

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

What **UNECE** does for you



...**UNECE**
works for
gender equality

Gender equality is an important dimension of sustainable economic development. UNECE works to raise awareness and encourages countries to mainstream gender into their economic policies.



What is gender equality and how can we achieve it?

Gender equality is commonly defined to imply that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and to equally benefit from the results. Gender equality is therefore the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play.

Achieving gender equality requires measures to compensate for existing disadvantages that prevent equal opportunities for women and men. An example are targeted micro-credit schemes

for women entrepreneurs to compensate for traditions and social attitudes that disadvantage women.

At the same time, measures need to be taken to prevent new disadvantages from being created. It is important that the (possibly different) implications for women and men are considered in the design and implementation of new legislation, policies and programmes. In many policy areas the relevance of gender is not seen at first glance, leading to the assumption that both men and women benefit equally from a given policy. Pension entitlements, for example, which are conditional on the number of years spent in paid employment, tend to disadvantage women who spend fewer years in paid

employment than men due to their primary responsibility for unpaid child and elder care in the home. By not taking the different roles of women and men into account, a supposedly 'gender-neutral' approach may therefore involuntarily reproduce or create gender inequalities.

Where do we stand with gender equality in the UNECE region?

Across the region, much progress has been made in ensuring that women enjoy the same legal rights as men, for example in education and in the labour market. In addition, most countries have introduced legislation addressing gender-specific problems. In particular there has been considerable progress over the past decade in addressing violence against women. Other areas of increased attention by policymakers in our region include the reconciliation of work and family life, women's poverty and national mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment.

However, the enforcement of existing gender equality legislation is far from satisfactory throughout the region, particularly in countries where institutions for gender equality and the promotion of women's rights continue to be weak. This lack of effective implementation alongside prevailing gender stereotypes in all societies is one of the most important

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What is GENDER?



It is important to emphasize that the concept of gender is not interchangeable with women. Gender refers to both women and men and the relations between them. The concept refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female. These attributes are not biologically determined but socially constructed. They are context and time specific and can change.

challenges to achieving *de facto* gender equality.

How does UNECE contribute to advancing gender equality in the region?

We pursue a dual approach of gender mainstreaming across UNECE areas of work and targeted activities under our Gender and Economy Programme. We assist our member States in implementing internationally agreed commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals. We provide a regional platform for monitoring progress and research, and facilitating exchange and policy learning through regional conferences, expert group meetings and a web-based information platform, the UNECE Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender.

What does the Gender and Economy Programme focus on?

Women's Entrepreneurship

Micro and small enterprises, a majority of which are run by women, are an important tool to create new opportunities for women and to generate income. We promote the development of women's entrepreneurship in South-East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Activities include research assessing the business environment for women entrepreneurs and sub-regional forums for women entrepreneurs to address issues of particular concern such as the lack of

networking opportunities, difficult access to credit and lack of specific knowledge and skills. Furthermore we work to enhance entrepreneurship skills of women in the region, for example through international capacity-building workshops on information and communication technologies (ICTs) and support systems for women entrepreneurs.

Stronger mechanisms for gender equality

In order to facilitate women's economic empowerment and sustainable progress towards gender equality, the institutions shaping economic life need to become gender-sensitive. We monitor and support the development of effective mechanisms for gender equality through periodic reviews and research in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women and all regional commissions. UNECE actively participates in the work and task forces of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) on various aspects of the economics of gender.

Mainstreaming gender in economic policies

Within our mandate as an economic commission, we are particularly concerned with the need to engender economic policies in the region. An important condition for gender analysis and

gender impact assessments in any given policy field is data availability. The UNECE Statistical Division works with national statistical offices and provides training in collecting sex-disaggregated data. We further publicize policy practice in gender mainstreaming via discussion papers and the Knowledge Hub on the Economics of Gender and promote gender responsive budgeting among our member States.

What is the SPECA Working Group on Gender and Economy?

Progress in women's economic advancement is especially relevant for countries in Central Asia and Caucasus, where women's economic position has deteriorated since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) aims to strengthen sub-regional cooperation between Central Asian countries and their integration into the world economy. The SPECA Project Working Group on Gender and Economy was set up in 2006 with a membership covering Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.



The group raises awareness on gender and economy issues, exchanges good practices in mainstreaming gender into economic policies, develops national projects in selected areas and promotes cross-sectional linkages and synergies with other relevant areas of SPECA activities such as statistics, trade and information and communication technologies.

Gender mainstreaming: A gender perspective across UNECE programmes and activities

In addition to targeted activities under the Gender and Economy Programme, attention is given to gender aspects across the different UNECE programmes ranging from economic cooperation and integration, environment, housing and land management, to population, statistics and transport.

What is GENDER MAINSTREAMING?

Gender mainstreaming was defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1997 as 'a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of... the policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.'

How does UNECE assist member States in implementing their international commitments to gender equality?

We assist member States in monitoring progress towards international commitments on gender equality, notably through periodic reviews on progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the Millennium Development Goals (in particular MDG3 on promoting gender equality and empowering women). Targeted support through technical cooperation in the areas of concern such as gender statistics and entrepreneurship is offered to countries in South-East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

The Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment.

It addresses the following critical areas of concern:

- Women and Poverty
- Education and Training of Women
- Women and Health
- Violence against Women
- Women and Armed Conflict
- Women and the Economy
- Women in Power and Decision-Making
- Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women
- Human Rights of Women
- Women and the Media
- Women and the Environment

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.unece.org/gender>

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