is scored.

¹³ [Data collection on institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming: Methodological report | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁴ Deciding on complaints of discrimination on the grounds of sex; Providing legal support for victims of discrimination on the ground of sex or gender; Publishing and disseminating gender equality related information and training; Conducting research on gender equality issues

Originally, the data were requested in person years so that part-time employees had to be converted to full-time equivalents but many of the data providers reported difficulties to do this so that now only the total number of employees is requested. In the case of bodies that cover gender equality together with other grounds for discrimination, the reported data for total employees are adjusted by an estimate of the proportion of time spent on gender equality issues (¹⁵).

Originally also, the indicator was scored by relating the number of staff to the size of the population, but analysis undertaken as part of the 2021 exercise showed that this clearly biased results in favour of smaller countries. Whilst it is certainly the case that the resources needed for handling of complaints of discrimination is liable to increase with population size, other key functions are likely to require similar levels of resource irrespective of the population size. Currently, therefore, the indicator is scored according to categories of size (0-5, 5-10, 10-25, 25-100, 100 or more). The 2021 data for sub-indicator H2b are available [here](#).

2.3 H3d: Consultation of independent bodies

Sub-indicator H3d was added in 2021 to monitor the extent to which independent gender equality bodies are involved in the development of gender equality policies. It considers how often independent bodies are consulted by government departments or ministries about prospective policies, laws, or programmes (measured as a rough proportion of the number of policies/laws/programmes developed) and, where relevant, what proportion of these consultations result in changes being made. The 2021 data (available [here](#)) show that governmental consultation of independent bodies is still infrequent and partial, with 16 countries reporting no regular consultation (in relation to gender equality).

¹⁵ In order to simplify the data collection, only a rough estimate is requested (0-25%, 25-50%, 50-75%, 75-100%) and the adjustment uses the upper limit of each band.