



European Institute for  
Gender Equality



# **Institutional mechanisms** for gender equality in the EU: present realities, future priorities



An EU Agency

## European Institute for Gender Equality

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# Abbreviations

<b>BPfA</b>	Beijing Platform for Action
<b>CIG</b>	Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (Portugal)
<b>CITE</b>	Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (Portugal)
<b>CSO</b>	civil-society organisation
<b>EIGE</b>	European Institute for Gender Equality
<b>ELSTAT</b>	Hellenic Statistical Authority (Greece)
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GEMSAP</b>	gender equality and mainstreaming strategy and action plan (Malta)
<b>IHREC</b>	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
<b>LGBTIQ</b>	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer
<b>MEGA</b>	Ministry of Gender Equality and Diversity (Luxembourg)
<b>NAEO</b>	National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (Romania)
<b>NCPE</b>	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (Malta)
<b>NFP</b>	national focal point
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organisation
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>pp</b>	percentage point(s)
<b>SDG</b>	sustainable development goal



## EU Member State country codes

<b>BE</b>	Belgium	<b>LT</b>	Lithuania
<b>BG</b>	Bulgaria	<b>LU</b>	Luxembourg
<b>CZ</b>	Czechia	<b>HU</b>	Hungary
<b>DK</b>	Denmark	<b>MT</b>	Malta
<b>DE</b>	Germany	<b>NL</b>	Netherlands
<b>EE</b>	Estonia	<b>AT</b>	Austria
<b>IE</b>	Ireland	<b>PL</b>	Poland
<b>EL</b>	Greece	<b>PT</b>	Portugal
<b>ES</b>	Spain	<b>RO</b>	Romania
<b>FR</b>	France	<b>SI</b>	Slovenia
<b>HR</b>	Croatia	<b>SK</b>	Slovakia
<b>IT</b>	Italy	<b>FI</b>	Finland
<b>CY</b>	Cyprus	<b>SE</b>	Sweden
<b>LV</b>	Latvia		

# Glossary

The definitions below have been adapted from EIGE's 'Glossary & thesaurus' <sup>(1)</sup> and EIGE's Gender Mainstreaming Platform <sup>(2)</sup>. These are the definitions that have been used in the research.

<b>Action plan for gender equality</b>	An action plan operationalises a strategy and focuses on actions to achieve specific outputs and results, typically with targets, timelines and indicators to monitor progress over a specific period. It also typically identifies who is responsible for the implementation of each action.
<b>Action plan for gender mainstreaming</b>	This is a detailed document that operationalises the gender mainstreaming strategy by specifying actions, targets and indicators to achieve specific outputs and results. It includes timelines and assigns responsibilities for the implementation of each action, ensuring that gender equality is systematically integrated into all relevant policies and processes.
<b>Gender budgeting</b>	Gender budgeting is the application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It entails a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process, and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.
<b>Gender equality</b>	Gender equality refers to equality between women and men in all policy areas. This refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and of girls and boys. It comprises the equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men, as stated in Directive 2006/54/EC, and the equal representation of women and men as policy beneficiaries and in the decision-making process. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, while also recognising the wide range of situations and diverse backgrounds that different groups of women and men experience. Equality between women and men is a core value of the EU, a fundamental right and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.
<b>Gender equality training</b>	Gender equality training is any educational tool or process that aims to make policymakers and other stakeholders in the EU and Member States more aware of gender equality issues, build their gender competence and enable them to promote gender equality goals in their work at all levels.
<b>Gender impact assessment</b>	Gender impact assessment is a policy tool used to screen a given policy proposal in order to detect and assess its differential impact or effects on women and men, so that these imbalances can be redressed before the proposal is endorsed.
<b>Gender mainstreaming</b>	Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes to ensure that a gender equality perspective is incorporated into all policies at all levels and stages by those normally involved in policymaking. Gender mainstreaming has been recognised as a transformative approach to address the root causes of gender inequality and challenge the unequal distribution of power and resources.
<b>Gender mainstreaming strategy</b>	This is a comprehensive framework that outlines the vision, mission, values and priorities for integrating a gender equality perspective into all policies and processes at all levels and stages of government. This strategy can be a standalone document or part of a broader gender equality or equality mainstreaming strategy, but it must specifically focus on gender mainstreaming.

<sup>(1)</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/overview>.

<sup>(2)</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming>.

<b>Gender-sensitive language</b>	Gender-sensitive language is gender equality made manifest through language. Language plays an important role in how women's and men's positions in society are perceived and interpreted, which in turn influences attitudes towards women and men. Certain words, or use of the masculine form as the generic term (common in most languages), can overshadow women in legal acts, contribute to stereotypes (e.g. in professions) and make women's roles and needs invisible, among other effects. In this way, language contributes to, produces and reproduces sexist and biased thoughts, attitudes and behaviours.
<b>Governmental gender equality body (governmental body)</b>	This is a body within the government whose purpose is to design, coordinate and implement government policies for gender equality. It is normally located in the government hierarchy. A governmental gender equality body can be a separate ministry, grouped with other portfolios within a single ministry or located within the office of the head of government or state. It also includes government agencies. It does not include individual ministers or gender focal points / coordinators in other government bodies.
<b>Governmental strategy for gender equality</b>	A gender equality strategy is a governmental strategy that provides an overall vision, mission, values, priorities and activities to achieve a gender equality policy objective or goal. It is separate from an action plan, which lays out the steps and actions – ideally with targets and timelines – that will be taken to achieve specific gender equality objectives (typically those laid out in the gender equality strategy).
<b>Independent gender equality body (independent body)</b>	Independent gender equality bodies are 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, in line with EU directives in gender equality and non-discrimination.
<b>Intersectionality</b>	This is an analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, such as socioeconomic background, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation and rural or urban location, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination.

# Executive summary

The European Commission's renewed commitment and long-term vision to advance gender equality, the 2025 roadmap for women's rights, considers that specialised institutional structures for gender equality and gender mainstreaming are crucial to address structural gender inequalities, advance on commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action 30 years ago and help to realise a gender-equal society in the EU.

Institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming are bodies and processes that promote, advocate and support gender equality and the mainstreaming of gender issues across all policy areas. The underlying premise of calls for stronger institutional mechanisms is that the existing gender inequalities in all areas of life need to be better recognised and understood and then systematically addressed through gender-transformative policies and laws. This demands a systemic approach, applied to all areas of policy; the introduction of appropriate tools and methods to make the relevant assessments; comprehensive, good-quality data to inform decisions and monitor progress; and adequate resources to fulfil all of these tasks.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) regularly carries out data collection to monitor progress, identify gaps and provide recommendations to strengthen these mechanisms in the 27 EU Member States as part of the monitoring of Area H of the platform.

This report, based on the 2024 data collection, assesses changes since 2021, monitors the progress of these mechanisms, and presents actionable, evidence-based recommendations to enhance them.

EIGE's monitoring framework consists of four key indicators measuring key aspects of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming: H1, commitment to gender equality; H2, human resources for gender equality bodies; H3, gender mainstreaming; H4, production and dissemination of gender statistics. [Figure 1.1](#) presents the measurement framework. These indicators and their subindicators help identify trends, highlight gaps and shape policy recommendations for future actions.

The research adopted a mixed-methods approach, gathering data from officially appointed national focal points and complementing it with data from desk research and interviews with civil-society organisations (CSOs).

## Key findings

### Stronger institutional mechanisms promote greater gender equality

Statistical correlations between EIGE's overall ratings for institutional mechanisms and EIGE's Gender Equality Index show a high degree of correlation, confirming that stronger institutional mechanisms go hand in hand with greater gender equality, though not necessarily that one causes the other.

These results confirm that institutional mechanisms are fundamental to ensuring the integration of gender concerns throughout governmental actions and also serve as a valuable endorsement of the EU's effort to measure the strength of institutional mechanisms.

## Institutional mechanisms in Member States are at varying stages of development

EIGE's data shows that the strength of institutional mechanisms varies considerably across the EU. Spain is the standout leader, with an overall score of 86 %, which is the average of the scores for each of the four monitoring indicators expressed as a percentage of the maximum possible. Sweden (78 %) and Portugal (75 %) are the only other countries to score more than 70 %. The strength of institutional mechanisms is rated below 50 % of the maximum possible in more than half of the Member States (14). Poland scores 17 % and is the only country to score less than 30 % overall. Bulgaria, Slovenia, Latvia, Estonia and Cyprus all score below 40 % and, together with Poland, are furthest from delivering effective structures and processes to promote gender equality.

## Limited progress has been made in commitment to gender equality and the integration of an intersectional approach into gender equality policies

The average score for indicator H1, commitment, was 62 %, indicating a marginal improvement in national commitments to gender equality since 2021 (61 %). Significant disparities exist among Member States due to varying levels of governmental accountability, with scores varying from a high of 87 % in Spain to a low of 44 % in Latvia. Many Member States lack comprehensive national strategies and action plans for gender equality, and regular reporting mechanisms.

Governmental gender equality bodies are most often delegated to a secondary level within the governmental structure, typically established as a unit or section within a ministry rather than as a full ministry. In addition, fewer governmental gender equality bodies are exclusively focused on gender equality than in 2021.

Independent gender equality bodies play a crucial role in promoting and enforcing gender equality, but their effectiveness varies due to differences in mandates and the scope of their functions.

Despite some progress, the integration of an intersectional approach into gender equality policies remains limited, highlighting the need for increased awareness, training and the use of adequate tools to ensure that policies effectively address the needs of diverse groups of women and men.

## National gender equality bodies continue to face a low level of resourcing and need more resources to carry out their functions

The average score for indicator H2, human resources, was 47 %, indicating an increase in personnel resources for national gender equality bodies since 2021 (43 %), mostly due to a slight increase from 39 % to 43 % in personnel resources for independent bodies. However, there was a decrease in the level of resourcing of governmental bodies (from 50 % in 2021 to 48 % in 2024).

Scores range from 88 % in Greece, Spain, France and Sweden to zero in countries with fewer than five gender equality personnel. Nine Member States have fewer than 10 staff working in gender equality in at least one body and score no more than 25 %. This could potentially hamper the ability of these bodies to fulfil their mandates effectively and achieve meaningful progress.

Countries that are highly rated for overall gender equality tend to allocate resources to gender equality bodies more adequately.

## Commitment to and implementation of gender mainstreaming have declined

Results for indicator H3, gender mainstreaming, were the lowest among the four indicators, with an average score of 34 % compared with 39 % in 2021, highlighting a general need to strengthen commitment to gender mainstreaming.

The implementation of gender mainstreaming shows significant variability, with some countries establishing comprehensive frameworks and dedicated resources, while others fall behind, resulting in inconsistent application and effectiveness. Scores ranged from 71 % in Spain to zero in Hungary, with 21 Member States scoring less than 50 %, suggesting that many countries could do more to effectively mainstream gender equality concerns in policy processes.

The use of gender mainstreaming tools and methods, such as gender impact assessments and gender budgeting, is still not widespread. Governmental and independent gender equality bodies are not routinely consulted on new laws and policies in many Member States, limiting their impact on gender mainstreaming efforts.

## The production and dissemination of gender statistics have made slight progress

The average score for indicator H4, gender statistics, was 60 %, showing some progress from 56 % in 2021, but there were significant differences between countries, with scores ranging from 100 % in Spain and Sweden down to 25 % in Estonia, 17 % in Poland and 8 % in Cyprus.

The levels of government commitment to the collection of sex-disaggregated data and the production of gender statistics vary, with minor changes across a few Member States since 2021.

There has been minimal progress in Member States' efforts to disseminate sex-disaggregated data and make gender statistics more accessible to diverse stakeholders, ensuring informed analysis and evidence-based decision-making.

Commitments to the development, dissemination and use of gender statistics show a positive correlation with the level of gender equality.

## CSOs' funding and their involvement in gender equality policy development are inadequate and inconsistent

Despite the existence of formal consultation mechanisms, the involvement of CSOs in policy development is often ad hoc and under-resourced, lacking regularity and follow-up mechanisms. This limits their effectiveness and hinders the inclusion of diverse perspectives.

Though the majority of Member States provide funding to CSOs, the lack of long-term, sustainable funding represents a structural barrier to the involvement of CSOs in policymaking and hinders their capacity to foster long-term transformative changes in gender equality. This highlights the need for structured and inclusive funded consultation processes, and enhanced resources for CSOs.

## Key recommendations

### For the EU-level institutions and bodies

1. **Strengthen Member States' obligations to align with the EU's gender equality policy framework**, by integrating gender equality and gender budgeting into the EU's macroeconomic framework and allocating dedicated percentages of the EU's long-term budget to gender equality and gender mainstreaming interventions and activities.
2. **Endorse a formation of the Council of the European Union dedicated to gender equality** that would regularly bring together EU ministers responsible for gender equality and gender mainstreaming.
3. **Consider initiating a legislative process for an EU directive on substantive gender equality**, which would foster transformative gender equality and gender mainstreaming standards across the EU, address structural inequalities and help to realise a gender-equal society.
4. **Renew the EU's commitment to gender mainstreaming by adhering to the European Commission roadmap for women's rights and enhance its implementation** by embedding a gender perspective in all key EU strategic policy documents, supported by robust data collection, the effective use of gender impact assessments and gender budgeting, and dedicated resources to ensure comprehensive integration.
5. **Promote binding instruments mandating the collection of sex-disaggregated data** and ensure that gender-sensitive indicators are fully integrated into official statistics, providing a strong foundation for systematic data collection and informed policymaking that accurately reflects gender disparities.
6. **Strengthen public consultations on EU gender equality policies and legislation and other relevant initiatives**, ensuring broader participation by stakeholders, including national gender equality and women's rights organisations, in policymaking across all areas and funding programmes.
7. **Ensure sustainable funding for CSOs, women's rights organisations and other relevant bodies working on gender equality**, and expand their capacity to champion policy reforms and promote long-term transformative changes in gender equality.

### For the Member States

1. **Adhere to the European Commission roadmap for women's rights and develop comprehensive and long-term gender equality strategies and action plans with clear accountability mechanisms, specific targets and dedicated budgets.** These documents need to outline specific steps, timelines and responsibilities for integrating gender perspectives into all policy areas, with transparent reporting mechanisms to ensure that commitments are being met and gender equality efforts are effective. Such policy documents need to integrate an intersectional approach to address intersecting inequalities, supported by thorough data collection and analysis.
2. **Enhance the architecture, role and effectiveness of gender equality bodies**, assigning responsibility for gender equality to senior government officials and providing gender equality bodies with adequate expertise, budgetary resources and staff.

3. **Make gender mainstreaming obligations enforceable through legal and regulatory frameworks across all levels of government and policy areas**, establishing formal structures to facilitate coordination, and providing targeted training and resources to equip public employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively integrate a gender perspective into their work.
4. **Strengthen commitment and systematic implementation of gender mainstreaming methods and tools (e.g. gender budgeting and gender impact assessment)** to support their institutionalisation and ensure consistent application across all sectors and levels of government.
5. **Ensure the production and dissemination of comprehensive gender statistics** by integrating gender-sensitive indicators into official statistics, developing comprehensive guidelines and training programmes for data collectors, and allocating sufficient resources for comprehensive data collection, analysis and dissemination.
6. **Establish regular and transparent processes for consulting gender equality CSOs** by creating formal structures and protocols for engagement, and developing clear criteria for diversity in the representation of CSOs.
7. **Ensure adequate and predictable funding for CSOs working on gender equality** and guarantee their capacity and financial security by developing multiannual schemes and long-term grants, build strategic partnerships as part of innovative funding structures, simplify the procedures, adjust for inflation, and reserve funding for awareness raising and the provision of advice, services and support on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.



# 1. Introduction

In the 30th anniversary year of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the European Commission launched the **roadmap for women's rights** and a **declaration of principles for a gender-equal society**. Principle 8, institutional mechanisms that deliver on women's rights, acknowledges that advancing women's rights requires effective gender mainstreaming, financing and institutional infrastructure, as well as gender-sensitive research, data collection, design and planning that address women's needs with an intersectional approach (European Commission, 2025a).

## 1.1. Institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming in Area H of the BPfA

The 1995 BPfA is a landmark international policy framework aimed at promoting and protecting the human rights of all women and girls. It identifies 12 critical areas of concern that require concerted efforts from governments, institutions and civil society to achieve gender equality. Area H, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, emphasises the need to establish and reinforce institutional mechanisms at various levels of governance. This ensures that gender equality is not just a specific goal, but an objective integrated into all phases of the policymaking process (United Nations, 1995). [Box 1.1](#) presents the key definitions used in this study.

### Box 1.1. Key definitions

**Institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming** are bodies and processes that serve to promote, advocate and support gender equality and the mainstreaming of gender issues across all policy areas (EIGE, 2023a).

For monitoring purposes, 'bodies' refers to gender equality bodies convened at the national level only. These are split into two types.

- **Governmental gender equality bodies** are bodies within the government whose purpose is to design, coordinate and implement government policies for gender equality. Such bodies are normally located within ministerial structures but can also be government agencies (EIGE, 2023a).
- **Independent gender equality bodies** are 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 (EIGE, 2023a).

The BPfA recognises that institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women are not only a specific area of concern but a cornerstone for achieving gender equality in all other areas. Without strong institutional support, progress in areas such as decision-making, education, health and economic empowerment is hindered.

In 2005, the Council of the European Union called on EU Member States and the Commission to strengthen these institutional mechanisms and establish a framework for the systematic monitoring of progress. In line with the BPfA, the Council emphasised that certain conditions must be met by institutional mechanisms to achieve gender equality. These include ensuring that the mechanisms are

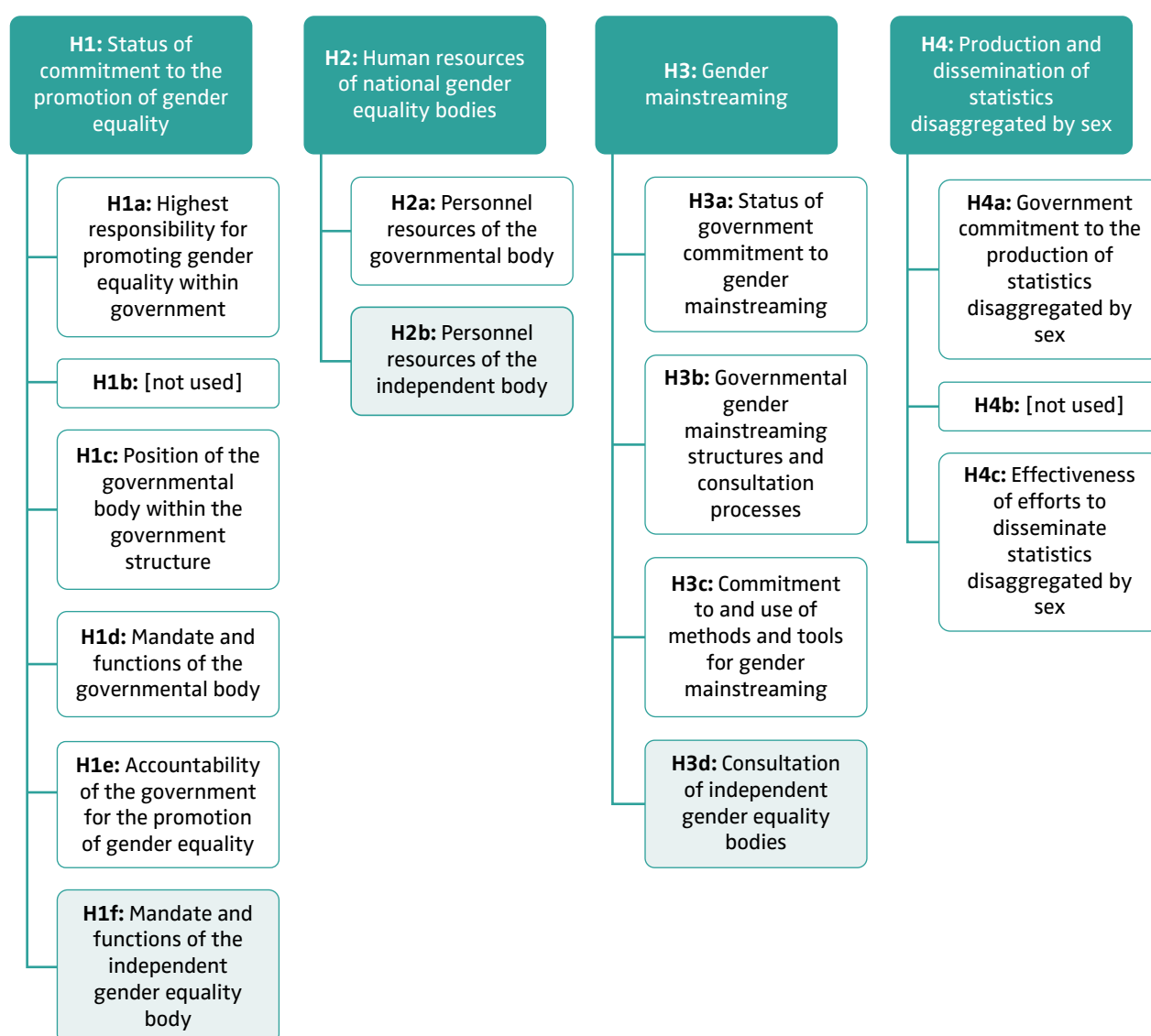
situated at the highest level of government, with the ability to influence the development of government policies, guaranteeing the involvement of civil-society organisations (CSOs) and allocating sufficient human and financial resources to their functioning. Following the Council's request for a monitoring framework to oversee the implementation of Area H, three monitoring indicators were developed under the 2006 Finnish Presidency and later adopted by the Council of the European Union (2006), with a fourth indicator added in 2013 (Council of the European Union, 2013).

### 1.2. EIGE's role in monitoring progress

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) plays a crucial role in monitoring and refining the indicators related to Area H of the BPfA. The 2024 data collection marks the fourth data collection exercise conducted by EIGE to assess the status of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming in each Member State (EIGE, 2025).

EIGE slightly adapts the indicators used in data collections to align with key policy and legislative developments at both the EU and international levels. These adaptations are based on data validation, quality assurance processes and stakeholder feedback from each data collection. The result is a robust framework with effective and relevant indicators for tracking and assessing progress (see [Figure 1.1](#)). EIGE's monitoring activities have proven instrumental in identifying trends, highlighting gaps and shaping policy recommendations for future actions.

**Figure 1.1. Indicators for monitoring institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, 2024**



NB: Light shaded boxes (H1f, H2b and H3d) represent data collected for independent gender equality bodies. Subtotals for indicators H1 and H3 excluding these subindicators provide data that focuses on governmental commitments in line with the formally adopted indicators. Data aligned with the official indicators is available in [Annex 1](#) and in EIGE's Gender Statistics Database. The data in this report always refers to the expanded indicators. Subindicator H1b (permanence of the governmental body) has not been used, as it has not provided meaningful results, and H4b (governmental commitment to gender statistics dissemination) has been incorporated under H4a.

### 1.2.1. Methodology

Building on previous data collection efforts and aligning with established indicators, this study was driven by a comprehensive set of research questions aimed at assessing the current status of and trends in institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming within the EU.

### 1.2.2. Scope of the study

The research analysed the current situation and trends in the promotion of gender equality and the implementation of gender mainstreaming. This included examining the mandates, structures, resources and professional capacity of gender equality bodies and the institutionalisation of methods and tools to ensure effective and transformative policies (in line with indicator H3, gender mainstreaming). It also looked at the accountability of institutional mechanisms, focusing on the processes in place to report on and monitor progress towards gender equality, and to facilitate the involvement of CSOs in developing gender equality policies (H1, status of governmental commitment to promoting gender equality). In addition, the study closely examined the resources allocated to institutional mechanisms to understand their implications for the ability to fulfil their mandates (H2, human resources of the national gender equality bodies).

Another line of enquiry sought to identify trends in merging gender with other grounds of discrimination in both governmental and independent bodies. The study explored the prevalence of this practice, its implications for personnel resources and its impact on the focus and potential of gender equality initiatives (addressing issues in indicators H1, commitment, H2, human resources, and H3, gender mainstreaming). Furthermore, the research aimed to examine the current situation and trends in institutional mechanisms addressing intersectional inequalities. It also looked at the production and dissemination of gender statistics in the Member States (H4, promotion and dissemination of statistics disaggregated by sex).

### 1.2.3. Data collection

EIGE's 2024 data collection adopted a mixed-methods approach, which included official data collection, desk research and interviews with CSOs in all Member States.

#### 1.2.3.1 Official data collection

Statistical data and metadata on institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming were collected and validated by national focal points (NFPs), with support from national researchers who were part of the study team. The questionnaires were pre-populated with 2021 data and metadata evidence to provide guidance to NFPs and national researchers on the information required and its sources. This pre-population also facilitated the quick identification of changes that needed confirmation or further investigation. Excel was used to support interactive editing and sharing, and to extract data from structured raw data tables into a combined database.

The questionnaire was designed to follow the 2021 model for consistency, with a few minor clarifications to selected questions based on lessons learned from the previous collection. It included scored questions using the 2021 scoring model, and additional questions aimed at collecting supplementary information, validating responses and offering additional evidence. This approach ensures consistency between years, allowing for the observation of changes. Data collection occurred between April and May 2024.

The questionnaires underwent a **robust quality assurance process** from June to September 2024. During this time, national researchers worked with NFPs to address issues to ensure the data was verifiable and comparable across Member States. Quality assurance focused on completeness, data accuracy and non-comparability issues.

For all quality assurance decisions, strict reference was made to the quality assurance guidelines, which were shared with national researchers and NFPs. The guidelines set out definitions of key terms and

information on how questions should be interpreted. National researchers were then asked to liaise with the NFPs to address all quality assurance issues. All quality assurance issues are recorded in a dedicated methodological report. EIGE scored the data using the measurement framework for the study. Only minor changes were made to the previous measurement framework <sup>(3)</sup>.

### 1.2.3.2. Challenges in data collection

One of the key challenges remains the comparability of the legal and policy frameworks on gender equality and gender mainstreaming across the EU. This requires a detailed assessment both of the questions and of the metadata provided. This challenge was taken into account in the 2024 data collection process, and, in order to better contextualise the responses, the study team carried out desk research on national contexts and frameworks.

Despite the robustness and reliability of the methodology, the validity of the data may be compromised due to the lack of publicly available information (e.g. indicator H2 on the personnel and financial resources of governmental gender equality bodies and independent gender equality bodies).

### 1.2.3.3. Qualitative research

To align with the BPfA's goal of involving CSOs in the development and monitoring of the gender equality policy framework and in holding institutional mechanisms accountable, a qualitative component was added to gather experiences and better contextualise survey findings. This component includes desk research and interviews with CSOs. It was based on some of the key themes and questions that underpinned the research, including the architecture of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming; accountability mechanisms; resourcing for gender equality; and the status of gender mainstreaming.

National researchers conducted qualitative research using desk reviews (analysis of relevant research, national legal and policy documents, and qualitative data on socioeconomic, governmental, political, legislative and policy frameworks) and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives active in gender equality and mainstreaming. The interviews were conducted between 7 May and 20 June 2024, with a total of 91 interviews across the 27 Member States <sup>(4)</sup>. While the report primarily relies on data from NFPs, the qualitative data helps contextualise, understand and analyse trends.

### 1.2.4. Structure of the report

The report is structured into the following sections.

After the **introduction**, outlining the context and objectives of the study, the report presents a detailed assessment of the strategic objectives of Area H and the corresponding four indicators:

- Chapter 2 provides an **overview of the strength of the institutional mechanisms** for the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming at the EU and Member State levels;
- Chapter 3 focuses on the **status of the commitment to gender equality (indicator H1)**;

<sup>(3)</sup> For more details on the approach and methodology used in EIGE's 2024 data collection on institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, see the methodological report (EIGE, 2025 and 2023b).

<sup>(4)</sup> For confidentiality reasons, the list of interviewed CSOs cannot be disclosed.

## 1. Introduction

- Chapter 4 presents findings about the **human resources of gender equality bodies (indicator H2)**;
- Chapter 5 covers **gender mainstreaming (indicator H3)**;
- Chapter 6 focuses on the **production and dissemination of gender statistics (indicator H4)**.

While findings from the qualitative research, including quotes from CSOs, are integrated into each relevant section to further contextualise the data, Chapter 7 provides a comprehensive summary of the insights gathered from **CSO interviews**.

The **conclusions** summarise the key findings. Finally, the last section presents **recommendations**, offering actionable steps to enhance institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

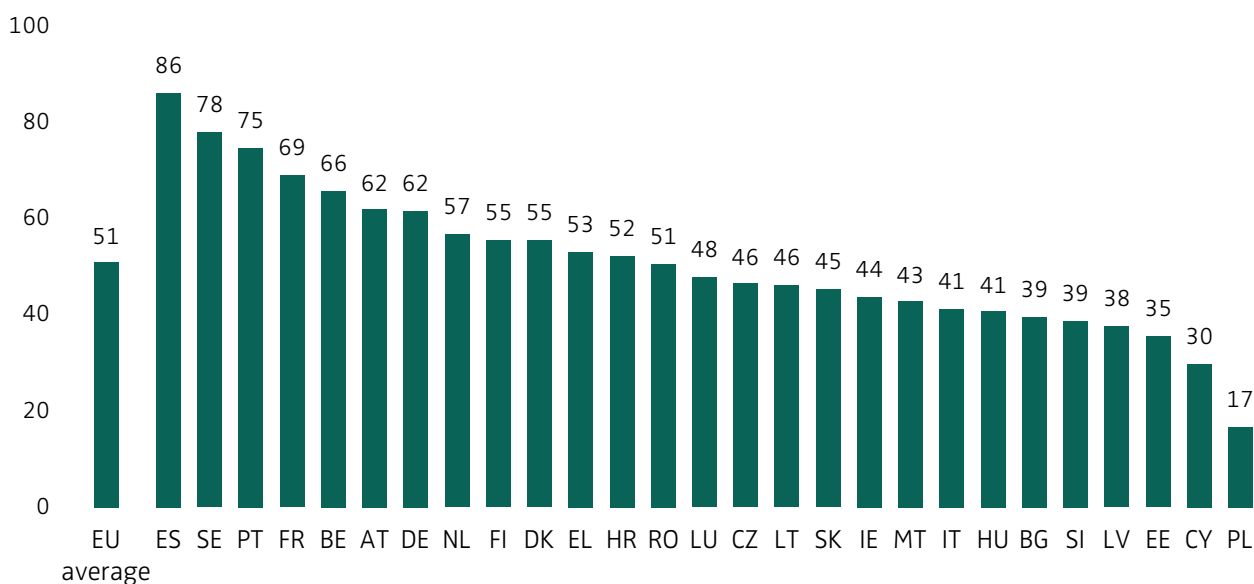
Supplementary information on survey findings and statistical correlations is provided in the annexes.

## 2. Strong institutional mechanisms coincide with greater gender equality

Calls for stronger institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality are founded on the premise that effective and adequately resourced structures and processes are needed to systematically identify and monitor existing gender inequalities and their causes. These mechanisms are also necessary to support the development of evidence-based policies to address gender inequalities and their causes. Ultimately, stronger institutional mechanisms should lead to greater gender equality.

In 2024, the overall strength of institutional mechanisms across the EU <sup>(5)</sup> was measured at just over half of the maximum possible (51 %), indicating that many countries still need to establish effective structures and processes. Ratings for individual countries range from 86 % in **Spain** to 17 % in **Poland** (see [Figure 2.1](#)). These two countries stand out as the only cases above 80 % and below 30 %, respectively. **Sweden** (78 %) and **Portugal** (75 %) are the only other countries to score more than 70 %, while **Bulgaria**, **Slovenia**, **Latvia**, **Estonia** and **Cyprus** all score below 40 % <sup>(6)</sup>.

**Figure 2.1. Overall strength of institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality, 2024 (%)**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

EIGE's Gender Equality Index <sup>(7)</sup> is a well-established measure of the overall levels of gender equality in the EU. Comparing the overall scores for institutional mechanisms with the Index scores indicates a

<sup>(5)</sup> The overall strength of institutional mechanisms is measured as an average of the scores for each of the four indicators (H1 to H4, see Chapters 3 to 6). All scores are expressed as a percentage of the maximum possible so that each indicator has equal weight in the average.

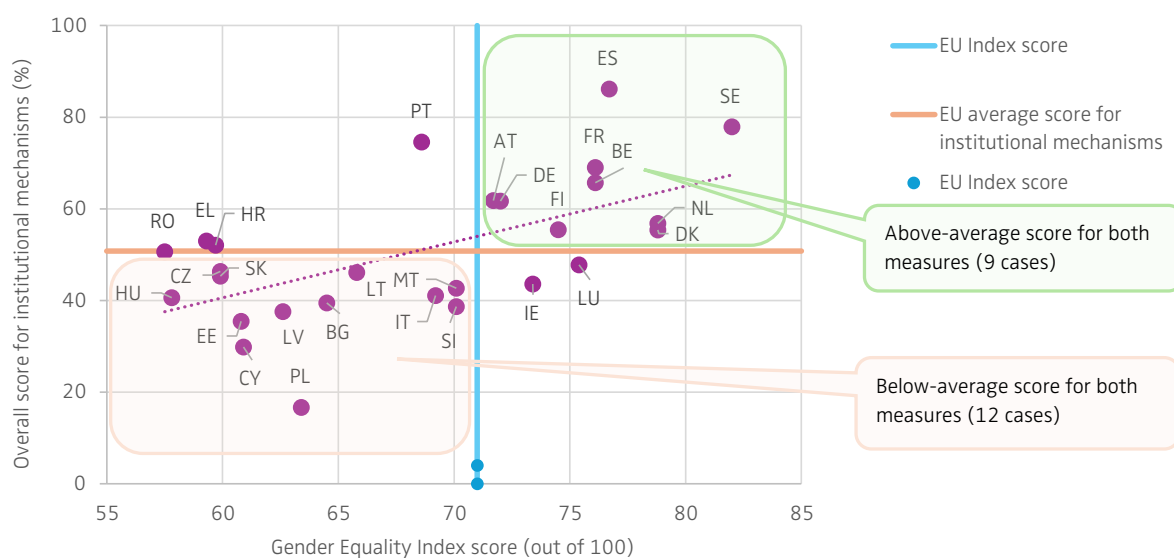
<sup>(6)</sup> Note that in this section lists of countries are ordered by overall score rather than protocol order, which is the default adopted in the rest of the report.

<sup>(7)</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index>.

## 2. Strong institutional mechanisms coincide with greater gender equality

strong positive correlation between the two measures (see [Figure 2.2](#) and [Annex 3](#))<sup>(8)</sup>. Scores for 21 of the 27 Member States fall into groups with either high scores for both indicators (9 cases: ES, SE, FR, BE, AT, DE, NL, FI, DK) or low scores for both indicators (12 cases: PL, CY, EE, LV, SI, BG, HU, IT, MT, SK, LT, CZ). **Portugal** is the only exception with a high score for institutional mechanisms but a below-average Index score, while **Ireland** and **Luxembourg** have below-average scores for institutional mechanisms despite above-average index scores. **Greece, Croatia** and **Romania** all score around the average for institutional mechanisms, more than expected from their low Index scores (less than 60).

**Figure 2.2. Scores for institutional mechanisms compared with scores for EIGE's Gender Equality Index, 2024**



Sources: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms and Gender Equality Index.

The positive correlation between scores for institutional mechanisms and the Gender Equality Index cannot be proven as causal. Indeed, it would be equally valid to postulate that countries with inherently greater equality tend to invest more in related support structures as it would be to say that stronger institutional mechanisms tend to drive greater equality.

The premise of calls for stronger institutional mechanisms in the BPfA is that they are fundamental to ensuring the integration of gender concerns throughout government action and, thereby, advancing gender equality. It is welcome, therefore, to find a clear statistical correlation between the two.

A number of countries (e.g. HR, IT, MT) have set explicit goals in their national gender equality strategies to improve their Gender Equality Index ratings. The data shown here suggests that a good starting point on this journey would be to ensure that the related action plans include clear steps to strengthen national structures and processes to promote and support gender equality.

<sup>(8)</sup> The Pearson coefficient is 0.6, which indicates a high correlation (<https://datatab.net/tutorial/pearson-correlation>). [Annex 3](#) provides an in-depth look at statistical correlations between EIGE's ratings for institutional mechanisms and its Gender Equality Index.



### 3. Limited progress in national commitments to gender equality since 2021 and significant variability in governmental accountability

Indicator H1 on the status of national-level commitment to the promotion of gender equality monitors progress towards the first strategic objective under Area H of the BPfA: to 'create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies' (United Nations, 1995, p. 128).

The indicator is comprised of **five subindicators**. Four of these (H1a, H1c, H1d and H1e) <sup>(9)</sup> relate to the conditions considered necessary for a governmental gender equality body to be effective, influential and powerful. The fifth subindicator (H1f) expands on the officially adopted indicator (Council of the European Union, 2006) <sup>(10)</sup>, recognising that independent gender equality bodies are an essential part of national structures to support gender equality and should have an active role in policy development (OECD, 2015; European Commission, 2024).

#### 3.1. Variations in national commitment to gender equality largely derive from governmental accountability

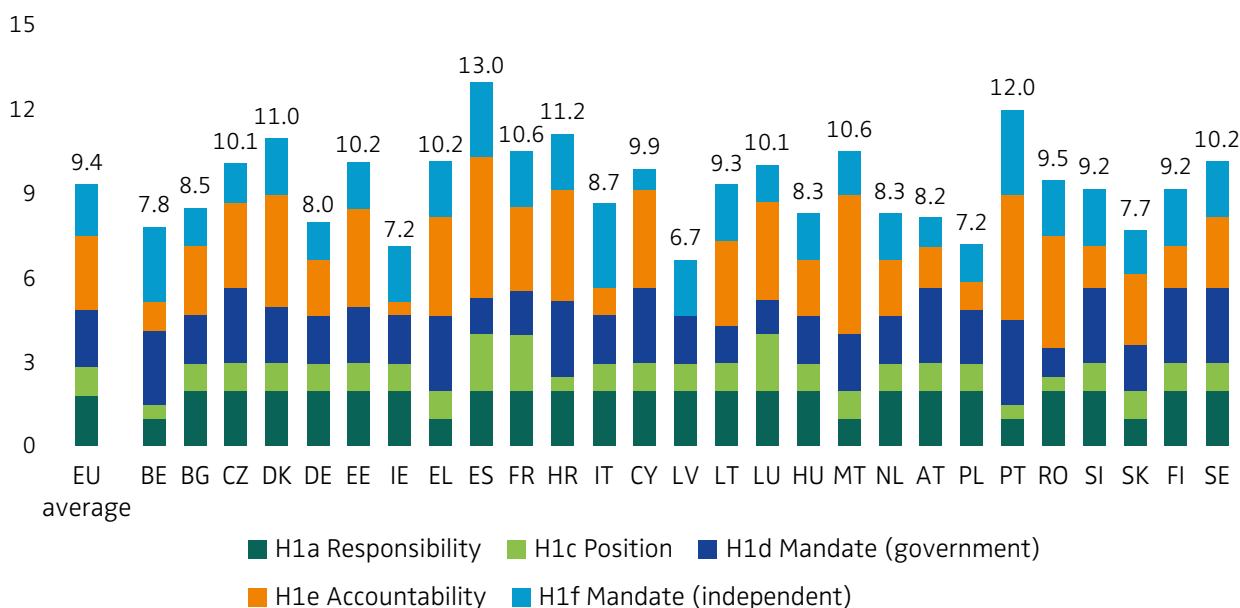
The average score for indicator H1, commitment, in 2024 was 9.4, 62 % of the possible maximum of 15 (see [Figure 3.1](#)), up just 0.3 points from 9.1 in 2021 (see further below). Scores were at least 10 percentage points (pp) above average (i.e. at least 11 out of 15) in **Denmark, Spain, Croatia** and **Portugal**. Conversely, scores were at least 10 pp below average (i.e. scores of less than 8) in **Belgium, Ireland, Latvia, Poland** and **Slovakia**.

<sup>(9)</sup> Subindicator H1b on the permanence of the governmental gender equality body was dropped from the measurement framework during the 2021 data collection exercise (see EIGE, 2023a, Section 2.1.1).

<sup>(10)</sup> Subindicator H1f (mandate of independent gender equality body) was added to the measurement framework during the 2021 exercise (see EIGE, 2023a, Section 2.1.1).

### 3. Limited progress in national commitments to gender equality since 2021

**Figure 3.1. Scores for indicator H1, status of commitment to the promotion of gender equality, 2024**



NB: Overall scores aligned with the officially adopted indicator covering governmental commitment only (H1a to H1e) are available in [Annex 1](#) and in EIGE's Gender Statistics Database.

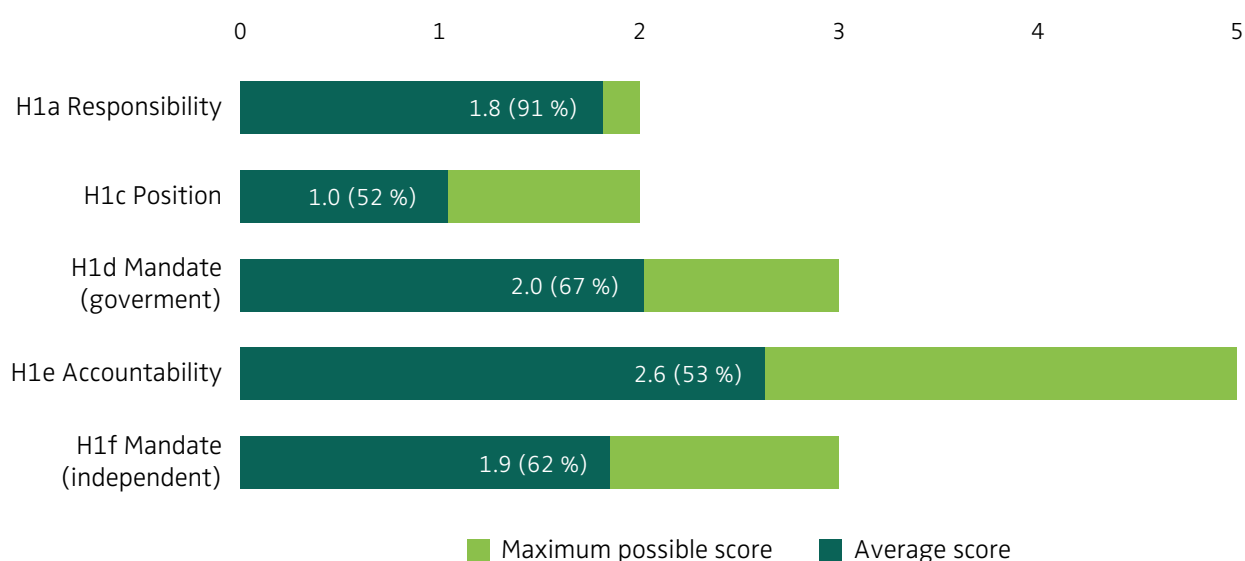
Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

The variation between countries is primarily driven by subindicator H1e, accountability, which contributes the largest share to the overall indicator. On average, scores for H1e were just 2.6 out of 5, or 53 % of the maximum possible (see [Figure 3.2](#)), highlighting the **need for greater governmental accountability**. The key difference lies in whether countries have a currently active (and formally adopted) gender equality strategy and gender equality action plan, the latter of which should be costed and have explicit quantitative targets and effective monitoring processes.

Among the countries with significantly below-average scores for H1 overall, **Belgium, Ireland and Latvia** report no active gender equality strategy or action plan<sup>(11)</sup>. Consequently, they score 1 of the 5 points available for subindicator H1e, with an impact on their overall scores for H1. In contrast, all four of the countries with significantly above-average scores for H1 overall (DK, ES, HR, PT) have active strategies and plans, and score at least 4 out of 5 for subindicator H1e<sup>(12)</sup>.

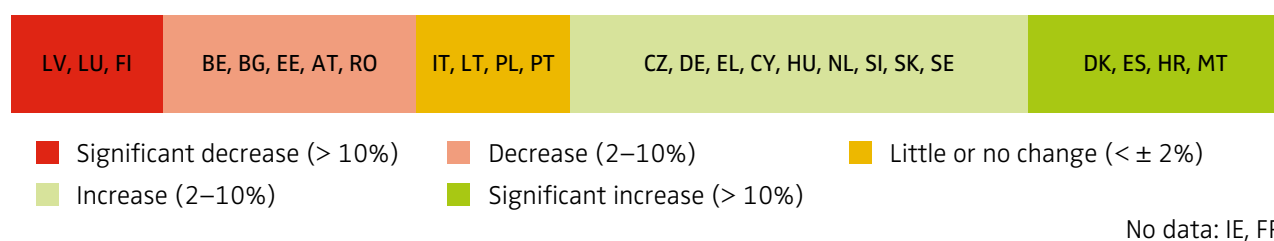
<sup>(11)</sup> However, in Ireland the new strategy is in preparation, and in Latvia the new strategy was under approval at the time of the data collection.

<sup>(12)</sup> In Portugal, the 2018–2030 national strategy for equality and non-discrimination covers gender equality together with other equality issues and forms the basis for three action plans, which are updated every four years, one of which is dedicated to equality between women and men.

**Figure 3.2. Average scores for each subindicator of indicator H1 in relation to its theoretical maximum, EU-27 (score, %), 2024**

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**Limited improvement since 2021.** While the average score for indicator H1 in 2024 was only slightly higher than in 2021 (9.4 compared with 9.1), there were several more substantial changes across countries (see [Figure 3.3](#)). More countries (13) saw their overall scores for H1 increase (by at least 2 %) than decrease (8) but the majority of these changes (14) were small (below 10 %, or less than 1.5 points, in either direction).

**Figure 3.3. Changes in scores for indicator H1, status of commitment to the promotion of gender equality, 2021–2024**

NB: Change for Slovakia affected by missing data for subindicator H1f in 2021.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**Significant decreases occurred in just three cases (LV, LU, FI).** In **Latvia** and **Finland**, the lower score for indicator H1 derived primarily from subindicator H1e, accountability. Each country had an active gender equality action plan in 2021, which was at least partly costed and had monitored targets, but had no active plan in 2024<sup>(13)</sup>. In the case of **Luxembourg**, the lower score is linked to the widening of the mandate of the governmental body, which was previously focused exclusively on gender equality.

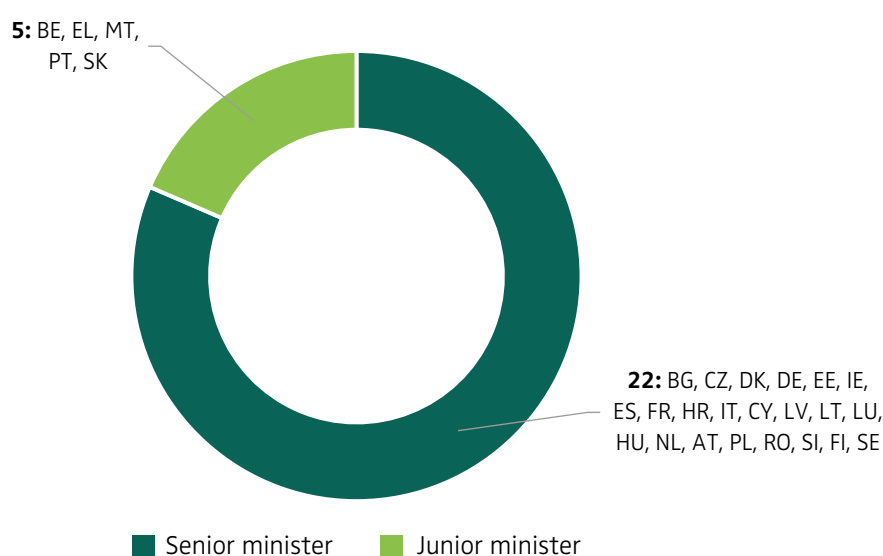
<sup>(13)</sup> The Finnish 2023–2027 action plan had not yet been published as of September 2024.

At the same time, there were **significant improvements in the scores for four Member States**. In all four cases – **Denmark, Spain, Croatia and Malta** – the improved scores for H1 overall were primarily due to increased scores for subindicator H1e. **Spain** and **Malta** have each adopted a national gender equality strategy and accompanying action plan (none was in place in 2021), while **Croatia** has adopted a new action plan (a strategy was already in place).

## 3.2. In most Member States, responsibility for gender equality is assigned to the highest possible level of government

**Average scores were high (1.8 out of 2, or 91 %) for subindicator H1a, responsibility**, because, in the majority of Member States, responsibility for gender equality is vested with a senior government minister who is a member of the cabinet. The five exceptions where direct responsibility for the gender equality portfolio lies with a junior minister are **Belgium, Greece, Malta, Portugal and Slovakia** (see [Figure 3.4](#))<sup>(14)</sup>.

**Figure 3.4. Highest level of ministerial responsibility for gender equality within the national government, 2024**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**The visibility of the gender equality bodies has shifted in three countries.** In **Malta**, a government reshuffle in 2023 placed a junior minister in charge of gender equality. Previously, the responsibility for gender equality was within the Ministry for Equality, Research and Innovation. It was then moved to the Office of the Prime Minister, with a parliamentary secretary holding direct responsibility for both equality and reforms. In **Slovakia**, establishment plan 5/2024 of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family shifted direct responsibility for gender equality from the minister to a state secretary, a subordinate position that does not have a seat on the cabinet.

<sup>(14)</sup> The determination of senior/junior follows the mapping used in EIGE's data collection on women and men in decision-making ([https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/wmid\\_mapping\\_natgov\\_2.pdf](https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/wmid_mapping_natgov_2.pdf)).

Conversely, in **Poland**, responsibility for gender equality was transferred to the new position of Minister of Equality, established in December 2023. Previously it was vested with the Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment, operating as a secretary of state in the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (Sejm of the Republic of Poland, 2023; Government of Poland, 2023). Elevating this role to the ministerial level helps gender equality issues to receive higher visibility and priority within the government, promoting more effective policy implementation and the integration of gender perspectives across all areas of governance (Lombardo and Meier, 2008; Lombardo and Verloo, 2009).

### 3.3. Governmental gender equality bodies are often positioned at a subsidiary level within the government structure

Subindicator H1c, position, assesses where a governmental body is situated within the overall government structure. This can vary from being an entire ministry, a department or a section of the government to being a government agency. The positioning of the body affects its ability to promote gender equality, its visibility and its influence. Ultimately, this determines its capacity to have an effective impact on gender equality policy implementation and gender mainstreaming (Chinkin, 2001).

All 27 Member States report having a governmental body dedicated to gender equality, and six (EL, CY, AT, PT, FI<sup>(15)</sup>, SE) report having a second governmental gender equality body. **Average scores were low for subindicator H1c in 2024 (1. out of 2, or 52 %)** because the governmental gender equality body is most often established as a unit or section within a ministry, scoring 1 point<sup>(16)</sup>. Indeed, there are only three cases (ES, FR, LU) in which the governmental gender equality body is located at the highest level of the government hierarchy, functioning as an entire ministry, and thus achieves the maximum score of 2 points. There are also four cases (BE, HR, PT, RO) where the governmental gender equality body is established as a government agency, which is deemed to be outside the ministerial structures, and therefore scores 0.5 points (see [Figure 3.5](#)).

Although the 2006 Council conclusions require that ‘The national machinery should be located at the highest possible level of government’, they clarify that the body ‘should have clearly defined mandates, adequate resources, ability to influence policy, to formulate and review legislation (203 b), and provide staff training (203 c)’ (Council of the European Union, 2006).

The location of the body is therefore primarily about ensuring that it is highly visible and has a suitably empowered mandate to deliver these functions effectively. The establishment of a government agency requires the adoption of relevant legislation that formally delegates specific functions to that body, a legal responsibility that remains intact until the legislation is changed. This demonstrates a clear and highly visible commitment for these activities to be implemented. For instance, the Government of the Republic of **Croatia** established an Office for Gender Equality as an expert service (and agency) for the implementation of activities related to the enforcement of gender equality. The Office for Gender Equality proposes and monitors law and policy and works closely with the government (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2018).

Thus, although not necessarily indicative of the relative power and authority of the body, the scoring for subindicator H1c, position, aligns with the BPfA recommendation for the body to be located at the

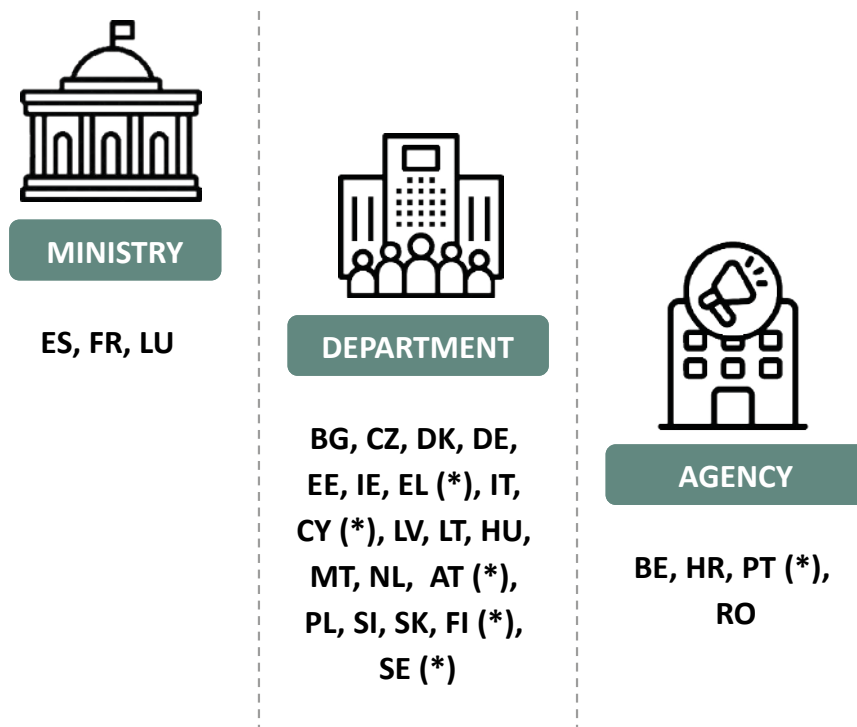
<sup>(15)</sup> Finland’s second governmental body, the Centre for Gender Equality Information, closed in August 2024 (<https://thl.fi/-/valtakunnallisen-tasa-arvotiedon-keskuksen-toiminta-thl-ssa-paatty>).

<sup>(16)</sup> BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, IT, CY, LV, LT, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, SI, SK, FI, SE.

### 3. Limited progress in national commitments to gender equality since 2021

‘highest possible level of government’. This also concurs with literature that shows that the effectiveness of gender equality bodies can be significantly affected by their structural position, with those located outside ministerial structures often facing challenges in influencing policy and securing resources (Krizsan and Zentai, 2006).

**Figure 3.5. Location of the governmental body, 2024**



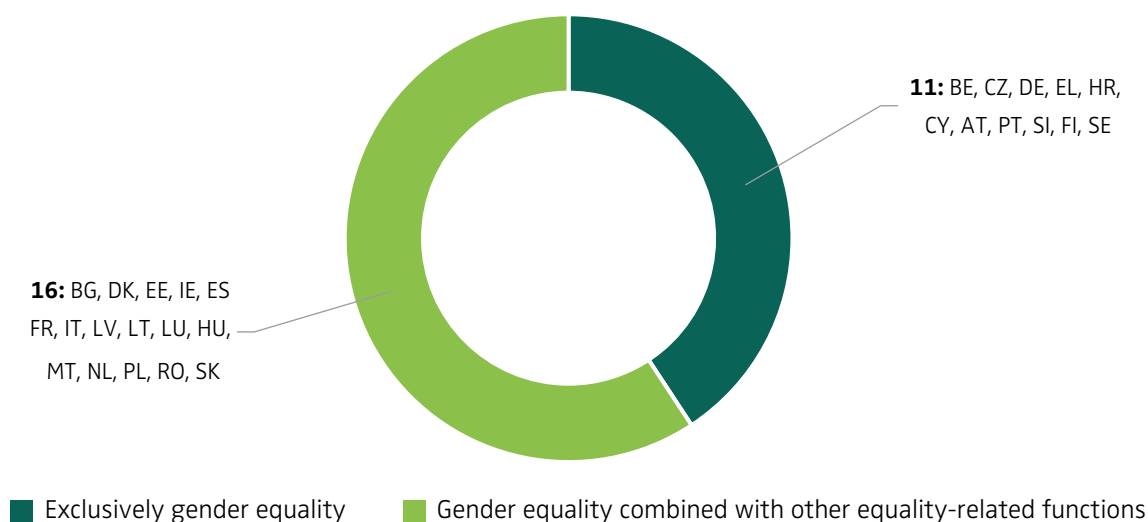
(\*): Greece, Cyprus, Austria, Portugal, Finland and Sweden each have two gender equality bodies. For Member States where the levels of the two governmental bodies differ (EL, CY, SE), the governmental body with the higher level is recorded.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

## 3.4. Fewer governmental bodies are exclusively focused on gender equality than in 2021

**In 2024, 11 Member States (BE, CZ, DE, EL, HR, CY, AT, PT, SI, FI, SE) had governmental bodies exclusively focused on gender equality, two fewer than in 2021.** The remaining 16 Member States have bodies that deal with gender equality as part of a broader equalities remit (see [Figure 3.6](#)), which results in a loss of one of the three points available for subindicator H1d, mandate (governmental body).

**Figure 3.6. Mandate of the governmental gender equality body, 2024**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

In November 2023, **Luxembourg's** Ministry of Equality between Women and Men took over the portfolio relating to the rights of LGBTIQ+ people from the Ministry of Family Affairs, Solidarity, Living Together and Reception of Refugees, and changed its name to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Diversity (MEGA) (Chronicle.lu, 2024). In addition to gender equality, it is now also responsible for the definition, coordination and implementation of national policies targeting LGBTIQ+ issues (Government of Luxembourg, 2023).

In **Romania**, the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (NAEO) consists of two departments: one dedicated to gender equality and another focused on domestic violence (including, but not limited to, violence against women). Since 2021, the activities of the domestic violence department have gained prominence within the agency, a shift also reflected in the staffing levels of each department, as detailed in Chapter 4 below.

In other Member States (EL, IE, HU), restructuring has led to the gender equality mandate being incorporated into departments with broader mandates, such as social affairs, family, youth or human rights. For example, in **Ireland**, the government transferred control of gender equality from the Department of Justice and Equality to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, a department with an even wider remit (Women's Collective Ireland, 2022). In **Greece**, the renaming of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality as the General Secretariat for Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality in 2019 reflected a shift in focus from gender equality to family cohesion. In 2023, the secretariat was renamed again as the General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights. A recent report by the Council of Europe highlights CSOs' concerns about the effectiveness and visibility of the renamed body, emphasising the importance of ensuring that the name change is accompanied by substantial improvements in resources, coordination and overall impact on gender equality and combating violence against women (Council of Europe, 2023).

### 3. Limited progress in national commitments to gender equality since 2021

CSOs interviewed in Member States where a gender equality mandate had been incorporated into ministries or departments with broader mandates raised concerns that this integration diluted the focus on gender equality, as other ministerial priorities might overshadow gender equality issues.

‘I think part of this goes back to when equality shifted. So it shifted from the Department of Justice over into children and equality and ... that department in my view has just too much within its remit.’

‘Their responsibilities have grown. They’re the same, I suppose. Actually a smaller team dealing with more. There is no specific gender equality unit there either, which is concerning for us’.

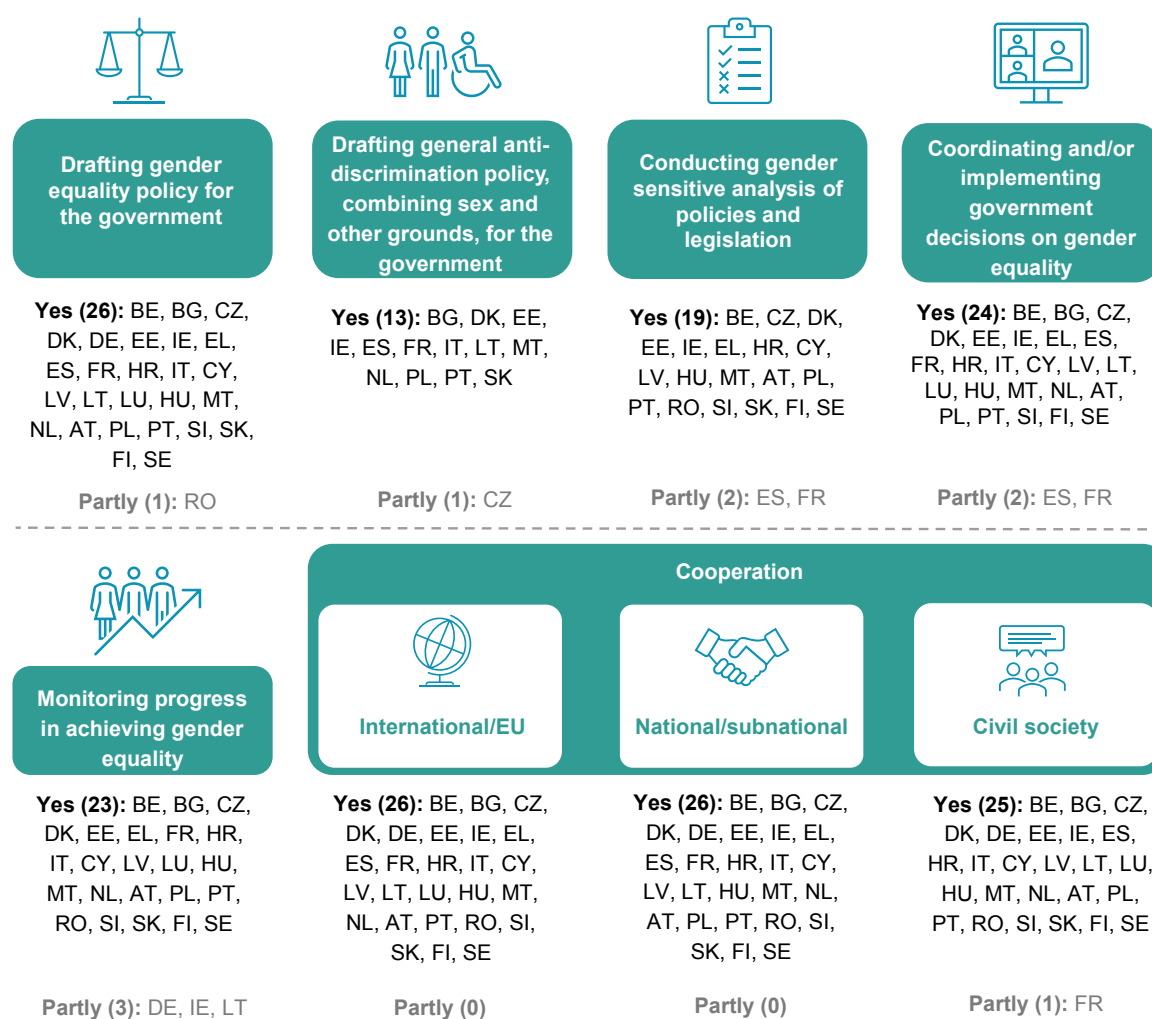
#### **Most governmental gender equality bodies carry out all functions identified by the BPfA as crucial for achieving gender equality.**

Subindicator **H1d, mandate (governmental body)**, assesses the range of functions undertaken by governmental gender equality bodies in relation to necessary activities set out in the BPfA. These activities include drafting gender equality policy for the government; drafting general anti-discrimination policy, covering sex or gender together with other grounds, for the government; conducting gender sensitivity analysis of policies and legislation; coordinating and/or implementing government decisions on gender equality; monitoring progress in achieving gender equality; and cooperation at the international/EU level, at the national/subnational level and with civil society (see [Figure 3.7](#)).

On average, the groups of bodies with and without an exclusive gender equality mandate scored the same for the range of functions carried out (1.6 out of 2 in both cases), implying that function (what the body does) is not dictated by mandate (what it covers).



Figure 3.7. Functions of the governmental body, 2024



NB: Greece, Cyprus, Austria, Portugal, Finland and Sweden each have two governmental bodies.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**All Member States reported that at least one of their governmental gender equality bodies is responsible for drafting gender equality policy for the government.** In Romania, while the NAEQ makes legislative suggestions, these are presented to the Ministry for Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities. It is then the ministry's responsibility to advance these suggestions as government legislative proposals, initiate public debates, consult with other ministries and guide them through the legislative process. Consequently, the NAEQ does not have complete control over the drafting of legislation. In 13 Member States (BG, DK, EE, IE, ES, FR, IT, LT, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK), the governmental body is also responsible for drafting general anti-discrimination policy, covering sex or gender together with other grounds. In **Czechia**, the Department of Gender Equality collaborates with the Department of Human Rights to draft comprehensive anti-discrimination policies that address the intersection of gender, sex and other grounds, and therefore is only partly responsible for this task<sup>(17)</sup>.

<sup>(17)</sup> General anti-discrimination policy is drafted by the Department of Human Rights. The Department of Gender Equality drafts anti-discrimination policy specifically on grounds of sex and gender.

**Governmental bodies in 19 Member States<sup>(18)</sup> conduct gender sensitivity analysis of policies and legislation across all areas.** In **Spain** and **France**, this function is only partly carried out. In **France**, each ministry is responsible for including a gender impact analysis in the preparation of all relevant draft laws and regulations, with the ministry in charge of gender equality involved due to its expertise. Similarly, in **Spain**, each ministry must prepare a gender impact report for legislative proposals presented before the parliament. The Ministry of Equality, which also addresses broader issues of equality and non-discrimination, is required to prepare a gender impact report for any laws it proposes (Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial del Estado, 1997, 2007). Governmental bodies do not perform this activity in six Member States (BG, DE, IT, LT, LU, NL).

**Most Member States** (except Germany; see below) **have a governmental body that coordinates and/or implements<sup>(19)</sup> government decisions on gender equality.** In **Romania** and **Slovakia**, this function is partly carried out, with the gender equality bodies cooperating with other ministries to carry out relevant activities.

**Most governmental gender equality bodies** (except those in Germany, Ireland, Spain and Lithuania) **monitor progress in achieving gender equality.** In **Germany, Ireland** and **Lithuania**, this function is partly carried out. In **Spain**, this function is carried out by the independent gender equality body, the Institute of Women. As outlined in Article 3 (d) and (e) of Law 16/1983 (last modified in 2020) (Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial del Estado, 1983), the institute is responsible for compiling information and documentation related to gender equality. This includes preparing reports, studies and recommendations on matters affecting gender equality, particularly public policies on equal opportunities, both nationally and internationally. The institute disseminates and exchanges this information with ministerial departments and public or private entities at various levels (international, national, regional and local). The independent nature of the Institute of Women in Spain may ensure that the monitoring of gender equality progress is conducted with a degree of impartiality and transparency. However, this may be less pronounced in other countries, where this function is managed directly by governmental bodies.

In some Member States, responsibilities for certain functions have been decentralised to other ministries. This is the case in **Germany**, where the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is not responsible for drafting policy, conducting gender sensitivity analysis, or coordinating and/or implementing government decisions on gender equality. Instead, paragraph 2 of the Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries emphasises that the principle of gender equality should be a consistent guiding principle in all political, normative and administrative measures of the federal ministries in their areas (Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat, 2024). While this approach aligns with the principle of gender mainstreaming, and aims to integrate gender perspectives into all policies, it may lead to a diffusion of responsibility and limited accountability for achieving specific gender equality outcomes, especially when progress depends on the individual in charge (Stratigaki, 2005).

Finally, **all Member States cooperate with other equality bodies and relevant public/private bodies** at the EU or international level (except Poland), at the national or subnational level (except Luxembourg) and with civil society (although in France there is no formalised process).

**In some of the countries where two governmental bodies exist (PT, SE, FI), there is still some duplication of functions between the two bodies.** In **Portugal**, both the Commission for Citizenship and

<sup>(18)</sup> BE, CZ, DK, EE, IE, EL, HR, CY, LV, HU, MT, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE. In Greece, Portugal and Sweden, both governmental bodies perform this function. In Austria and Finland, only one of the two governmental bodies is responsible for it.

<sup>(19)</sup> Coordinating means organising and managing efforts to ensure consistent application of gender equality policies across different ministries. Implementing means putting these policies into action through specific programmes and initiatives.

Gender Equality (CIG) and the Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (CITE) perform five out of the six functions of a gender equality body. However, while the CIG serves as a general gender equality body, the CITE primarily focuses on labour and employment issues. Despite their overlapping functions, their scopes differ. Notably, the only function the CITE does not undertake is the drafting of general anti-discrimination policy. In **Sweden**, both governmental bodies carry out four similar functions. In **Finland**, the gender equality bodies perform three similar functions, and neither of them carries out the function related to drafting of anti-discrimination general policy.

However, **bodies sometimes complement each other in terms of functions**. In **Cyprus**, the Equality Unit of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order has the main responsibility for formulating, coordinating and implementing government policy on gender equality issues, as well as monitoring international developments (Ministry of Justice and Public Order of Cyprus, n.d.). Meanwhile, the Commissioner for Gender Equality, appointed by the Council of Ministers, is responsible for drafting, monitoring, coordinating and evaluating the new National Strategy on Gender Equality (Council of Ministers Decision of 5 July 2023). In **Austria**, while both governmental bodies carry out functions in relation to monitoring progress in achieving gender equality and cooperation with different institutions, the Directorate General for Women and Equality is the only one to cooperate with civil society. In **Greece**, cooperation with CSOs falls under the remit of the Research Centre for Gender Equality, the second gender equality body (as per Law 4443/2016).

In **Finland**, the Centre for Gender Equality Information, which serves as the second gender equality body, has been responsible for conducting gender-sensitive analyses of policies and legislation. These analyses provide essential insights for the Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the primary gender equality body, which utilises this information to suggest amendments to broader policies across various sectors. Consequently, the recent closure of the Centre for Gender Equality Information in August 2024 (YLE News, n.d.) might pose a significant risk and lead to a fragmentation of gender equality data and hinder the ability to make informed policy decisions.

'It is difficult to say on positive developments, as we just heard that the Centre for Gender Equality Information will be closed. It is a huge loss for gender equality actors and work in Finland. It remains unclear if these functions will be continued.'

### 3.5. Many Member States lack strong accountability mechanisms

Subindicator H1e, accountability, assesses the existence of national laws, strategies and action plans for gender equality and gender mainstreaming. It also evaluates the presence of targets and monitoring mechanisms that ensure accountability for the implementation of action plans, and whether the governmental gender equality body regularly reports to legislative bodies on their progress.

In essence, subindicator H1e assesses whether governments are committed to gender equality not only in principle but also in practice, by ensuring that their plans are actionable and measurable, and that there is a system in place for regular reporting and accountability.

H1e is the key driver of the differences in the scores achieved under H1. **In 2024, the average score for indicator H1e was 2.6 out of 5 (53 %), up from 2.2 (44 %) in 2021.**

### 3. Limited progress in national commitments to gender equality since 2021

A total of **13 Member States have enacted laws dedicated exclusively to gender equality** (BE, BG, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, LT, RO, SI, FI).

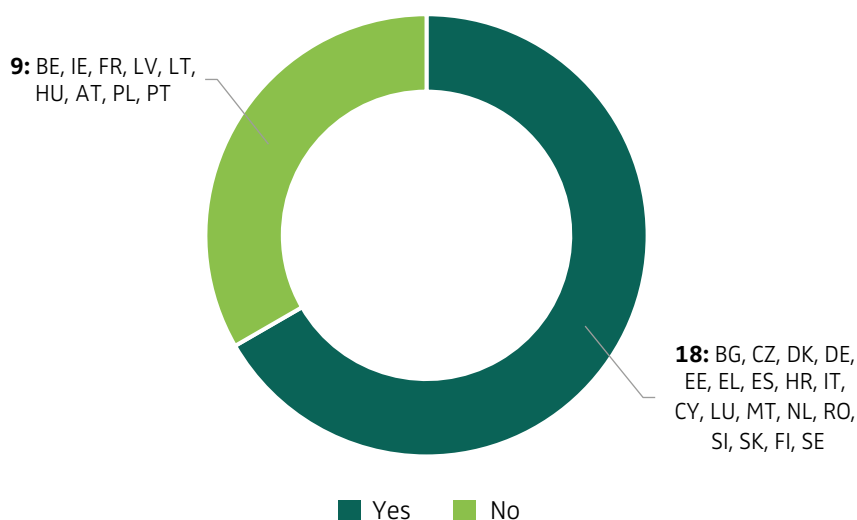
**Spain** has a comprehensive legislative approach detailed in Organic Law 3/2007 of 22 March, for the effective equality of women and men. This law is a constitutional act, which holds a higher legal status than other forms of law. It covers a wide range of areas, and mandates specific actions, gender mainstreaming and the incorporation of gender equality into policies and effective practices across all public authorities. It influenced the entire legal system as it adapted other national regulations to the framework for substantive gender equality. This organic law is complemented with additional legislation addressing specific gender inequalities.

In 10 other Member States, key legislation addresses gender equality together with other equality and non-discrimination issues (CZ, DE, IE, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, SK, SE). Among the four Member States without comprehensive laws, **Cyprus, Luxembourg and Portugal** have legislation addressing specific aspects of gender equality, such as equal pay, flexible working arrangements and ensuring gender balance in political representation. **Latvia** does not have any laws specifically focused on gender equality.

**Nine Member States lack a national gender equality strategy, two more than in 2021** <sup>(20)</sup> (see [Figure 3.8](#)).

A **gender equality strategy** is a governmental strategy that provides an overall vision, mission, values, priorities and activities to achieve a policy objective or goal (see [Glossary](#)).

**Figure 3.8. Existence of a national strategy for gender equality, 2024**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

Ten Member States have implemented new strategies since 2021 (DK, EE, ES, HR, CY, LU, MT, NL, FI, SI), thereby renewing their commitment to achieving gender equality.

In 2022, **Malta** launched the 2022–2027 gender equality and mainstreaming strategy and action plan (GEMSAP). The GEMSAP aims to strengthen the gender perspective at all levels of policy through eight

<sup>(20)</sup> In 2021, the Member States that lacked one were BE, BG, ES, CY, MT, PL, SI.

strategic objectives across all ministries. An interministerial committee, consisting of a focal point from each ministry, will drive the agenda forward and report on progress. The 2023 annual report highlights key achievements in relation to each objective, which are reflected in Malta's increased score from 65.6 points on EIGE's Gender Equality Index in 2022 to 70.1 in 2024, the country now ranking 12th and close to the EU score of 71.0.

In some Member States, work is being carried out to develop such strategic documents. For example, in **Latvia**, the plan on the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men for 2024–2027 was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 18 June 2024, after the time frame of the data collection for this study. In **Ireland**, the 2017–2020 national strategy for women and girls was extended to 2021 but has not been replaced <sup>(21)</sup>.

In addition to national strategies on gender equality, some governmental departments and ministries have adopted strategies to tackle specific gender equality issues in their policy area. Two Member States (PT, SI) have strategies on specific aspects of gender equality implemented across all or most departments/ministries. For instance, in **Slovenia**, under the Resolution on the national programme for equal opportunities for women and men 2023–2030, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities drafts a periodical plan every two years including strategies for the implementation of the guidelines for all ministries. Eight Member States (DE, IE, HR, IT, LV, RO, SK, SE) have separate strategies on specific aspects of gender equality in fewer than 50 % of their departments/ministries. As an example, in **Romania**, some ministries have strategies on specific aspects of gender equality, including the Ministry of Defence's strategy to promote the agenda of women, peace and security, the Ministry of Health's programmes to address women's health issues, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity's strategies incorporating gender equality. No such sectoral strategies were identified in the other Member States.

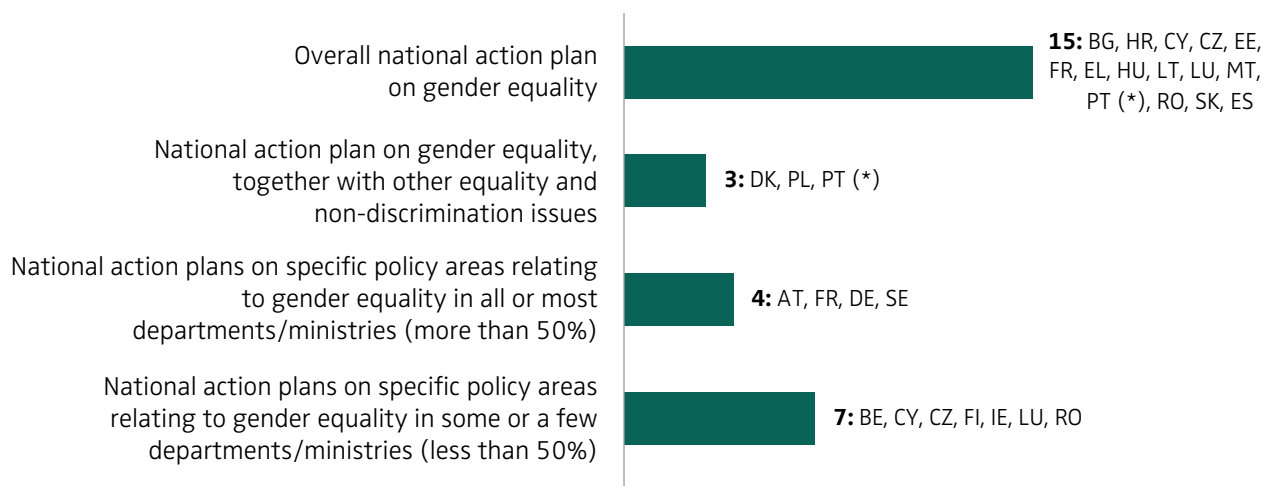
**A total of 15 Member States currently have overall national action plans focusing on gender equality, two fewer than in 2021.** Three Member States have a national action plan that focuses on gender equality together with other equality and non-discrimination issues (see [Figure 3.9](#)).

National gender equality action plans serve as comprehensive frameworks and accountability mechanisms to ensure that gender equality goals are met and sustained over time (Elson, 2006). These plans are crucial tools for governments not only to outline their commitment to achieving gender equality across various policy sectors but to outline concrete steps and actions, accompanied by targets and timelines, to achieve these objectives.

<sup>(21)</sup> A consultation on the new strategy was still in progress at the end of 2024. See, for example, the submission of the National Women's Council issued at the end of November ([https://www.nwci.ie/learn/publication/nwcs\\_submission\\_to\\_the\\_next\\_national\\_strategy\\_for\\_women\\_and\\_girls](https://www.nwci.ie/learn/publication/nwcs_submission_to_the_next_national_strategy_for_women_and_girls)).

### 3. Limited progress in national commitments to gender equality since 2021

**Figure 3.9. Existence of a national action plan for gender equality, 2024**



(\*): Portugal reports the existence of an overall national action plan on gender equality and a separate national action plan on gender equality combined with other equality and non-discrimination issues .

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

In some cases, single policy documents function as both the national strategy and the national action plan on gender equality (CZ, DK, EL, ES, CY, MT, RO). The combination works in different ways:

- action plans are presented as the final chapter or annex detailing how each objective in the strategy will be achieved, along with specific targets and a monitoring framework to assess implementation (CZ, RO);
- specific actions are linked to each objective throughout the policy document (DK, ES, CY, MT);
- specific actions are listed as the responsibility of specific ministries, and presented in a final chapter in an aggregated form (EL).

The 2022–2025 strategic plan for the effective equality of women and men in **Spain** has three levels of indicators (impact, result and performance) that comprise strategic objectives and measures for implementation. The adoption of this action plan (which is costed and includes targets for monitoring) resulted in a higher score for Spain under indicator H1 in 2024 than previously.

In **Croatia**, the national plan for gender equality for the period until 2027 serves as an overall gender equality strategy, and its implementation is outlined in the action plan for the implementation of the national plan for gender equality for the period until 2024. The action plan serves as a multiannual national action plan, with annual implementation plans detailing the steps to be taken until 2024. It will be followed by a second national action plan for the period until 2027.

Although there is no overarching national action plan for gender equality in **Sweden**, each of the 54 governmental agencies and 33 higher education institutions involved in the governmental developmental programmes for gender mainstreaming has its own action plan. These plans are tailored to address specific gender equality issues relevant to their respective sectors and political areas.

[Figure 3.10](#) provides an overview of the characteristics of the overall national action plans focusing on gender equality, and those that focus on gender equality together with other equality and non-discrimination issues <sup>(22)</sup>.

<sup>(22)</sup> Additional information is provided in [Annex 2](#).

**Figure 3.10. Overview of national action plans (NAPs) addressing gender equality**

Member State	Overall NAP on Gender Equality	NAP on Gender Equality, equality and non-discrimination issues	NAP has a dedicated budget	NAP includes quantifiable targets for gender equality outcomes	NAP includes monitoring mechanisms to assess progress
BE	No	No	No	No	No
BG	Yes	No	Partly	No	No
CZ	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
DK	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
DE	No	No	No	No	No
EE	Yes	No	Partly	No	Yes
IE	No	No	No	No	No
EL	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
ES	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
FR	Yes	No	Partly	Yes	Yes
HR	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
IT	No	No	No	No	No
CY	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
LV	No	No	No	No	No
LT	Yes	No	Partly	No	Yes
LU	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
HU	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
MT	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
NL	No	No	No	No	No
AT	No	No	No	No	No
PL	No	Yes	Partly	No	No
PT*	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes	Yes
RO	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
SI	No	No	No	No	No
SK	Yes	No	No	No	No
FI	No	No	No	No	No
SE	No	No	No	No	No

Legend	
Yes	Green bar
Partly	Yellow bar
No	Red bar

(\*) PT has two NAPs: one exclusively focused on gender equality, and another addressing equality and non-discrimination issues (including gender equality). The information in columns 3, 4, and 5 pertains exclusively to the NAP focused on gender equality.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**In nine Member States** (CZ, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, MT, PT, RO) out of the 15 that have an overall national action plan in place, **the national action plan includes specific, regularly monitored quantifiable targets, designed to demonstrate progress in achieving gender equality** (outcomes) rather than to monitor the implementation of specific actions.

In **Malta**, the GEMSAP has a few quantifiable targets accompanying specific sectoral objectives, including 'Ensure that at least 40 % of appointments made to officially designated bodies are women' and 'at least 73 % of women engaged in full-time employment (20–64 years) by 2027' (Human Rights Directorate, 2024, pp. 26, 13). The Department for Gender Equality in **Czechia** has set a number of quantifiable



targets in its national action plan, including increasing the ability of state authorities to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace. One target is for 15 ministries to conduct sexual harassment investigations, and another aims to reduce the difference between the average pay of women and men performing work of equal value for the same employer to 8 % (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021). In **Estonia**, the Equality Policy Department has a target to reduce the gender pay gap to 8.5 % in 2023 within its gender equality and equal treatment plan.

A total of **12 Member States** (CZ, DK, EE, ES, FR, HR, LT, LU, HU, MT, PT, RO) **with a national action plan have regular monitoring frameworks** in place to assess whether the targets set out in the plan are being achieved.

**France** employs multiple methods to monitor the 2023–2027 interministerial plan for gender equality. The minister delegate coordinates the implementation of the plan's measures and facilitates the meeting of the Interministerial Committee on Gender Equality twice annually. During the first interministerial meeting, 161 indicators were developed as accountability measures for the ministries to report on. However, those indicators have not been made publicly available. Alongside the meetings, all relevant ministries collaborate closely with the administrative department of the gender equality ministry on a day-to-day basis to monitor the actions.

In **Portugal**, the gender equality action plan is monitored twice a year, an improvement since 2021, when this was carried out annually. Resolution of the Council of Ministers No 92/2023 establishes the CIG as the coordinating body of the action plans under the national strategy for equality and non-discrimination. Through this responsibility, the CIG has established a digital information communication platform with a network of local focal points, where they are able to request information on the implementation process. Interim reports are prepared and delivered every six months to report on the progress of the action plan measures.

The current (2021–2030) government strategy for gender equality with its accompanying action plan in **Czechia** is monitored annually through the annual report on gender equality and the report on the fulfilment of the 2021–2030 strategy for gender equality. The regular monitoring of progress towards the objectives of the strategy strengthens the mandate of the governmental body promoting gender equality to follow up on the implementation and progress of the indicators (OECD, 2023a). The existence of this national action plan, with indicators and monitoring framework, is reflected in Czechia's increased score for H1 (10.1 in 2024, compared with 9.0 in 2021, and above the 2024 EU average of 9.4).

**In a few cases** (DK, EL, CY), **national action plans have been costed but lack specific targets and regular monitoring**. The 2024–2026 national strategy on gender equality in **Cyprus** has a dedicated budget; however, the amount has not been published. Similarly, in **Denmark**, the Finance Act of 2023 has dedicated funds related to gender equality, including the perspective and action plan. In **Greece**, the 2021–2025 national action plan for gender equality has been allocated EUR 20 million per year for implementation (totalling EUR 100 million). While the 28 indicators of the plan are monitored to a certain extent for progress, there are no quantifiable targets to measure implementation.

Representatives from CSOs from several countries were critical of the fact that gender equality strategies and action plans often lacked monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, financial resources, and systemic, meaningful consultation mechanisms. These deficiencies limited the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms in driving change towards gender equality.



‘Further challenge is that recent research showed that the political weight of the action plans is quite low. Overall impression was that [those are] nice papers, but do they really include ambitious aims that the government would be committed to implement?’

‘In addition, the political weight of the action plans, including the mainstreaming efforts, is quite low. This means that the efforts cannot be very ambitious, nor are their implementation monitored.’

‘The biggest challenge is changing mentalities and investing in gender equality. On paper all seems to be fine but in practice the reality is different. Accountability and investment are important. There needs to be a holistic approach.’

‘Major challenge for implementation is that the action plan for gender equality includes aims that are not assigned any additional resources. As a result, measures might be unambitious, or there might be issues in the implementation and their effectiveness might not be as good as could otherwise be expected.’

**The majority of currently active national gender equality strategies and action plans include references to intersectionality<sup>(23)</sup>.**

Gender and sex interact with various characteristics such as age, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, disability, rural or urban location, sexual orientation, gender identity and other characteristics. These interactions create unique forms of intersectional inequalities (EIGE, 2023a, 2024).

**Finland’s** government report on gender equality policy highlights intersectionality as a guiding principle, ensuring that measures in each of the seven strategic actions are dedicated to women who are affected by multiple forms of inequality (Government of Finland, 2022). Meanwhile, **Spain’s** 2022–2025 strategic plan for the effective equality between women and men dedicates one of its objectives (Axis 4) to ensuring that an intersectional approach is integrated into various lines of work (Instituto de las Mujeres, 2022).

CSOs interviewed across Member States report limited integration of an intersectional approach. Key stakeholders lack awareness and understanding of how sex and gender interact with other personal characteristics, and how these intersections lead to unique experiences of discrimination. The practical implementation of a relatively new concept into policies requires having access to knowledge, resources and support.

‘Yes, at least on the surface and in discourses we see more recognition of intersectionality. But at this stage it is a little unclear how profound the change is.’

‘What we see from our perspective is that intersectionality has started to gain traction in institutions, public administrations or organisations with a social mission in recent years. This is a positive development, but with the caveat that the implementation or definition of intersectionality is not always positive or does not always take materiality into account.’

‘The concept of intersectionality is fully understood and respected; the implementation in practice leaves room for improvement’.

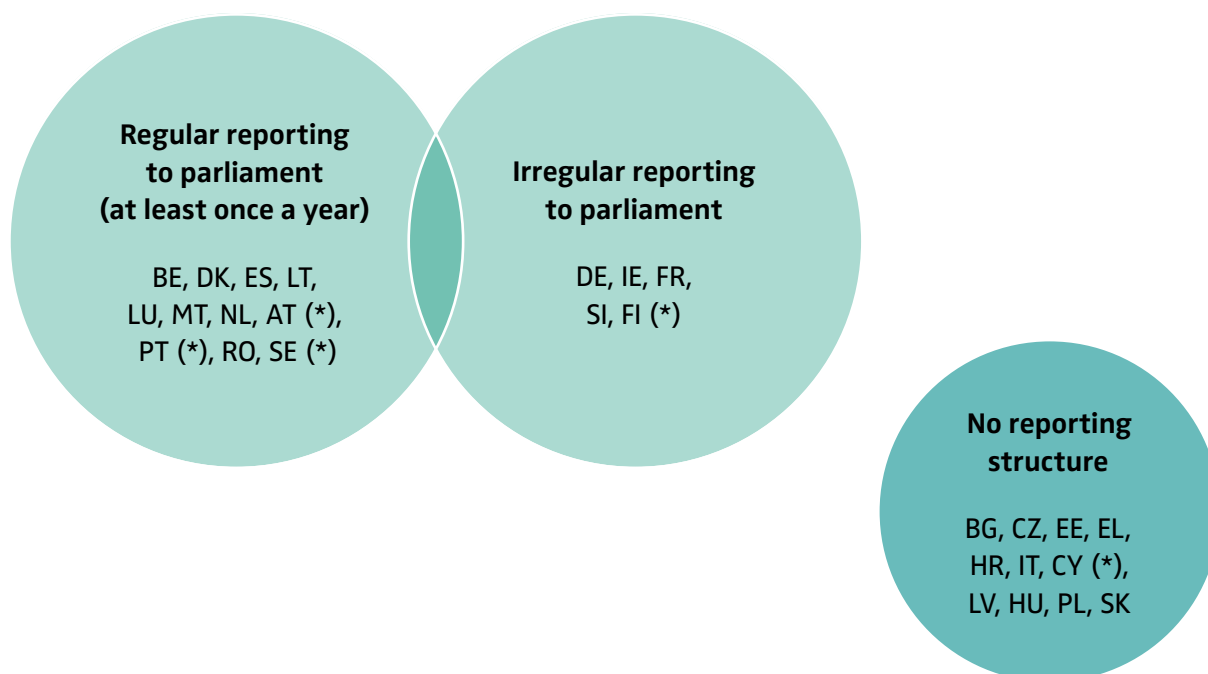
<sup>(23)</sup> BG, CZ, DK, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI, FI, SE.

### Incremental improvements in reporting obligations and parliamentary oversight of gender equality bodies

Regular reporting by the governmental body on its activities ensures transparency and accountability in the implementation of gender equality initiatives. It helps provide a comprehensive understanding of the progress being made towards gender equality (UN Women, 2023).

In 2024, 11 Member States (BE, DK, ES, LT, LU, MT, NL, AT, PT, RO, SE) reported having a system whereby the governmental body for the promotion of gender equality regularly reports to parliament. This is an increase of two Member States (ES, LT) from 2021, highlighting the need for more systematic reporting to achieve meaningful change (see [Figure 3.11](#)).

**Figure 3.11. Governmental body mechanisms for reporting to parliament for the accountability and progress of gender equality, 2024**



(\*) Greece, Cyprus, Austria, Portugal, Finland and Sweden each have two gender equality bodies. For Member States where the level of reporting mechanisms differs between governmental bodies (PT, FI), the governmental body with the higher level is recorded.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

Some countries have laws or regulations that mandate regular (at least once a year) reporting by the gender equality body to parliament. **Belgium** (Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, n.d.), **Spain** <sup>(24)</sup> and **Romania** (Parliament of Romania, 2002, Article 24 (9)), for instance, have specific laws requiring the gender equality bodies to report on gender mainstreaming and other gender equality initiatives.

<sup>(24)</sup> Article 18 of the Equality Law (<https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2007-6115>) establishes that a regular report by the government on actions on effective equality between women and men needs to be presented to the houses of parliament.

In some cases, gender equality reporting is integrated into broader strategic or budgetary documents. For example, **Sweden** includes reporting on gender equality results in its annual budget bill, in which the government reports on how its efforts have led to results related to the overall policy objectives of the Swedish gender equality policy (Government Offices of Sweden, n.d.a). The Minister for Employment, who is in charge of gender equality, visits parliament regularly, approximately between four and eight times a year, to discuss EU-related issues with the parliamentary standing committees. These discussions often include topics such as council conclusions on the BPfA. The gender equality body in **Luxembourg** issues a yearly report on its activities that is sent to parliament Ministry of Gender Equality and Diversity (2023). Other countries, like **Lithuania**, have decentralised reporting mechanisms whereby information is provided to higher governmental bodies, which then report to parliament (Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, n.d.).

Furthermore, **six Member States** (DE, IE, FR, PT, SI, FI) **reported having provisions for reporting, though they are generally ad hoc**, occasional or tied to specific legislative periods rather than being part of a regular, systematic reporting process. In 2021, three Member States reported such mechanisms (DE, SI, FI) <sup>(25)</sup>.

In **Ireland**, the gender equality body reports to the parliamentary committee (Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth) on an ad hoc basis, and only at the request of the committee <sup>(26)</sup>. In **Finland**, the Employment and Equality Committee of parliament calls the experts from the Gender Equality Unit for hearings in connection with the various law-drafting processes and the budget process at least once a year, but not on a regular basis. In **Slovenia**, Article 17 of the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act mandates that the government report on the implementation of the national strategy on gender equality to the National Assembly every two years.

In addition, in **12 Member States** (BE, DK, DE, EL, ES, FR, CY, AT, RO, SI, SK, SE), **a separate parliamentary committee responsible for gender equality issues monitors the work of the governmental gender equality body**. However, the regularity of this oversight mechanism is often unclear. In many Member States, information on how frequently the parliamentary committee monitors the gender equality body's work is not readily available.

In **Austria**, the Equal Treatment Committee deals with all legislative proposals, motions and reports relating to the equal treatment of women and men as well as the equal treatment of individuals who are discriminated against based on ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, or religion and belief (Austrian Parliament, 2022). In **Cyprus**, the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women examines law proposals and issues relating to equality and human rights. During its sessions, the committee frequently invites the Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Justice to report on progress on gender equality issues. This includes progress on the implementation of both national action plans and international conventions related to gender equality, and discussing legislative proposals (UNECE, 2021). In **Spain**, the standing legislative committee that deals with gender equality issues is known as the Equality Committee both in the Congress of Deputies <sup>(27)</sup> and in the Senate <sup>(28)</sup>. High representatives of the governmental body for gender equality (i.e. the Ministry of Equality) regularly present the main lines of action and projects before this committee (at least twice a year), where parliamentary initiatives related to gender equality are also discussed.

<sup>(25)</sup> No data about France and Ireland in 2021.

<sup>(26)</sup> The committee has not yet called on the minister or department to give an account of its progress on gender equality.

<sup>(27)</sup> [https://www.congreso.es/en/comisiones?p\\_p\\_id=organos&p\\_p\\_lifecycle=0&p\\_p\\_state=normal&p\\_p\\_mode=view&organos\\_selectedLegislatura=XV&organos\\_codComision=320](https://www.congreso.es/en/comisiones?p_p_id=organos&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&organos_selectedLegislatura=XV&organos_codComision=320).

<sup>(28)</sup> <https://www.senado.es/web/actividadparlamentaria/sesionescomision/detallecomisiones/composicion/index.html?id=S011015&legis=15&esMixta=N>.

This **overall lack of mandatory reporting on the progress made by governmental bodies** was identified by CSOs in Member States as one of the reasons why gender equality legislation often falls short of its objectives, and as explaining how even well-intentioned efforts often fail to bring about real change.

‘[CSOs] are often solicited again, attend meetings, more meetings, etc. Meanwhile, there hasn’t been the beginning of a bill that has led to anything. So, in fact, it’s very difficult to see the invested time materialising into positive decisions ... We can clearly see that there is no structural reflection, no long-term policy planning. Really, we can’t say that there are no ready-made recommendations, and there is really high-quality work done by field experts, which is the result of a consensus and independent experts. So, in fact, it’s a bit of a shame that so many reports are not used by the government.’

‘We must also measure evaluations, data, and improve, in any case, the measurement of impact and the collection of data in general’.

### 3.6. The majority of independent gender equality bodies combine this mandate with other equality-related functions

Subindicator **H1f, mandate (independent body)**, analyses the mandate and function of the independent gender equality body (or bodies) that has (or have) been designated by the Member State for the promotion, analysis, monitoring and support of gender equality.

**Independent gender equality bodies in the EU play a crucial role in promoting and enforcing gender equality, but their effectiveness varies due to differences in mandates and the scope of their functions.**

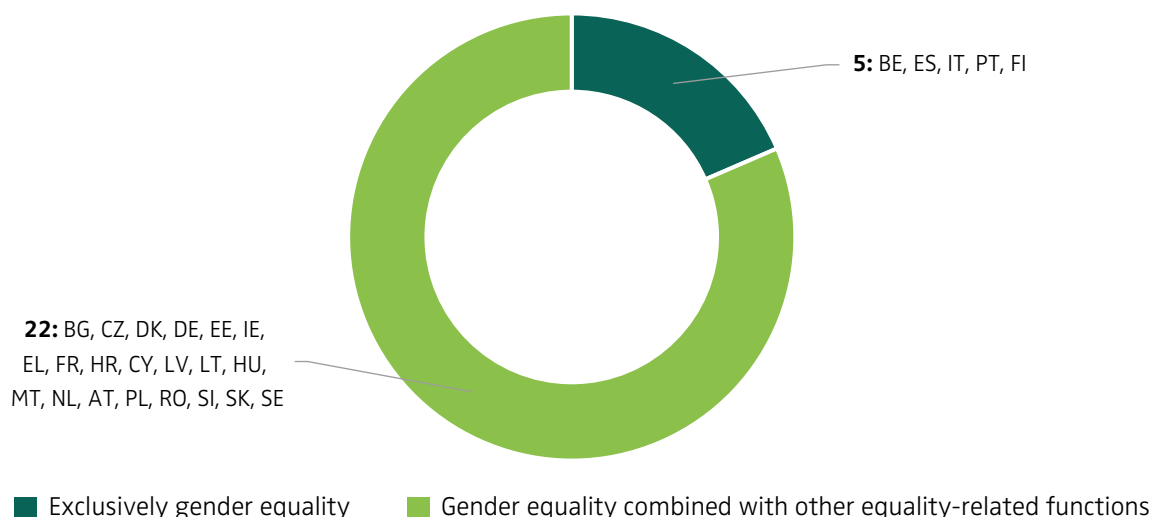
The importance of equality bodies in implementing equal treatment policies and as part of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality is highlighted by several international and European developments (OECD, 2015). Directives 2004/113/EC, 2006/54/EC and 2010/41/EU mandate the establishment of equality bodies to promote equal treatment and prevent discrimination. Their roles are expanded under various directives, such as Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on work–life balance and Directive (EU) 2023/970 on equal pay through pay transparency.

Due to differences in institutional structures, the enforcement of these directives varies between Member States (European Parliament, 2023). Equality bodies often face challenges related to independence, accessibility, resourcing and effectiveness (European Parliament, 2023). The recent adoption of the directives on standards for equality bodies (Directives 2024/1499 and 2024/1500) aims to address these challenges by setting out standards for equality bodies to ensure their effectiveness and independence. These directives call for equality bodies to have the necessary resources and mechanisms to cooperate with other equality bodies and relevant entities at various levels. Member States must also ensure that those bodies are consulted on legislation, policy, procedures and programmes.

Importantly, those directives also provide clarity on what functions those equality bodies should perform to improve gender equality (European Parliament, 2023). Those functions (presented in [Figure 3.12](#)) were thus reflected in subindicator H1f, mandate (independent body).

**All 27 Member States have independent bodies for gender equality, with 5 focusing exclusively on gender equality and 22 combining this focus with other equality-related functions** (see [Figure 3.12](#)). There is no change from 2021.

**Figure 3.12. Mandate of the independent body, 2024**



NB: Finland has two independent bodies dealing with gender equality issues.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

Similarly to the situation reported under H1d, mandate (governmental), the average score for subindicator H1f in 2024 was 1.9 (or 62 %), the same as in 2021. This score reflects differences between countries, primarily due to variations in the scope of the mandate of the independent gender equality body. Specifically, the average scores for subindicator H1f were 2.7 for those with an exclusive gender equality mandate and 1.7 for those without.

One of the underlying research questions of this study examines the current situation and trends regarding the merging of gender equality with other grounds of discrimination within independent bodies, and the implications such mergers can have on personnel and financial resources (see Chapter 4 below). This topic is subject to ongoing debate (Vidović, 2022).

Specialised institutions offer several advantages, including the ability to prioritise the protection of specific groups, thereby bringing higher visibility, dedicated expertise and focused resources to address the unique issues these groups face. Nonetheless, they also encounter challenges, particularly in maintaining cooperation with other institutions to avoid duplication of efforts and gaps in protection. In addition, when multiple specialised institutions coexist, they may inadvertently compete for resources and public attention, which can have a negative impact on their overall effectiveness (Vidović, 2022).

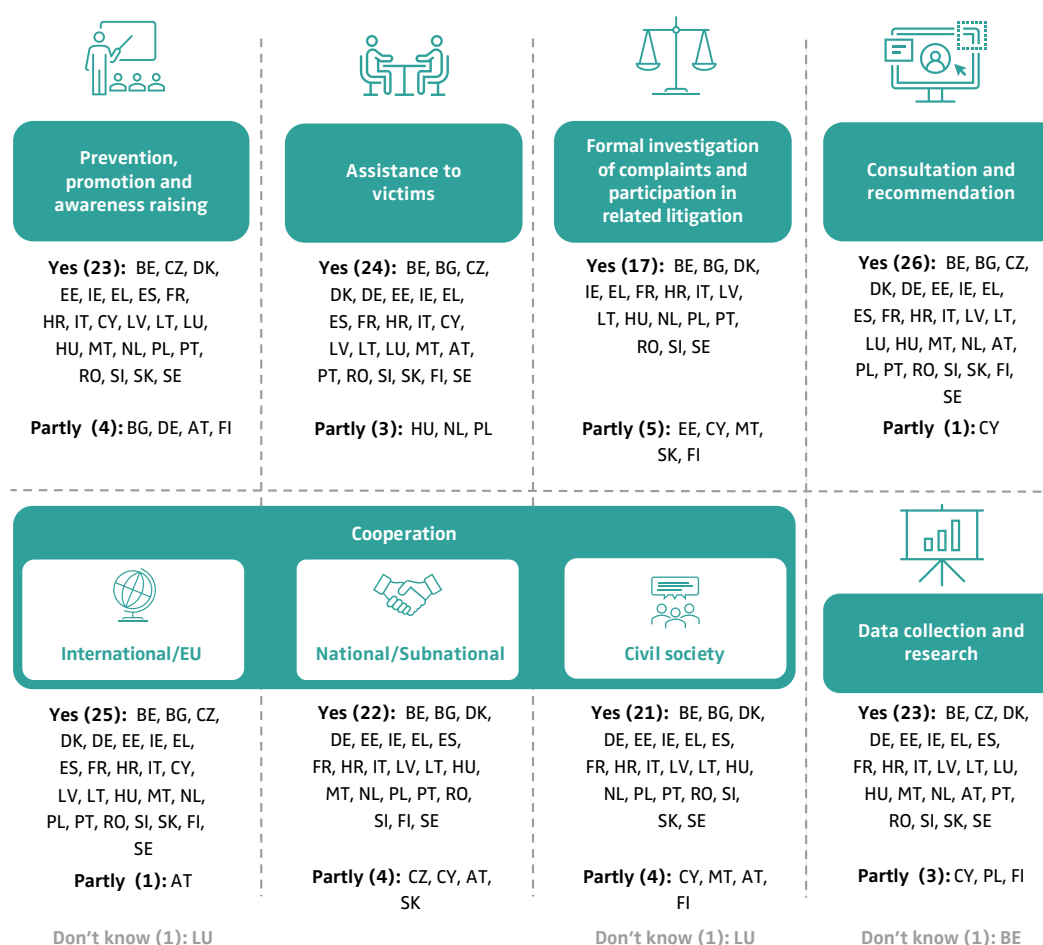
On the other hand, multi-mandated institutions often have greater authority and influence with the government and other bodies, as well as a stronger legal mandate. They can ensure that efforts and resources are more concentrated (Vidović, 2022). In **Austria**, the Ombud for Equal Treatment reported

### 3. Limited progress in national commitments to gender equality since 2021

that, as it deals with complaints and requests from individuals facing multiple forms of discrimination, having a shared mandate is beneficial for employing an intersectional approach. This broader mandate allows the ombud to address multiple dimensions of potential discrimination, making it better suited to cover the individual context of a person's lived experience. However, in some cases, these institutions may struggle to prioritise certain issues, potentially leaving some grounds of discrimination under-addressed, which can be detrimental to certain groups.

**Independent bodies focusing solely on gender equality are among those that perform most of the functions required by the BPfA, Directive (EU) 2024/1500 and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recommendations (see [Figure 3.13](#)).**

**Figure 3.13. Functions of the independent equality body, 2024**



NB: Finland has two independent gender equality bodies.  
Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

In 20 Member States<sup>(29)</sup>, independent bodies perform all those necessary functions as per the BPfA, Directive (EU) 2024/1500 and OECD recommendations, either fully or partly. Among the five bodies focused solely on gender equality (BE, ES, IT, PT, FI), all but those in **Belgium**<sup>(30)</sup> and **Spain** perform all functions, aligning with the directive recommendations (see [Figure 3.12](#)). In **Spain**, the only function not carried out by the independent body relates to the independent body's capacity to perform formal

<sup>(29)</sup> DK, EE, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, CY, LV, LT, HU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE.

<sup>(30)</sup> No data on 'data collection and research' in Belgium.

investigations of complaints and participate in related litigation. In **Finland**, there are two independent gender equality bodies: the Ombudsman for Equality and the Council for Gender Equality (Tane). While each body has its specific mandate and functions, together they complement each other and cover all the necessary functions for promoting gender equality.

All independent bodies carry out **prevention, promotion and awareness-raising activities**, fulfilling one of the key functions identified by the directives. In Bulgaria, Germany, Austria and Finland, this function is carried out only partly.

In addition, the directives require equality bodies to **assist victims of discrimination**. This function is widely fulfilled by independent gender equality bodies, with all countries reporting full or (in Hungary, the Netherlands and Poland) partial fulfilment. Equality bodies should have the power to **investigate complaints and participate in related litigation**. The data shows mixed fulfilment of this function among independent gender equality bodies, with independent bodies in 17 Member States meeting this requirement fully (BE, BG, DK, EL, FR, HR, IE, IT, LV, LT, HU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SE), in 5 only partially (EE, CY, MT, SK, FI<sup>(31)</sup>) and in the 5 others not fulfilling it at all (CZ, DE, ES, LU, AT).

The directives highlight the need for **cooperation at various levels, including at the international/EU and national/subnational levels and with civil society**. Independent gender equality bodies generally report high levels of cooperation, aligning with the standards set out in the directives. All Member States but Luxembourg<sup>(32)</sup> reported that their independent gender equality bodies cooperated at the international/EU level (in **Austria**, only partly). Similarly, cooperation at the national/subnational level is widely reported, with 22 countries reporting fulfilling these functions (BE, BG, DK, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IE, IT, LV, LT, HU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, FI<sup>(33)</sup>, SE) and 4 Member States reporting fulfilling them partly (CZ, CY, AT, SK). **Luxembourg** is the only country where the independent body does not report carrying out this function. Similarly, 22 Member States report that their independent gender equality bodies collaborate with civil society (BE, BG, HR, DK, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, LV, LT, HU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI<sup>(34)</sup>, SE), and 3 others that they collaborate partly (CY, MT, AT). Only **Czechia**'s independent body reports not performing this function<sup>(35)</sup>.

All but one Member State reported that their independent gender equality bodies provide **consultations and recommendations**. Only in **Cyprus** is this function reported as partly fulfilled.

The directives emphasise the importance of **data collection and research** to inform policy and practice. Independent gender equality bodies generally fulfil this function, with 25 Member States reporting that their independent gender equality bodies fulfil this function either fully (CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PT, RO, SI, SK, SE) or partly (CY, PL, FI<sup>(36)</sup> <sup>(37)</sup>). **Bulgaria** is the only country whose independent gender equality body does not carry out this function.

Both Directive 2024/1499 and Directive 2024/1500 on binding standards for equality bodies seek to guarantee the effectiveness and independence of these bodies. While Directive 2024/1500 focuses on integrating and promoting gender perspectives and addressing intersectional discrimination based on a combination of sex and one or more of the grounds protected under Directive 79/7/EEC, 2000/43/EC, 2000/78/EC or 2004/113/EC, Directive 2024/1499 covers a broader range of discrimination grounds and

<sup>(31)</sup> Function partially carried out by one of the two independent bodies in Finland.

<sup>(32)</sup> Response was 'don't know'.

<sup>(33)</sup> Both independent gender equality bodies.

<sup>(34)</sup> Function carried out fully by one of the two independent bodies in Finland and partly by the other one.

<sup>(35)</sup> 'Don't know' in Luxembourg.

<sup>(36)</sup> Function partially carried out by the two independent bodies in Finland.

<sup>(37)</sup> No response in Belgium.



emphasises comprehensive anti-discrimination policies. This distinction has important consequences for the kind of work carried out by equality bodies, particularly regarding the function of prevention, promotion and awareness raising.

Data collected across Member States revealed that, although independent bodies with a shared mandate reported performing most of the listed functions (see [Figure 3.12](#)), some examples of their work did not address gender-related issues. In **Ireland**, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) carries out all the listed functions. However, apart from the Gender Care Campaign (IHREC, 2023), none of the examples provided of each function addressed gender equality. The absence of gender mainstreaming and a gender perspective approach in this body's mandate indicates that its intersectional approach aligns more with Directive 2024/1499 than with Directive 2024/1500. This affects the enabling conditions, such as gender expertise and resources, necessary for gender equality and gender mainstreaming work to take place. As will be explored in the following chapter, on personnel resources of independent equality bodies, resourcing for equality bodies has increased since the last data collection. However, the lack of a gender mainstreaming perspective may limit the number of personnel dedicated specifically to gender equality.

Interviews with CSOs demonstrated that, while they sometimes collaborate with independent equality bodies to influence policy at the national and EU levels, these bodies are not often seen as 'game-changers' (European Parliament, 2023). Few CSOs reported active collaboration with them, highlighting their lack of visibility in gender-related matters and a resulting lack of expertise and minimal CSO involvement. Consequently, there is little active work on promoting gender equality. However, in some Member States, such as **Croatia**, the role of independent bodies like the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality was praised for promoting gender equality, despite the lack of formal cooperation structures.

'The Ombudsperson for Gender Equality is very active in the entire field of gender equality and frequently collaborates on many projects. She herself leads certain projects and often invites civil society organisations to partner with her. She regularly participates in various public events, round tables and conferences, contributing significantly and daily. Her reports are a good source of information for anyone wanting to know the state of gender equality in the Republic of Croatia and are frequently used.'



## 4. National gender equality bodies need more human resources to effectively carry out their functions

Indicator H2 measures the commitment of each country to ensure that the bodies and institutions tasked with promoting and securing gender equality are adequately resourced. This is considered to be a critical element of the objective to build strong national machineries, set out in strategic objective H1 of the BPfA. Indeed, insufficient human resources can significantly hamper the capacity of gender equality bodies to meet their mandates effectively (Mazur, 2024).

The indicator is split into two subindicators, which consider the human resources of both governmental (H2a) and independent gender equality bodies (H2b) <sup>(38)</sup>. In both cases, the indicator considers the total number of staff employed by the body or bodies in question, adjusted, where relevant (i.e. where bodies have a remit that goes beyond gender equality), for the proportion of time dedicated to gender equality issues <sup>(39)</sup>, and scored according to a set of five size bands <sup>(40)</sup>.

### 4.1. National gender equality bodies face a low level of resourcing despite increases in personnel

The average score for indicator H2 on **human resources** was 1.9, or 47 % of the possible maximum of 4 (see [Figure 4.1](#)), slightly up from 1.7 (43 %) in 2021 (see further below). The highest scores (3.5 out of 4) were achieved in **Greece, Spain, France and Sweden**, all of which scored the maximum of 2 for governmental bodies and 1.5 for independent bodies. Notably, from this group, **Greece and Sweden** are also two of the six Member States <sup>(41)</sup> to have multiple governmental bodies, and this may partly explain the above-average level of resourcing. Indeed, two of the remaining four countries with two governmental bodies (AT, PT) also score 1.5 out of 2 for subindicator H2a, well above the average of 1.0.

<sup>(38)</sup> In some Member States (BE, ES, AT), gender equality policy is implemented across various administrative levels, each with its own legal powers and competences, making the regional or decentralised dimension crucial for the promotion of gender equality. However, since the questionnaire does not account for these regional structures, the data collected under H2a only reflects the number of people working in central governmental bodies dedicated to gender equality in these Member States.

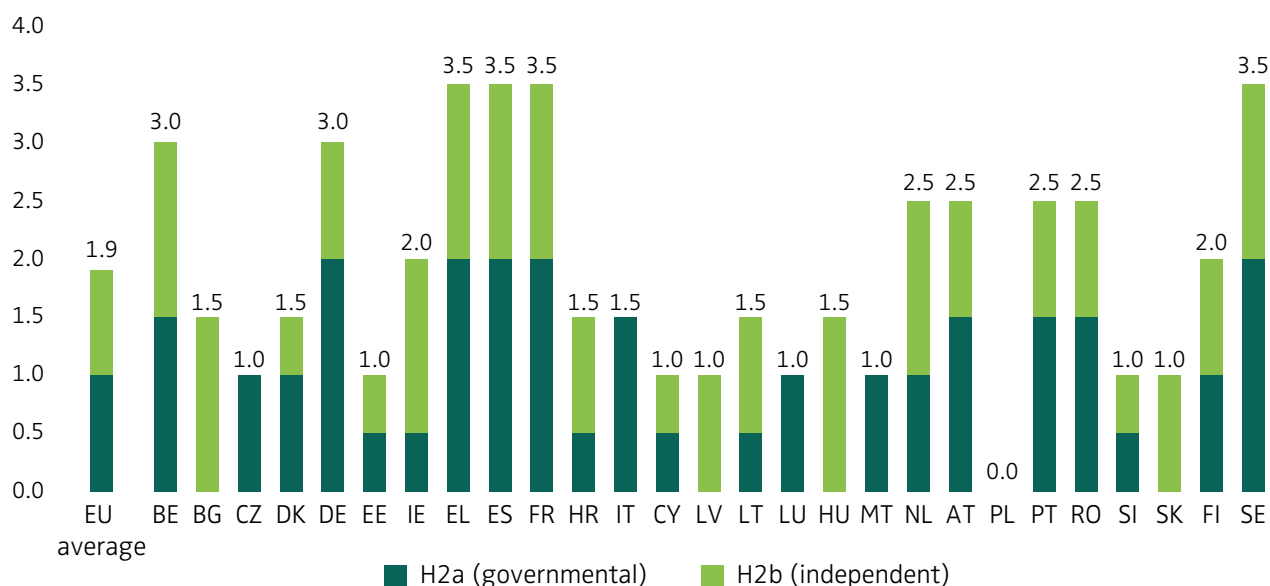
<sup>(39)</sup> Bodies with a wider remit often report that it is difficult to specify the proportion of staff time spent on gender equality issues, and they are thus reluctant to provide precise figures. Consequently, the questionnaire asks only for a rough estimate, offering four broad bands: 0–25 %, 25–50 %, 50–75 % and 75–100 % of the time. Furthermore, when adjusting the total staff of the body by this estimate, the top end of each band is used (e.g. if a body reports that staff spend 0–25 % of their time on gender equality, 25 % of the total number of staff is used to generate the indicator score). This may overestimate resources in some cases, but this approach encourages respondents to provide a rough estimate and thus avoids significant gaps in the data.

<sup>(40)</sup> Size bands for scoring of indicators H2a and H2b: < 5 personnel scores 0; 5 to < 10 scores 0.5; 10 to < 25 scores 1; 25 to < 100 scores 1.5; 100 or more scores 2. Since the upper limit of each range is used to adjust the score based on the estimated percentage of time dedicated exclusively to gender equality (0–25 %, 25–50 %, 50–75 % and 75–100 %), this may sometimes inflate the number of personnel reported as working on gender equality.

<sup>(41)</sup> EL, CY, AT, PT, FI, SE.

#### 4. National gender equality bodies need more human resources to effectively carry out their functions

**Figure 4.1. Scores for indicator H2, human resources of the national gender equality bodies, 2024**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

[Table 4.1](#) provides further detail on the scoring of indicator H2 by subindicator, grouping countries according to the size band for each type of body and showing (a) where total staff numbers have been adjusted to reflect time spent on gender equality issues and (b) where the data covers multiple bodies.

**Table 4.1. Personnel resources working on gender equality, by type of body**

Personnel	< 5	5 to < 10	10 to < 25	25 to < 100	100 or more
Score	0	0.5	1	1.5	2
<b>Governmental bodies (H2a)</b>	BG (*), LV (*), HU (*), PL (*), SK (*)	EE (*), IE (*), HR, CY (**), LT (*), SI	CZ, DK (**), LU, MT (*), NL (*), FI	BE, IT (*), AT (**), PT (**), RO (*)	DE (**), EL (**), ES (**), FR (**), SE (**)
<b>Independent bodies (H2b)</b>	CZ, IT, LU, MT, PL	DK, EE, CY, SI	DE, HR, LV, LT, AT, PT, RO, SK, FI (*)	BE, BG, IE, EL, ES, FR, HU, NL, SE	

(\*) Data covers at least one body with a mandate for gender equality combined with other equality-related functions, for which the total number of staff was adjusted for the estimated proportion of time dedicated to gender issues.

(\*\*) Data covers at least one body with a wider equality remit where staff work 75–100 % of the time on gender issues; thus, the total number of staff was not adjusted (the upper limit of the range was always used as the adjustment factor).

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

### Countries rated highly for gender equality tend to have better-resourced bodies to promote gender equality.

Although there are some exceptions, the data clearly shows that countries highly rated for overall gender equality by EIGE's Gender Equality Index (EIGE, 2024) generally commit more adequate levels of resources to bodies to promote and support gender equality (see [Figure 4.2](#))<sup>(42)</sup>.

Of the 11 Member States with Index scores above the EU-level score of 71 (out of 100) in 2024 (BE, DK, DE, IE, ES, FR, LU, NL, AT, FI, SE), 9 also scored more than the EU average (1.9) for indicator H2 (BE, DE, IE, ES, FR, NL, AT, FI, SE). The two exceptions with high Index ratings but lower scores for H2 are **Denmark** (1.5) and **Luxembourg** (1.0). Similarly, 13 of the 16 countries with overall gender equality ratings below the EU level (BG, CZ, EE, EL, HR, IT, CY, LV, LT, HU, MT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK) also score less than the EU average for indicator H2. Here, the exceptions that score well for H2 despite a lower Index score are **Greece** (3.5), **Portugal** and **Romania** (both 2.5). There are two factors that contribute to these exceptions. Firstly, **Greece** and **Portugal** are countries with two governmental bodies, whose combined resources boost the scoring for subindicator H2a. Secondly, the governmental bodies in **Portugal** and **Romania** are both agencies. As independent legal structures with a binding mandate, such bodies are likely to have higher resource needs than a unit within a ministry (the most common form of governmental body), where at least some supporting resources may be shared.

While there is no evidence of which is the driving factor (i.e. if more resources lead to greater equality or if more equitable societies are simply liable to commit more resources to supporting bodies), the correlation is nonetheless clear and conveys a message to countries with lower gender equality ratings. A number of countries have gender equality strategies or action plans with an explicit objective to improve their rating under EIGE's Gender Equality Index<sup>(43)</sup>. A good start would be to commit more resources to the supporting bodies that can help drive progress.

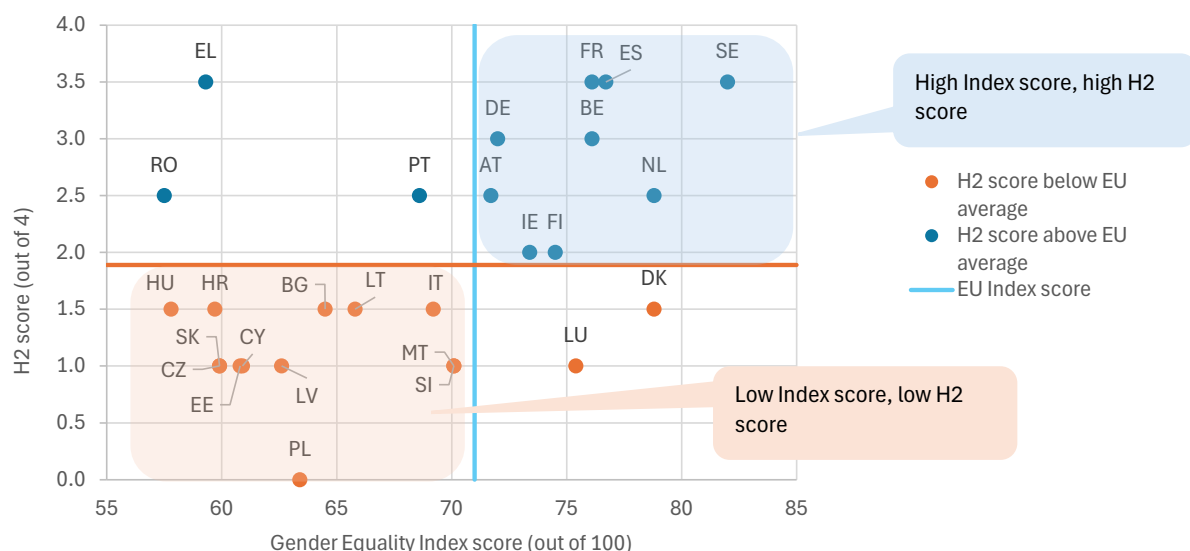
This is a welcome finding, since access to adequate resources is surely key to the type of effective action that is needed to drive progress towards greater gender equality.

<sup>(42)</sup> The Pearson coefficient is 0.46, which indicates a medium correlation (<https://datatab.net/tutorial/pearson-correlation>). [Annex 3](#) provides an in-depth look at statistical correlations between EIGE's ratings for institutional mechanisms and its Gender Equality Index.

<sup>(43)</sup> For example, Italy's national strategy for gender equality adopted in 2021 has a specific objective to 'Gain 5 points in EIGE Gender Equality Index ranking over the next 5 years, to outperform the European average by 2026 and to be among the top 10 European countries in 10 years' (Department for Equal Opportunities, 2021, p. 11). Similarly, in Croatia, the 2022–2027 national plan for gender equality notes that 'In the 2022 Gender Equality Index by EIGE, the Republic of Croatia ranked 19th in the EU with a score of 60.7, which is 7.9 points below the EU-27 average of 68.6. The goal of this national plan is to create conditions that will enable the Republic of Croatia to reach at least the EU-27 average in the overall assessment of gender equality' (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2023, p. 12).

4. National gender equality bodies need more human resources to effectively carry out their functions

**Figure 4.2. Scores for indicator H2 (human resources) in 2024 against scores for EIGE's 2024 Gender Equality Index**



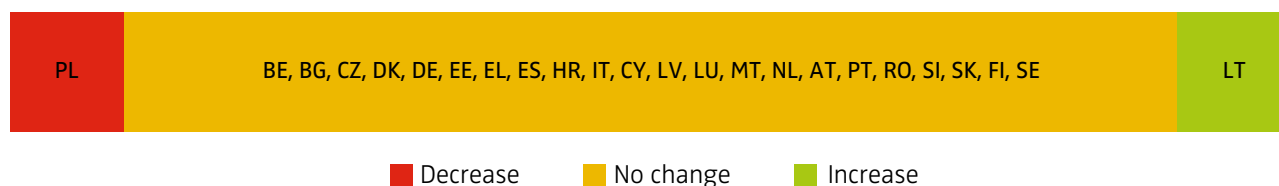
\*

Sources: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms and Gender Equality Index.

## 4.2. Governmental gender equality bodies need sufficient personnel resources to perform all their functions effectively

Subindicator H2a monitors the personnel resources of governmental bodies. Results showed an average score of 1.0 (out of a possible 2.0), revealing no overall change in governmental resources for Member States since 2021 (average score also 1.0). Indeed, there were only two cases where scores for H2a changed substantially (by more than 10 %; see [Figure 4.3](#)). In **Lithuania**, following a restructuring, the responsible unit in the Ministry of Social Security and Labour now has a greater focus on gender equality within its wider equalities remit. In **Poland**, at the time of data collection, the new Department for Equal Treatment in the Prime Minister's Office (Chancellery) was still being established, so the dip in staff numbers may be temporary.

**Figure 4.3. Changes in scores for subindicator H2a (personnel resources of governmental bodies), 2021–2024**



NB: No data about Ireland and France in 2021; incomplete data about Hungary in 2021.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**Shared mandates can affect the level of resources dedicated to gender equality, potentially having an impact on the effectiveness of governmental gender equality bodies.**

A total of 10 Member States (BE, DE, EL, ES, FR, IT, AT, PT, RO, SE) have at least 25 staff members working on gender equality, making them relatively well resourced to perform the functions and duties necessary to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

Since 2021, the number of personnel in governmental gender equality bodies has increased in 11 Member States (BE, CZ, DE, ES, IT, CY, LV, LT, AT, FI, SE). The most significant increases were in **Belgium** (26 additional personnel, an increase attributed to a budget increase to manage rising tasks such as the new law on femicide and the new framework for financing civil society), **Spain** (44 additional personnel) and **Sweden**<sup>(44)</sup> (31 additional personnel). Despite increases in personnel for countries like **Cyprus**, **Latvia** and **Lithuania** – all of which scored 0 or 0.5 points in 2021 – these increases were not significant enough to improve their scores for this subindicator.

Of the 11 Member States where the number of personnel increased, most (BE, CZ, DE, CY, AT, FI, SE) have bodies that focus exclusively on gender equality.

By contrast, in the governmental bodies of four Member States (EE, PL, RO, SK), all of which have a mandate that combines gender equality with other equality-related functions, the number of personnel dedicated to gender equality decreased. Though this had no impact on the scoring for **Estonia**, **Slovakia** and **Romania** (which in 2021 scored 0.5, 0.0 and 1.5, respectively), for **Poland** this led to a decrease in the score from 0.5 to 0.

Notably, the data shows that the resources of departments, especially those with a shared mandate, vary significantly – from fewer than five personnel in **Bulgaria**, **Latvia**, **Hungary**, **Poland** and **Slovakia** to more than 100 personnel in **Germany**, **Spain** and **France**. This variability highlights the risk that having a shared mandate poses to the effectiveness of governmental gender equality bodies (see below).

**Insufficient personnel limit Member States' ability to effectively carry out gender equality functions.**

Some Member States (LT, LU, HU) with few personnel had broadened their mandates since 2021. These same Member States also scored low for H1d, mandate (governmental body), suggesting that low levels of resources combined with a shared mandate can weaken the functions carried out to foster gender equality.

For example, in **Lithuania**, following the reorganisation of the former Equal Opportunities Department, a new department was created within the ministry in 2024: the Group for Equal Opportunities and Equality between Women and Men, which includes a gender equality adviser and eight other employees. However, this restructuring led to the broadening of the group's mandate and functions to also include the issue of domestic violence. As indicated in the scoring for H2a (0.5) and H1d (1.3)<sup>(45)</sup>, the slight increase in personnel was insufficient to fully support gender equality initiatives.

In 2023, the Ministry of Equality between Women and Men in **Luxembourg** absorbed the portfolio relating to the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, changing its name to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Diversity (MEGA). Despite this restructuring, findings report that the same number of personnel dedicate their time to gender equality and that MEGA is still the smallest ministry in **Luxembourg**. The country scored 1.0 for H2a and 1.2 for H1d. This demonstrates some limitation on its capacity to fully implement the functions of a governmental gender equality body.

<sup>(44)</sup> This increase was specific to the Swedish Gender Equality Agency (governmental body 2).

<sup>(45)</sup> The EU average for H1d is 2.0, and the maximum score is 3.0.

#### 4. National gender equality bodies need more human resources to effectively carry out their functions

In **Hungary**, structural changes have positioned women's rights within the family portfolio policy under the State Secretary Responsible for Families and the Deputy State Secretary for Family Issues. However, this body is not well resourced, with fewer than five personnel working within the body (scoring 0 for H2a). Although it was reported that the majority of functions are carried out, a lack of sufficient personnel will affect how effectively these functions are carried out.

Interviews with CSOs reflect these challenges overall across the EU. Indeed, CSOs have highlighted a general trend of insufficient resources for the implementation and monitoring of gender equality policies, affecting the effectiveness of such policies. This issue is particularly evident in smaller ministries, where financial and personnel resources are often limited. In their interviews, CSOs have stressed the importance of allocating dedicated personnel to support policy development, especially in conducting gender-sensitive analyses of policies and legislation.

'There is also some pressure to combine the Ombudsman for Gender Equality and the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman. It is difficult to say is it political pressure or pressure from the state administration. It is also difficult to say would that be beneficial or a negative development and what is the rationale behind it, is there pressure to diminish the resources provided for the Ombudsman for Gender Equality? We don't know.'

In order to carry out the functions of the gender equality body effectively, sufficient personnel and resourcing are essential. Therefore, the scores for H1d and H2a would be expected to correlate. However, there are instances where there are high scores for H2a and low scores for H1d (i.e. DE, ES, FR, IT, RO). For example, **Romania** scored the lowest out of all Member States for H1d (1.0), as the NAEO is divided into two departments, gender equality and domestic violence, with two thirds of the staff working exclusively on domestic violence while the remainder of work is carried out exclusively on gender equality. However, in cases such as **Spain**, the functions are divided between the governmental body and the independent body. For example, the Institute of Women (independent body) carries out the function of monitoring progress in achieving gender equality, a function typically assigned to the governmental body<sup>(46)</sup>.

Nevertheless, in some Member States, the opposite is true: three Member States (HR, CY, SI) that scored low for H2a scored high for H1d. Moreover, in the case of **Estonia**, fewer than five personnel are reported to carry out all the functions listed under H1d. Though this pattern could be explained by the size of the countries in question, research shows that a minimum number of people is required to deliver effective services, regardless of the size of the country (Mazur, 2024).

**Although the number of personnel in agencies varies, they tend to be well resourced relative to a section/department of a ministry.**

Compared with Member States that have sections/departments of ministries dedicated to gender equality, those with agencies (BE, HR, PT, RO, SE) generally have more than 25 personnel working exclusively on gender equality (except for **Croatia**). Since agencies outside the ministerial structure may be less visible than a section or department within a ministry, dedicating sufficient resources is essential. This commitment to gender equality and the ability to influence gender equality policy demonstrate the agency's dedication to the cause.

<sup>(46)</sup> See Article 3, points (d) and (e) of Law 16/1983 on the Institute of Women.

**Belgium** and **Sweden** demonstrate a strong commitment to gender equality, with exclusive mandates and substantial personnel dedicated to gender equality, scoring 1.5 and 2 points, respectively. **Portugal**, despite having a shared mandate, also shows a high level of commitment through having sufficient personnel, scoring 1.5 points. **Romania**, although primarily focused on domestic violence, dedicates a significant number of personnel exclusively to gender equality, scoring 1.5 points. Meanwhile, **Croatia**, despite having a single mandate, has the fewest resources dedicated to gender equality, scoring 0.5 points.

Therefore, although agencies may be less visible due to their position outside the ministerial structure, dedicating sufficient resources demonstrates a stronger commitment and greater influence on gender equality policy than departments with very few personnel.

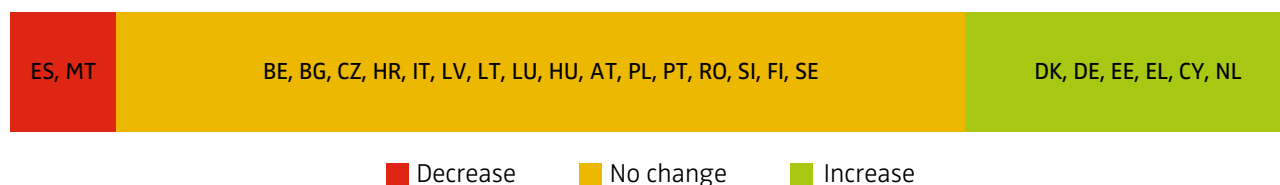
### 4.3. Despite some increases in personnel resources, the independent bodies dedicated to promoting gender equality lack sufficient staff to fulfil their functions effectively

Subindicator H2b captures the personnel resources of independent bodies, following the same measurement framework as H2a, resources (governmental body).

As detailed under H1f, mandate (independent body), the recent Directives 2024/1499 and 2024/1500 aim to address the challenges faced by independent bodies by advocating their need to be fully resourced. Well-resourced equality bodies are more likely to effectively provide high-quality legal support to victims of discrimination, and to initiate key research and advocacy efforts that push for legislative reform (European Commission, 2018). By contrast, under-resourced bodies risk becoming ineffective, being unable to respond to discrimination complaints and limiting their advocacy on gender-related issues (Human European Consultancy and Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, 2010; Equinet, 2012, 2023).

The average score in 2024 for subindicator H2b is 0.9 out of a maximum of 2, revealing a slight increase in personnel resources for independent bodies compared with the average score in 2021 of 0.8 (see [Figure 4.4](#))<sup>(47)</sup>. According to the reported data, resources have decreased in **Spain** and **Malta** but increased in **Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Cyprus** and the **Netherlands**.

**Figure 4.4. Changes in scores for subindicator H2b (personnel resources of independent bodies), 2021–2024**



NB: No data about Ireland, France and Slovakia in 2021.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

<sup>(47)</sup> At this level of accuracy (one decimal point), the comparison is not affected by the inclusion of Ireland, France and Slovakia, for which there was no data on subindicator H2b in 2021; the 2024 average excluding these countries is still 0.9.



**While 17 Member States have independent equality bodies with fewer than 25 personnel dedicated to gender equality, the number of personnel has increased in 16 Member States since 2021, demonstrating some progress.**

Five Member States (BE, ES, IT, PT, FI) have at least one independent body that works exclusively on gender equality, while the remaining Member States have independent bodies with a mandate of gender equality combined with other equality-related functions. Unlike governmental gender equality bodies, most of these Member States (IT, PT, FI) have fewer than 25 personnel dedicated to gender equality.

In 2024, no independent bodies with a remit of gender equality had more than 100 staff, and therefore no Member State scored the maximum of 2 points for this subindicator. In 2021, **Spain** was the only Member State to score the maximum of 2 points, with 136 staff members working for the Institute of Women. However, by 2024, the staff count had decreased to 89, resulting in a score of 1.5 points.

However, though across the Member States the number of personnel dedicated to gender equality is low, in 14 Member States (BE, CZ, DK, DE, EE, IT, LV, LT, AT, PT, RO, SI, FI, SE) the number of personnel working on gender equality has reportedly increased since 2021, demonstrating progress in the promotion of gender equality. This increase in personnel dedicated to gender equality may be attributed to recent gender equality directives that assign, or leave Member States to decide on assigning, additional functions in gender equality-related domains to equality bodies (e.g. Directive (EU) 2022/2381 on gender balance on company boards, Directive (EU) 2023/970 on pay transparency and Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on violence against women).

**The effectiveness of independent gender equality bodies is limited by insufficient staffing, which affects their ability to fully carry out their mandated functions.**

In parallel with the correlation between the scores for H2a, resources (governmental), and H1d, mandate (governmental), the same analysis can be carried out in relation to H2b, resources (independent), and H1f, mandate (independent). The data shows that the same Member States that score 0 for H2b (CZ, IT, LU, MT, PL), and therefore have fewer than five members of staff working on gender equality, show varied scores for H1f. This means that the independent bodies in these Member States differ in the number of functions they perform and have either single or shared mandates. For example, **Luxembourg** and **Poland** score 1.3 out of a maximum of 3 for H1f, while **Italy** scores the maximum of 3 points. However, it is unlikely that fewer than five personnel are able to carry out effectively all or even most of the functions listed for the promotion of gender equality.

From 2021 to 2023, the Public Defender of Rights in **Czechia** had two additional staff members, who focused on gender equality and were funded through Norwegian funds. Since the project ended, the number of personnel working on gender equality has decreased. Though the body reports carrying out five out of six measured functions (scoring 1.4), having fewer personnel will limit the extent to which these are carried out with a focus on gender equality.

In **Malta**, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) reports an increase of two personnel since 2021. However, the overall score for H2b had decreased to 0 in 2024 from 0.5 in 2021, as in 2024 only 0–25 % of personnel time is spent on projects focused on gender equality, compared with 50–75 % of personnel time in 2021 (NCPE, 2023a). It was reported that the proportion of the NCPE's work related to gender equality varies from year to year depending on the grounds of the complaints received and investigated. It also varies based on the EU projects that are being developed during the year, the requests for input received from international and national entities, and the current promotional work of the equality body. Therefore, although the NCPE is mandated to carry out the majority of the functions



listed under H1f, the extent to which these functions are carried out consistently on gender equality matters is potentially limited.

**Despite more personnel working for independent bodies overall, wider mandates often entail a small number of personnel working on gender equality, limiting the work carried out on gender equality issues.**

There were other cases where, despite reportedly sufficient personnel dedicated to gender equality, in practice, little work on gender equality is carried out. This was often the case with independent bodies that have a mandate for gender equality combined with other equality-related functions. For example, bodies in 13 Member States (CZ, DK, DE, FR, LV, LU, HU, MT, NL, PL, RO, SI, SE) whose mandate includes gender equality together with other equality-related issues reported that 0–25 % of personnel time is spent on projects focused on gender equality.

In **Hungary**, the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights reports 192 personnel within the independent body. However, with a wider mandate promoting other equality-related functions, only an estimated 0–25 % of time is dedicated exclusively to gender equality, meaning that, while the independent body completes five out of six functions (scoring 1.7 for H1f), the personnel resources dedicated to gender equality are a maximum of 48 people (a score of 1.5 for H2b). CSOs have expressed their concerns that the independent body's non-binding recommendations do not carry sufficient weight and do not adequately address women's rights violations (NANE Women's Rights Association et al., 2023).

Another example concerns the **Netherlands** Institute for Human Rights, where only a small percentage (6.5 %) of personnel work on research, policy and awareness raising on gender equality combined with other non-discrimination areas (Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, 2023). Though approximately 20 % of staff work on equal treatment rulings that include cases related to possible discrimination based on sex, this wider remit provides context for the score of 1.7 for H1f, indicating that these functions may not entail work carried out on gender equality specifically.

In **Ireland**, the IHREC aims to divide its focus and resources evenly across both of its mandates, human rights and equality, meaning that the number of personnel working on equality-related issues is between 25 and 100, scoring 1.5 for H2b (Government of Ireland, n.d.). The IHREC works across 10 grounds of discrimination, including sex, and adopts an intersectional lens in its work. The body also carries out all six functions outlined under H1f, mandate (independent), achieving a score of 2.0. However, in practice, very little work is carried out specifically on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, with evidence demonstrating that most of its work centres on gender-based violence<sup>(48)</sup>.

**The lack of standardised and comprehensive financial reporting across Member States hinders the ability to accurately assess and compare their efforts to promote gender equality.**

Indicator H2 should also cover the financial resources of governmental gender equality bodies and independent gender equality bodies, respectively, as a further indication of the commitment to the

<sup>(48)</sup> In 2023, the IHREC produced a range of publications including a submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; a submission to parliament on legislation concerning sexual offences and human trafficking; a report on trafficking in Ireland, in its role as the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings; a policy statement on care; a submission on the review of equality legislation; a submission to parliament on legislation concerning an agency focused on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence; a report on sustainable development goals; a policy statement on family reunification; and a policy statement on the incorporation of economic, social and cultural rights into the Irish constitution.

#### 4. National gender equality bodies need more human resources to effectively carry out their functions

promotion of gender equality and evidence that the relevant bodies are suitably equipped to fulfil their mandates.

In the 2024 data collection, Member States were asked to provide data on the actual expenditure of the governmental and independent bodies for 2023 in order to gain a more accurate picture of the resources that were actually spent on gender equality, rather than what was merely planned. These questions were not scored and therefore do not affect the overall scores for indicator H2.

The data provided by Member States highlights the non-comparability of financial information across Member States due to differences in reporting practices and budget structures, as well as issues with accessing the relevant data. A number of Member States did not have the data on expenditure costs for 2023 at the time of data collection, as this data is contained in annual reports that are produced at the end of the following year. As a result, many Member States reported budget data from either 2023 or 2024, or annual expenditure from 2022. Another reason for incomplete data was that countries were apparently unable to distinguish the costs of the gender equality section/department/unit from the wider costs of the parent ministry.

This unclarity obscures the level of investment in gender equality initiatives, making it difficult to hold governments accountable and to measure progress effectively. Furthermore, the inability to compare data between Member States due to differences in reporting practices and budget structures undermines efforts to identify best practices and areas needing improvement.

CSOs across various Member States have identified the under-resourcing of governmental gender equality bodies as a significant barrier to their effectiveness in promoting and implementing transformative policies. They noted that resource constraints prevent these bodies from effectively mainstreaming gender equality concerns into public policies, resulting in the non-implementation of essential methods and tools.

‘The current political elite does not see gender equality as an important issue that needs systematic investment of money and effort. They don’t understand that it will cost us some money now, but it will result in a robust and efficient economy soon.’

## 5. Gender mainstreaming remains inadequately integrated into legislation, policy and practices across Member States

Indicator H3 on gender mainstreaming relates to strategic objective H2 of the BPfA, which aims to 'integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects' (United Nations, p. 129, 1995).

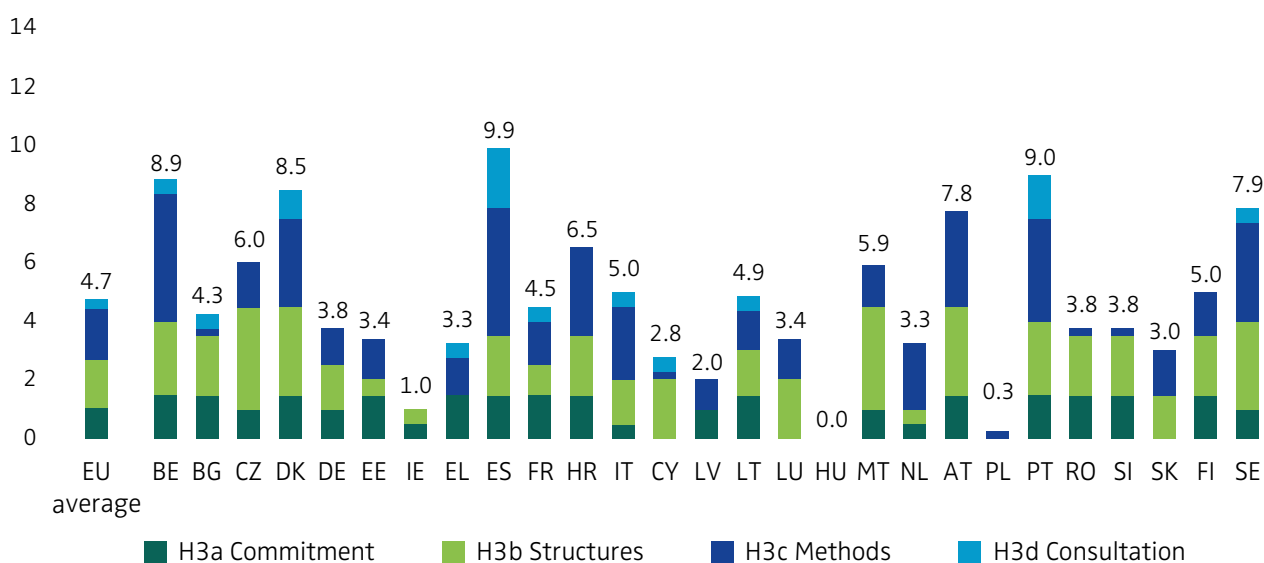
It is comprised of four subindicators looking at the government's commitment to gender mainstreaming (H3a), the governmental gender mainstreaming structures and consultation processes (H3b) and the commitment to, and use of methods and tools for, gender mainstreaming (H3c). The fourth subindicator (H3d) takes into account the directives on equal treatment between women and men, including the directives on binding standards for equality bodies, and the 2015 OECD recommendation to strengthen the role of independent bodies in the promotion and support of equal treatment and gender-sensitive policymaking (OECD, 2015), and considers the extent to which governments consult these bodies when developing new laws/policies.

### 5.1. There is a widespread need to strengthen commitments and use of methods and tools for gender mainstreaming

The average score for indicator H3 on gender mainstreaming across Member States in 2024 was 4.7, or 34 % of the maximum possible (14), the lowest among the four indicators covered. Only **Belgium**, **Denmark**, **Spain** and **Portugal** achieved at least 60 % of the maximum possible (8.5 out of 14, [Figure 5.1](#)), while **Hungary** scored 0 and **Poland** 0.3 out of 14, indicating that these countries have room for improvement in integrating gender concerns into the policy development process.

## 5. Gender mainstreaming remains inadequately integrated into legislation, policy and practices

**Figure 5.1. Scores for indicator H3, gender mainstreaming, 2024**

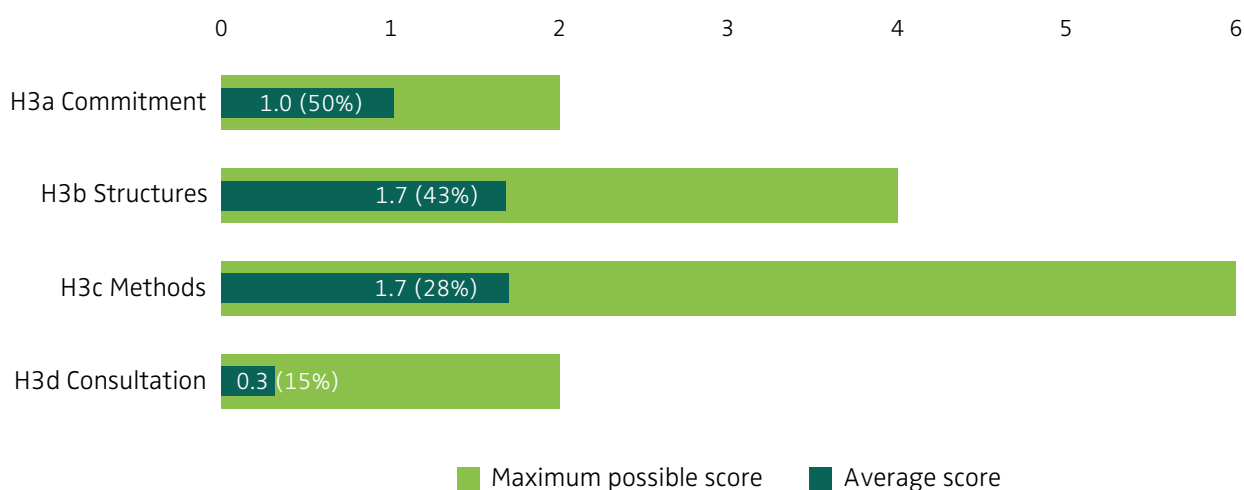


NB: Overall scores aligned with the officially adopted indicator covering governmental commitment only (H3a to H3c) are available in [Annex 1](#) and in EIGE's Gender Statistics Database.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

All of the countries that scored at least 50 % of the maximum possible (BE, DK, ES, AT, PT, SE) did so because of a significant contribution (at least 3 out of 6) from the most important subindicator, H3c, dealing with the use of gender mainstreaming tools and methods. On average, however, countries scored 1.7 out of 6 for this subindicator, just 28 % of the maximum possible (see [Figure 5.2](#)), indicating that the use of key tools such as gender impact assessments and gender budgeting is not widespread. Scores for subindicator H3d (consultation) were lower (an average of 0.3 out of 2, 16 % of the maximum possible), with as many as 16 countries scoring 0 (CZ, DE, EE, IE, HR, LV, LU, HU, MT, NL, AT, PL, RO, SI, SK, FI) because independent gender equality bodies are not routinely consulted on new laws and policies.

**Figure 5.2. Average scores for each subindicator of indicator H3, gender mainstreaming, 2024**



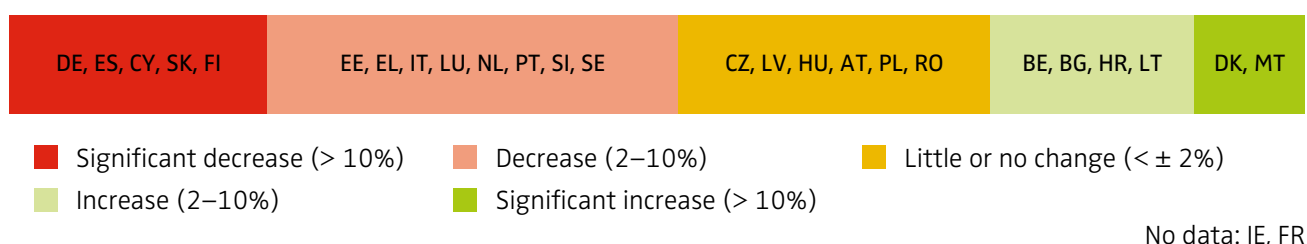
Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

### 5.1.1. Significant declines since 2021

The average score for indicator H3, gender mainstreaming, has fallen from 5.2 out of 14 in 2021 to 4.7 in 2024, though part of this decline derives from the inclusion of Ireland and France, neither of which provided data in 2021. Excluding these two countries, the average score in 2024 was 4.9.

Five of the 25 countries for which a comparison between 2021 and 2024 is possible showed a significant decline (> 10 %) in their scores (see [Figure 5.3](#)). These decreases result primarily (but not only) from lower scores for subindicators H3b, dealing with gender mainstreaming structures (ES, SK<sup>(49)</sup>, and H3c, on the use of gender mainstreaming tools and methods (DE, CY, FI)<sup>(50)</sup>.

**Figure 5.3. Changes in scores for indicator H3, gender mainstreaming, 2021–2024**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

### Over half of Member States report strong levels of governmental commitment to gender mainstreaming.

The necessity of embedding gender mainstreaming within legal and constitutional frameworks has been identified as a priority to ensure its effectiveness (Chinkin, 2001), and **subindicator H3a captures the level of commitment to gender mainstreaming in law and policy** (see [Figure 5.4](#)).

**In 2024, 14 Member States (BE, BG, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, LT, AT, PT, RO, SI, FI) were legally obliged to apply gender mainstreaming in the development of new laws/policies.** This was also the case in 2021<sup>(51)</sup>, meaning that no new laws to require the use of gender mainstreaming have been passed. **Importantly, none of the laws requiring the use of gender mainstreaming are enforceable** (i.e. there are no penalties or sanctions for non-compliance). This means that there is no formal way to ensure that gender concerns are systematically taken into account and, therefore, that those laws may not be effective.

<sup>(49)</sup> For Spain, the decline in the H3b score is due to the absence of a procedure ensuring that the gender equality body is consulted on policies and laws. In 2021, such a mechanism was reported as existing, but it has now been clarified that no such procedure is in place, as the law merely requires each ministry to conduct a gender assessment of all policies. For Slovakia, the difference in the H3b score stems from a reduction in the reported proportion of policies and laws referred to the government body. In addition, the proportion of those that result in amendments is now unknown, whereas it was previously reported as all or nearly all cases.

<sup>(50)</sup> Among the group showing declines for indicator H3 in 2024, for Finland and Sweden this partly derives from an accidental omission in the 2024 questionnaire so that ad hoc gender equality training for all/most government employees (which both reported in 2021) could not be taken into account in 2024, meaning that their scores for H3c were potentially 0.5 points lower than if the option had been available. In a limited number of cases, the recorded changes reflect a learning process for both the national focal points and the contracted research team: the collection of more detailed metadata in 2024 has led to a better understanding of the situation and, consequently, different treatment of responses. For more information, see the methodological report (EIGE, 2023b).

<sup>(51)</sup> The 2021 data did not cover France, but the requirement to apply a gender mainstreaming approach derives from the 2014 equality law, so it would have been counted.

Reference to this obligation is often found in the main legislation on gender equality. Examples include **France**, where the Framework Law of 4 August 2014, for real equality between women and men, defines gender mainstreaming as the main approach to gender equality. In **Spain**, this obligation is outlined in Article 15 of Organic Law 3/2007, of 22 March, for the effective equality of women and men (Ministry of Justice, 2007). In **Austria**, this obligation is enshrined in the federal constitution, supported by specific articles and resolutions (Federal Constitution Law, Austria, 2021). In **Belgium**, the Law of 12 January 2007, known as the Gender Mainstreaming Law, aims to implement the resolutions of the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference and to integrate a gender perspective into all federal policies (Moniteur Belge, 2007). While this law applies only at the federal level, similar legal obligations exist in the Walloon Region, the French Community and the Brussels Region, with mechanisms in place in Flanders at the regional and community levels.

**Five Member States (CZ, DE, LV, MT, SE) have de facto binding commitments to gender mainstreaming.**

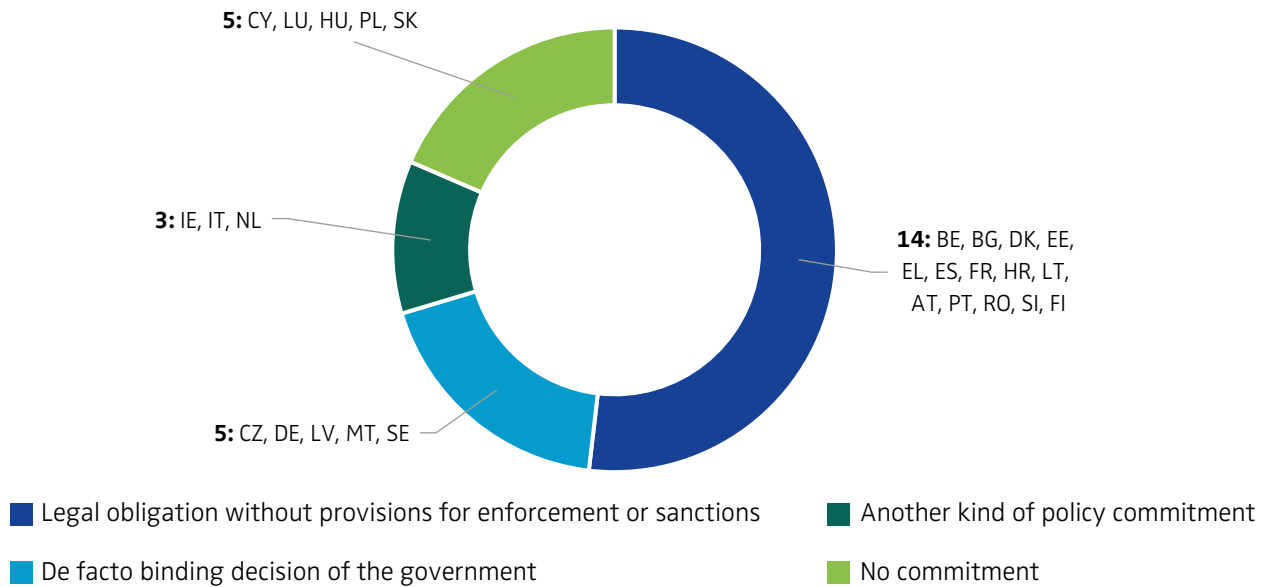
A de facto binding decision is a situation where the government has made a decision or policy regarding gender mainstreaming that is expected to be followed, even though it may not be formally codified into law. This decision carries significant weight and is treated as binding in practice, often due to strong political or institutional support, but it lacks the formal enforcement mechanisms that come with an enforceable legal obligation.

For instance, in **Czechia**, government rules of procedures require all documents submitted by ministries to the government (policies and legislation) to include gender impact assessment, overseen by the Department of Gender Equality (Government of the Czech Republic, 2023). In **Latvia**, regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers adopted in 2021 mandate that ministries assess the gender impact of new legislation, guided by the State Chancellery and the Ministry of Welfare (Cabinet of Ministers, Latvia, 2020). However, limited resources (only two staff) hinder a thorough follow-up and quality assessment of those annotations, especially in sectors where gender inequalities are less recognised (e.g. transport). In **Malta**, gender mainstreaming has been official governmental policy since 2000, reinforced by a 2012 circular ensuring annual progress monitoring (NCPE, Malta, 2000).

**In three countries (IE, IT, NL), overarching policy commitments to gender mainstreaming are mentioned in strategic documents.** For instance, **Italy's** 2021–2025 national strategy for gender equality promotes gender mainstreaming and budgeting through measures aiming to integrate a gender perspective in all areas of life and policy and to assess public policy impacts from a gender perspective. In the **Netherlands**, this commitment is outlined in the Emancipation Note (Government of the Netherlands, 2023).

**In the five remaining Member States (CY, LU, HU, PL, SK), no commitment has been identified.** However, in **Cyprus**, a new bill aiming at strengthening the country's commitment to gender mainstreaming is currently being discussed. The bill would upgrade the roles of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, gender focal points and the National Machinery for Women's Rights. The commissioner would draft, coordinate, monitor and evaluate gender equality strategies with all ministries. **Luxembourg** does not make gender mainstreaming a legal obligation, but various ministries, such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have made informal, voluntary commitments to it.

**Figure 5.4. Governments' commitment to gender mainstreaming, 2024**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

CSOs have raised concerns about the uneven progress in the implementation of gender mainstreaming, even in Member States that have strong legal commitments to gender equality and gender mainstreaming, noting that its application remains inconsistent across various sectors and levels of government. CSOs perceive gender equality bodies as having limited power to ensure the integration of gender equality concerns into all policies and identify common challenges facing governmental gender equality bodies across Member States. Those bodies are seen as often lacking a well-defined mandate in relation to gender mainstreaming, particularly concerning policy areas under the remit of other ministries. The relative 'marginalisation' of these bodies within the institutional frameworks of Member States (Krizsan, 2012) is seen as hindering their capacity to lead on the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

'My feeling is that it is a sub-ministry with very few resources and, most importantly, it does not have a favourable balance of power when it comes to obtaining something from the Ministry of the Interior or the Ministry of Justice.'

In the 2024 data collection, Member States were asked additional questions about the adoption of **governmental strategies and action plans for gender mainstreaming**, but those questions were not scored. Information is provided in [Annex 2](#).

## 5.2. Most Member States have structures for coordinating gender mainstreaming, but their resources and powers vary

Gender mainstreaming structures are an important mechanism for ensuring effective coordination across government. These structures may consist of dedicated departments, units or working groups within ministries; an interministerial group; or staff specifically dedicated to gender mainstreaming.

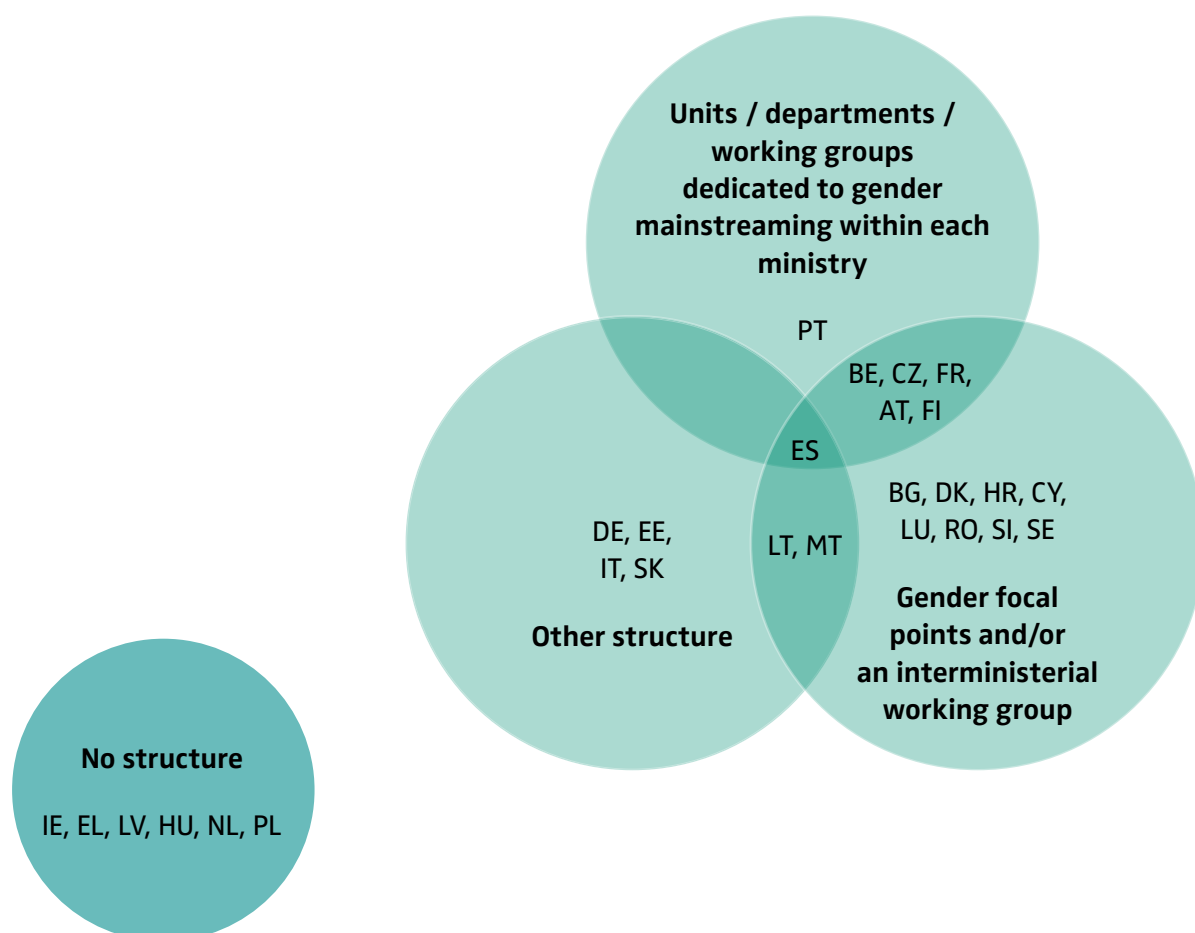
5. Gender mainstreaming remains inadequately integrated into legislation, policy and practices

They involve varying levels of resources and degrees of cross-government coordination (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.).

Subindicator H3b measures whether a structure exists to coordinate gender mainstreaming across ministries, and the extent to which the governmental body is consulted on new policies.

**Twenty-one Member States have at least one structure coordinating gender mainstreaming in place. In 2021, 19 Member States reported having such a structure in place<sup>(52)</sup>.** A few structures are typically led by a ministry (e.g. AT), whereas others are coordinated by a governmental body (e.g. BE, RO) or an independent body (e.g. MT). Some structures emphasise federal-level planning and guidance; for example, in **Austria** the Minister for Women chairs the Inter-ministerial Working Group for Gender Mainstreaming/Budgeting, which has delegates from all federal ministries, *Länder*, supreme bodies and the public service union. Others implement a multilevel approach, enabling them to operate nationally, regionally and locally (e.g. BG, IT, PT), such as the interinstitutional National Network of Gender Mainstreaming in **Italy**, which is mainly composed of regional administrations that oversee planning and evaluation, as well as national institutions and a few ministries. [Figure 5.5](#) illustrates which types of structure are present across all Member States.

**Figure 5.5. Existence of structures coordinating gender mainstreaming**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

<sup>(52)</sup> No data about France and Ireland.



**Seven Member States** (BE, CZ, ES, FR, AT, PT, FI) **have a unit or group dedicated to gender mainstreaming within each ministry.** Those structures are tasked with the integration and promotion of gender equality across all policies, programmes and actions. They play a crucial role in institutionalising gender mainstreaming within public administration, ensuring that gender equality is a fundamental consideration in all governmental activities. For example, in **Czechia**, every line ministry has a working group for gender equality that is also tasked with monitoring and implementing gender mainstreaming in the policies of the ministry. In **France**, high civil servants for gender equality and equality of rights are responsible for implementing a gender mainstreaming approach across all ministries, and are supported in this task by a team in each ministry.

**Eleven Member States** (BE, BG, DK, ES, LT, LU, MT, AT, RO, FI, SE) **have interministerial groups for gender mainstreaming.** These are strategic bodies composed of representatives from multiple ministries or government departments. These groups are typically established through government resolutions or legal mandates, and operate at a high level to ensure the integration of gender equality policies across all areas of government. Their primary function is to facilitate communication and collaboration between different ministries, enabling a coordinated approach to gender mainstreaming. These groups provide a platform for sharing best practices, discussing challenges and ensuring that gender perspectives are systematically incorporated into all governmental policies and programmes. Examples include **Austria's** Inter-ministerial Working Group for Gender Mainstreaming/Budgeting and **Spain's** Inter-ministerial Commission for Equality between Women and Men.

In both **Lithuania** and **Romania**, the interministerial groups include representatives from civil society. Lithuania's Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men includes representatives from academia, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Lithuanian Association of Municipalities. Similarly, Romania's National Commission on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men includes representatives from trade unions, employers' associations and NGOs.

**In 10 Member States** (BE, BG, CZ, DK, FR, HR, CY, MT, SI, SE), **there are gender focal points in ministries.** Those are designated individuals within each ministry or government department who are responsible for integrating gender perspectives within their specific ministry. Operating at an operational level, gender focal points ensure that gender equality is considered in the ministry's policies, programmes and actions. They act as the main point of contact for gender mainstreaming within the ministry, coordinating gender equality initiatives and ensuring compliance with national gender equality policies. In addition, they might provide training and support to ministry staff on gender mainstreaming. Examples include **Croatia's** gender equality coordinators and **Cyprus's** gender focal points. These roles are crucial for the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming, ensuring that gender equality is embedded in the day-to-day operations of government ministries.

**Other types of gender mainstreaming structures have been identified in seven Member States** (DE, EE, ES, IT, LT, MT, SK). These structures tend to involve multiple stakeholders from various sectors, including government ministries, CSOs and other public institutions. They often provide advisory and support roles rather than direct implementation of gender mainstreaming within ministries, and therefore their impact on the operational integration of gender perspectives may be less direct than that of dedicated units or focal points. Four of those Member States (DE, EE, IT, SK) have only this other type of structure. In **Estonia**, the competence centre for gender equality provides information materials and offers gender equality e-training for policymakers and other target groups. In **Italy**, an interinstitutional National Network of Gender Mainstreaming was established to oversee the planning and evaluation of cohesion policy at both the national and regional levels. This initiative emerged from the 'MES – Evaluation methods and tools for gender mainstreaming' project, conducted by the Department for Equal Opportunities with European funds (Department for Equal Opportunities, 2023).

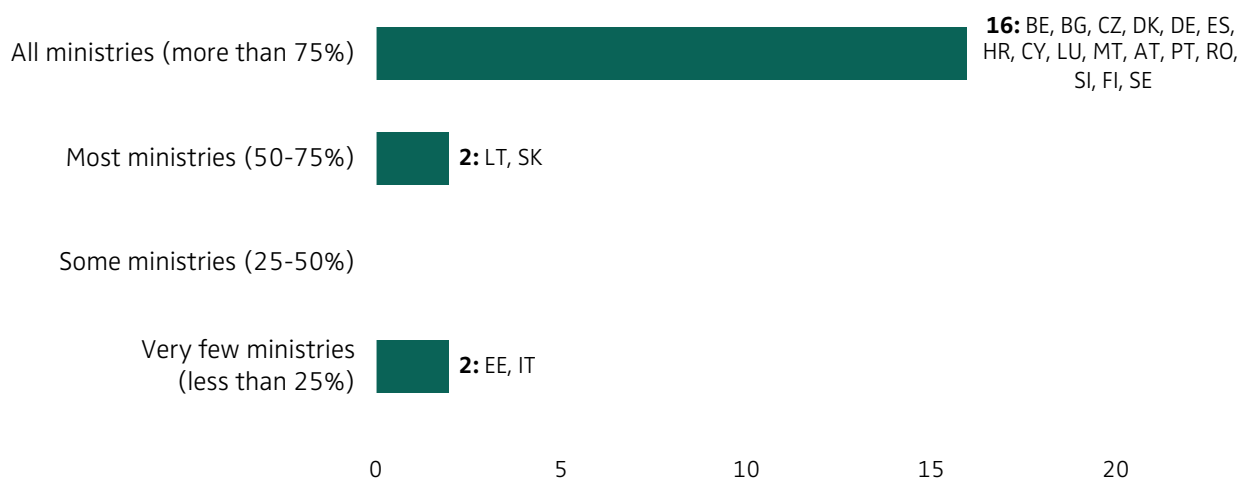
5. Gender mainstreaming remains inadequately integrated into legislation, policy and practices

**Six Member States** (IE, EL, LV, HU, NL, PL) **reported having no gender mainstreaming structure in place.** The lack of a formal structure means that gender mainstreaming efforts are likely to be inconsistent and uncoordinated, leading to significant gaps in the delivery of policies that adequately reflect gender concerns.

**Of the 21 Member States with at least one gender mainstreaming structure in place, 16 include at least 75 % of their ministries in this structure** (see [Figure 5.6](#)).

Changes from 2021 have been identified in **Italy** and **Slovakia**. In **Slovakia**, the structure now includes most ministries (50–75 %) instead of more than 75 %. In **Italy**, where there was no structure in place in 2021, a structure has now been established but includes very few ministries (fewer than 25 %).

**Figure 5.6. Proportion of ministries/departments that are included in the governmental gender mainstreaming structure, 2024**



NB: No data about France.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

Data was collected on the **number of staff assigned to the gender mainstreaming structure**, to assess the strength of its resources<sup>(53)</sup>, and on whether the **structure has an action plan** in place, to assess its effectiveness. These questions were not scored, so the results are not included in the overall scores for indicator H3, but they are presented in [Annex 2](#).

<sup>(53)</sup> Due to a lack of concrete data, six Member States provided estimates of the number of staff supporting gender mainstreaming.

Some CSOs interviewed for this study reported that, even when gender mainstreaming structures have sufficient personnel, they lack the power to influence the work of other ministries due to limited resources and strategic positioning. In addition, CSOs highlighted resistance from other ministries to implementing the gender equality measures recommended by these bodies. Therefore, CSOs recommended that these units should be placed higher in the ministry's hierarchy to enhance their influence and effectiveness.

'The minister [in charge of gender equality issues] meets with us and says it's great. But in reality, the Ministry of the Interior ... doesn't care, and the Ministry of Justice ... doesn't care either. So it goes nowhere.'

'Here I'd like to refer to a recent study that found that gender mainstreaming often is not assigned with additional resources to develop and implement ... In addition, the political weight of the action plans including the mainstreaming efforts is quite low. This means that the efforts cannot be very ambitious, nor is their implementation monitored.'

### 5.3. There is room to improve consultation procedures and foster the ability of governmental gender equality bodies to ensure that gender equality issues are integrated into policymaking across the EU

Subindicator H3b, structures, also considers **consultation with the governmental body on new policies, enabling an assessment of the likelihood that new policies will integrate gender equality issues.**

The data reveals a diverse landscape of consultation procedures for integrating gender equality considerations into policymaking across countries.

**Over half of the Member States (BE, CZ, DK, EE, IE, FR, LT, MT, AT, PL, PT, SK, FI, SE) have a procedure in place to ensure that the government and other public institutions can consult the governmental body on legislation, policy, procedure, programmes and practices in policy fields other than gender equality (Figure 5.7).**

**Austria, Belgium, France, Portugal and Finland** involve their governmental gender equality bodies in regulatory impact assessments. For instance, in **Austria**, the Directorate General for Women and Equality participates in numerous interministerial working groups and can be consulted during the legislative process for expert assessments. Similarly, **Belgium's** Law on Gender Mainstreaming mandates consulting the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, ensuring gender analysis is included in regulatory impact assessments (Law aimed at monitoring the application of the resolutions from the world conference on women held in Beijing in September 1995 and at integrating the gender perspective into the whole of the federal policies, Article 2, paragraph 2).

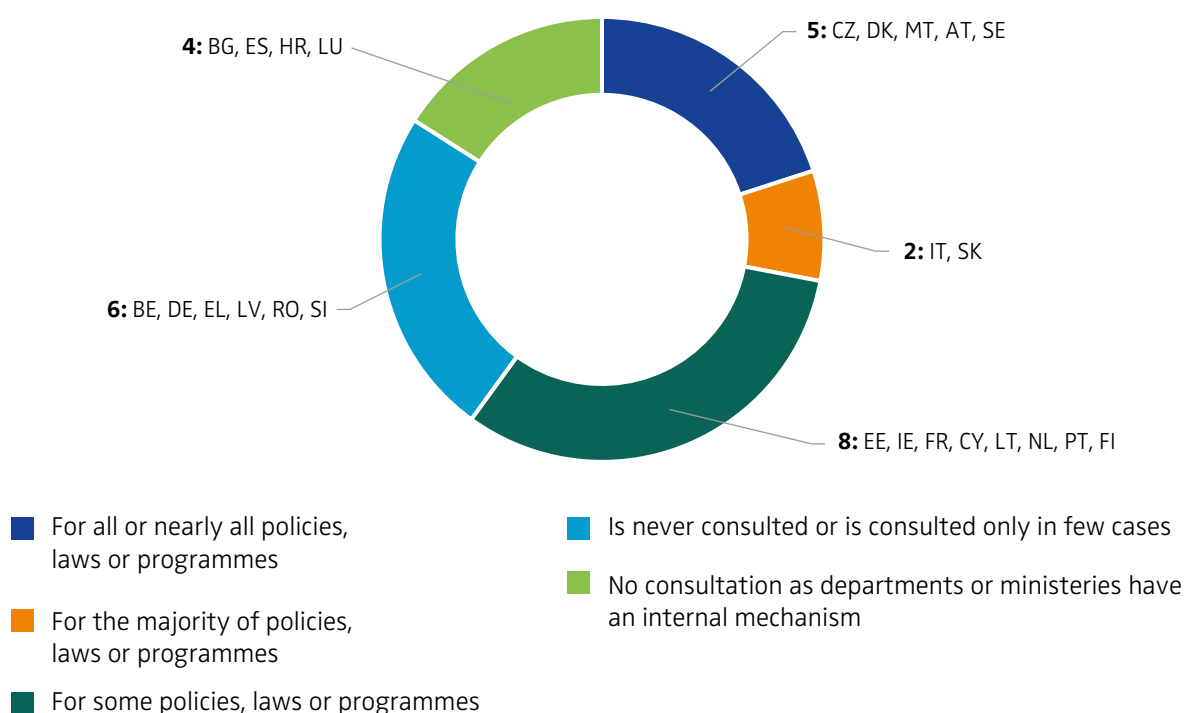
In **Czechia, Estonia, Lithuania and Slovakia**, governmental gender equality bodies are included in interministerial procedures and legislative drafting processes. For example, **Czechia's** Department for Gender Equality takes part in the interministerial comment procedure for proposed acts, allowing it to provide input on all legislative and non-legislative materials submitted to the government. **Estonia's**

5. Gender mainstreaming remains inadequately integrated into legislation, policy and practices

rules for good legislative practice and legislative drafting also ensure that gender equality bodies are consulted during the legislative process.

**An additional four Member States (BG, ES, HR, LU) do not have a consultation procedure in place because departments or ministries have an internal mechanism for ensuring gender equality is mainstreamed in legislation, policy, procedure, programmes and practices in policy fields other than gender equality (see [Figure 5.7](#)).**

**Figure 5.7. Consultation of governmental bodies or departments/ministries on new or existing policies, laws or programmes in policy fields other than gender equality, 2024**



NB: No data about Hungary or Poland.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**Croatia** uses a centralised regulatory impact assessment to integrate gender equality into broader policy areas, mandated by the Act on Better Regulations Policy Instruments (Official Gazette Narodne novine, 74/2015, Article 13). This process requires that new laws and decrees be evaluated for their impact on equal treatment, opportunities, work–life balance and protection against discrimination. This ensures that gender considerations are systematically integrated into all legislative and policy making processes. **Spain** relies on several laws and decrees such as Law 3/2007 and Royal Decree 931/2017, which mandate gender impact assessments and the mainstreaming of gender equality principles. **Spain** also has an interministerial committee, and equality units within each ministry to gather input and statistics on gender equality, ensuring a comprehensive and coordinated approach. A new process called the *Nohaltegkeetscheck* (sustainability check) was introduced in **Luxembourg** in 2023. This procedure ensures that all proposed laws are evaluated for their durability in line with the sustainable development goals (SDGs) (including SDG 5 on gender equality). All ministries are required to carry out this evaluation. In **Bulgaria**, there is no direct consultation of the governmental body because all ministries have internal mechanisms, including the use of gender impact assessments, to ensure that gender equality concerns are taken into account in policies for their particular areas.

By embedding gender equality considerations within their internal processes, these countries may achieve a more integrated and holistic approach to gender mainstreaming. This strategy could potentially lead to more consistent and effective outcomes, as gender equality is continuously monitored and addressed within the context of each ministry's specific responsibilities and areas of influence. On the other hand, when gender mainstreaming is carried out as part of other processes, such as a broader process of impact assessment, the risk is that the gender perspective may become blurred and lose its prominence (EIGE, 2016a).

In **Italy**, the Department for Equal Opportunities is consulted by a variety of ministries when a new law or policy addressing gender is under discussion; however, there is no legal obligation to consult the department.

Consultations with the gender equality body take place regarding all or nearly all policies, laws or programmes in five Member States (CZ, DK, MT, AT, SE) and the majority of policies, laws and programmes in two Member States (IT, SK).

**This indicates significant gaps in the systematic integration of gender equality considerations in policymaking across the EU.**

**Indeed, in 14 Member States, governmental gender equality bodies are consulted on a limited number of policies, laws or programmes (EE, IE, FR, CY, LT, NL, PT, FI), or are rarely consulted at all (BE, DE, EL, LV, RO, SI).**

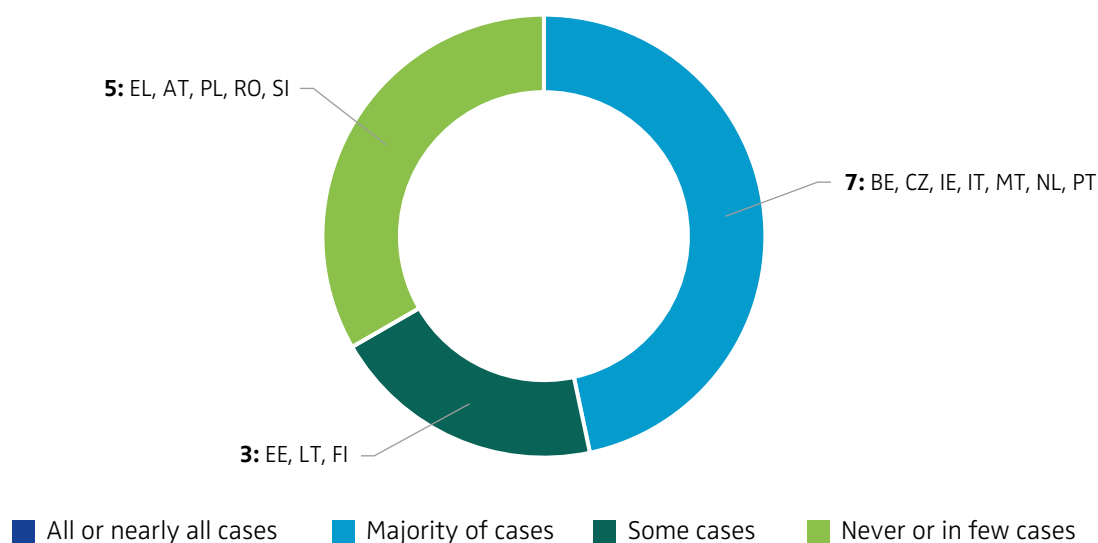
These figures have remained similar to the rates of consultation in 2021, when six Member States held consultations on some policies and six never consulted the governmental body on policies.

While this may indicate gaps in the systematic integration of gender equality considerations in policymaking across the EU, the explanation might differ in some countries, especially those that report a strong commitment to gender mainstreaming and the use of gender mainstreaming tools and methods (high scores for subindicator H3c, methods). For instance, in **Belgium**, it is reported that all ministries have internal mechanisms, including ex ante evaluations and gender budgeting, to ensure that gender equality concerns are addressed in their policies. Thus, this might result in low levels of consultation of the gender equality body.

**Fewer than half of the Member States report this involvement leading to relevant adjustments in the majority or all instances (see [Figure 5.8](#)).**

5. Gender mainstreaming remains inadequately integrated into legislation, policy and practices

**Figure 5.8. Frequency of adjustment following consultation with the governmental body, 2024**



NB: No data about Denmark, Germany, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia and Sweden. Bulgaria, Spain, Croatia and Luxembourg have internal mechanisms in ministries/departments for ensuring gender equality in new or existing policies, laws or programmes.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

In **Belgium, Czechia, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands and Portugal**, adjustments to policies, laws and programmes occur in the majority of cases (50–75 %), while in **Estonia, Lithuania and Finland** these consultations lead to adjustments in some cases (25–50 %). Finally, in six Member States (EL, LU, AT, PL, RO, SI), adjustments do not take place or do so in fewer than 25 % of cases.

In 2021, in three Member States (PT, SK, SE), at least 75 % of consultations resulted in adjustments. It is challenging to determine the practical implications of the adjustment rates. This change since 2021 might suggest that consultations with the governmental body have become less effective. However, a more optimistic interpretation could be that the consultations revealed fewer needs for adjustments, indicating that the reviewed documents had a greater tendency to incorporate gender equality.

## 5.4. Significant gaps remain in commitment to, and implementation of methods and tools for, gender mainstreaming

Government policymaking and budgeting are often perceived as gender-neutral and value-free. However, understanding gender – its manifestations in society and across policy sectors, the required data and its application as a category of analysis – is essential for developing meaningful gender equality objectives within the policymaking and budgetary processes (Quinn, 2017). Gender competence, alongside political commitment and strong leadership, is crucial to ensure that gender equality is embedded in these processes, guaranteeing that new regulations, and public revenues and expenditures, do not perpetuate gender inequalities (EIGE, a).

**Subindicator H3c** examines **Member States' commitments to, and use of methods and tools to implement, gender mainstreaming**, including *ex ante* gender impact assessment, gender budgeting, gender evaluation, gender-sensitive language, gender awareness raising and gender equality training.

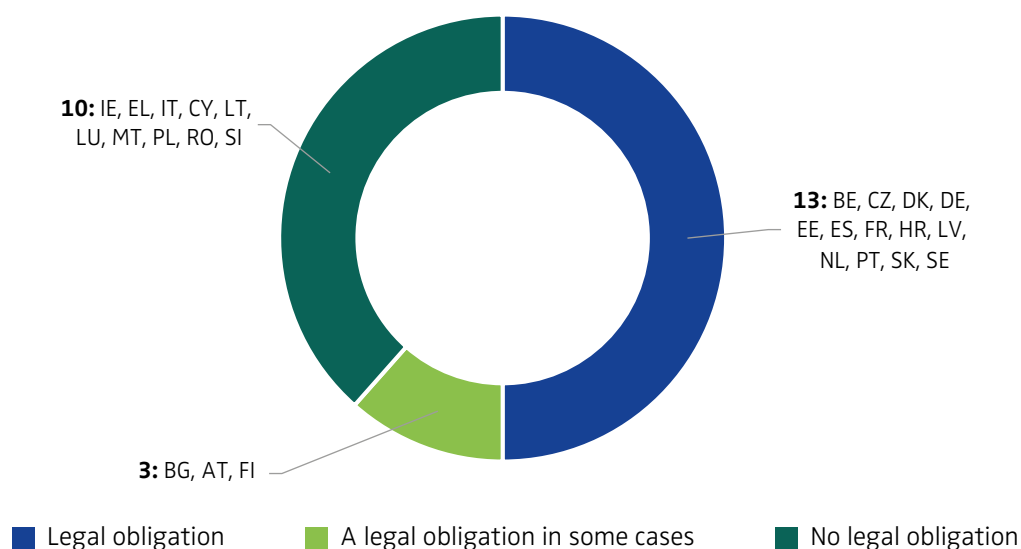
The use of these tools is considered a prerequisite to ensure that a gender perspective is fully integrated into the design, implementation and evaluation of policies, laws and programmes (Bacchi, 2010). This subindicator is crucial for understanding how gender equality considerations are embedded in governmental processes and practices. The scoring for this subindicator assesses various aspects of gender mainstreaming, including legal obligations, practical implementation and awareness-raising initiatives.

#### 5.4.1. There is a limited obligation to undertake *ex ante* gender impact assessment

Despite *ex ante* gender impact assessments being a transformative tool to shape policies that actively advance gender equality, **under half of Member States** (BE, CZ, DK, DE, EE, ES, FR, HR, LV, NL, PT, SK, SE) **have a legal obligation to undertake an *ex ante* gender impact assessment when drafting laws, policies and programmes** (see [Figure 5.9](#)).

In the **Netherlands**, the gender-proofing of policies and legislation is integrated into the integral assessment framework for policy and regulation. This framework includes a test on the 'effects on gender equality', requiring policymakers to evaluate and map out the potential impacts of proposed policies and regulations on gender equality. The responsibility for conducting this test lies with the ministries themselves as part of their policy development and regulatory requirements (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2024). To enable progress towards gender equality, this approach relies on policymakers having extensive knowledge of the mechanisms underlying gender inequalities, the capacity to carry out gender analysis and enough resources to do so (Vogel-Polsky and Beauchesne, 2001).

**Figure 5.9. Governments' commitment to *ex ante* gender impact assessment, 2024**



NB: No data about Hungary.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

In 3 Member States (BG, AT, FI), there is a legal obligation that applies in only some cases, while in 10 Member States (IE, EL, IT, CY, LT, LU, MT, PL, RO, SI) no legal obligation has been reported. However, in



**Lithuania**, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour has prepared a methodological guide for carrying out a gender impact assessment and provides examples for public institutions to use (Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, 2024). Meanwhile, in **Italy**, though there is no legal obligation, the 2021–2026 national strategy for gender equality has introduced mandatory gender impact assessments in all parliamentary commissions, meaning that any proposed legislation or policy must be evaluated to understand its potential effects on gender equality before it is approved (Department for Equal Opportunities, 2021).

*Ex ante* gender impact assessments are often carried out in the broader context of gender and gender equality strategies or action plans to understand if new policies are aligned with those strategies and plans (PEFA, n.d.). Notably, 11 of the 13 Member States (CZ, DK, DE, EE, ES, FR, HR, NL, PT, SK, SE) that have a legal obligation to carry out an *ex ante* gender impact assessment have a currently active strategy or action plan on gender equality in place. Carrying out *ex ante* gender impact assessments as part of broader gender equality strategies helps ensure that all policy areas are considered through a gender lens and therefore indicates a robust framework for gender mainstreaming (EIGE, 2016a; OECD, 2023b).

#### 5.4.2. There is a limited obligation to undertake gender budgeting, which is still not widely used in the EU

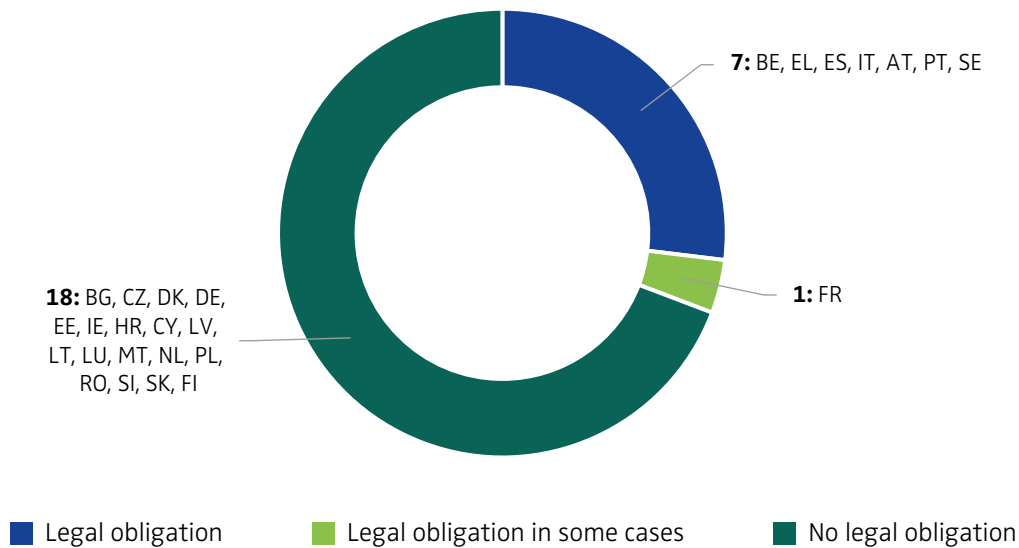
In 2019, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council urged the European Commission and Member States to implement gender mainstreaming across all policy areas, including setting gender-specific targets and integrating gender budgeting into the budgetary process (Council of the European Union, 2019). In 2021, the Council conclusions on gender mainstreaming in the EU budget highlighted the need for stronger commitment to gender budgeting and tracking methodologies (Council of the European Union, 2021). In 2023, the Council conclusions on mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in policies, programmes, and budgets underscored the importance of gender budgeting, recommending the introduction of gender-specific targets, indicators and impact assessments to ensure that budgetary decisions contribute to gender equality (Council of the European Union, 2023).

Despite increased attention given to gender budgeting at the EU level, there has been very limited progress at the Member State level. No Member State has introduced new legislation to undertake gender budgeting since 2021.

Therefore, **only seven Member States (BE, EL, ES, IT, AT, PT, SE) have a legal obligation to undertake gender budgeting for a ministerial budget or the budget of other governmental institutions** (see [Figure 5.10](#)). In one Member State (**France**), the budgetary law establishes a legal obligation to report on all expected budgetary contributions to gender equality formulated by each ministry, but only in the context of presenting the annual budgetary law (Law 2005-1720).



**Figure 5.10. Governments' commitments to gender budgeting, 2024**



NB: No data about Hungary.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

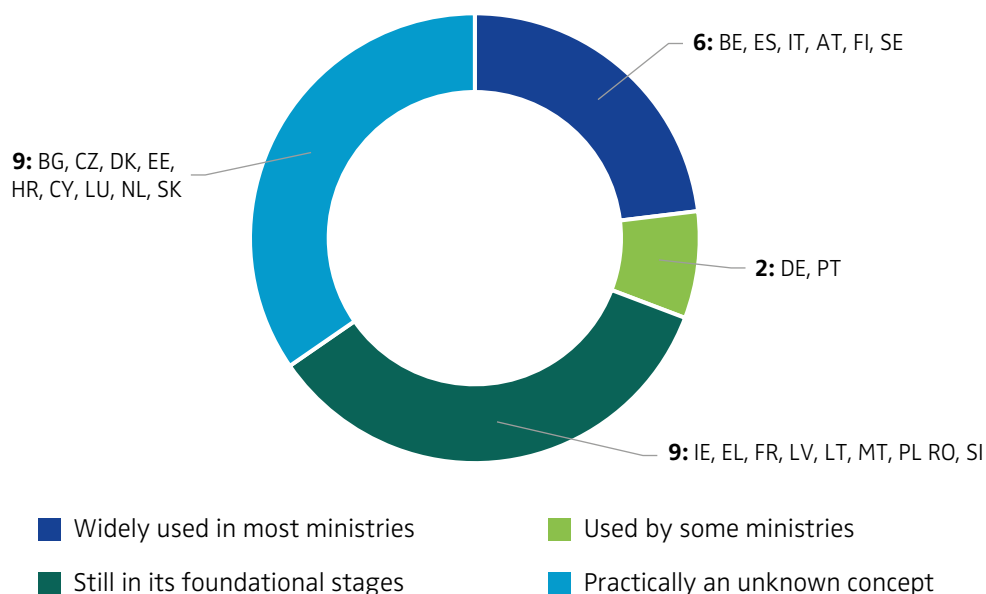
In **Austria**, gender budgeting is enshrined in the federal constitution. It requires the federation, *Länder* and municipalities to aim for the equal status of women and men in budgeting (Article 13 (3)). In addition, the management of federal budgets must respect the principles of efficiency, transparency and the equal treatment of women and men (Article 51 (8)). The Federal Budget Act of 2013 introduced performance-oriented budgeting, requiring each budget chapter to include at least one gender objective along with corresponding activities and indicators. This means that every ministry must have at least one high-level gender objective and related measures, ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into all policy areas.

In **Belgium**, the methodology for gender budgeting is part of Belgium's broader commitment to gender mainstreaming, which is anchored in the 2007 Gender Mainstreaming Law (Article 2, paragraph 2). This law mandates the integration of gender perspectives in all policies, measures and budgetary preparation and requires each federal department to specify the financial allocations dedicated to actions aimed at achieving gender equality. The gender budgeting methodology involves the use of a gender marker system, which categorises budget programmes based on their relevance to gender equality, requiring detailed gender notes for significant impacts and shorter gender comments for moderate or indirect impacts (Quinn, 2017).

In **Finland**, there is no legal obligation, but the Ministry of Finance provides binding instructions on how to incorporate gender perspectives into budget drafts and how to report evaluated gender impacts. Each ministry's budget proposal includes a summary of these gender impacts.

**A legal obligation of gender budgeting often results in its widespread implementation across ministerial and other governmental budgets.** Subindicator H3c also measures the extent to which gender budgeting is applied in ministerial and other governmental budgets, helping to assess the effectiveness of formal commitments. In six Member States (BE, ES, IT, AT, FI, SE), gender budgeting was reported to be widely used in ministerial budgets and in the budgets of other governmental institutions, and in two Member States (DE, PT), it was reportedly used by some ministries. However, in nine Member States (IE, EL, FR, LV, LT, MT, PL, RO, SI), gender budgeting is considered to be in its foundational stages, while in another nine (BG, CZ, DK, EE, HR, CY, LU, NL, SK), gender budgeting is practically an unknown concept (see [Figure 5.11](#)).

**Figure 5.11. Gender budgeting in ministerial budgets, 2024**



NB: No data about Hungary.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

In five of the seven Member States with a legal obligation (BE, ES, IT, AT, SE), gender budgeting is widely used. Legal foundations for gender budgeting guarantee sustainability by insulating the practice from economic or political fluctuations (OECD, 2023b). The data demonstrates a clear correlation between the adoption of legislation on gender budgeting and its application in ministerial and other governmental budgets. In **Italy**, in 2021, gender budgeting was limited to a few ministries, with no comprehensive data on its use across the government. By 2024, its implementation had expanded significantly, with most ministries involved in gender budgeting.

Despite a legal obligation being in place, gender budgeting is still in its foundational stages in **Greece**, pointing to limited implementation of Law 4604/2019 introducing central government gender budgeting. In **Portugal**, while the legal obligation to undertake gender budgeting applies to all ministerial budgets, implementation has been gradual in public bodies but is increasing as the government reinforces this process. **Finland** is the only country that does not have a legal obligation and yet reports a wide use of gender budgeting.

In contrast, in the 20 Member States without a legal obligation (or with a partial one, such as **France**), 8 report that gender budgeting is still in its foundational stages (IE, FR, LV, LT, MT, PL, RO, SI), while a further 9 (BG, CZ, DK, EE, HR, CY, LU, NL, SK) indicate that gender budgeting is still virtually unheard of. In **Germany**, gender budgeting is used by some ministries only. **These findings reveal almost no improvements in the use of gender budgeting since 2021.**

An additional question focused on the use of gender-responsive evaluation, which remains very low across the EU-27 Member States. As this question was not scored, the information is provided in [Annex 2](#).

### 5.4.3. Central initiatives raise awareness of gender equality

To effectively integrate a gender perspective into policymaking, it is crucial to understand structural gender inequalities and critically analyse social contracts, policies and practices.

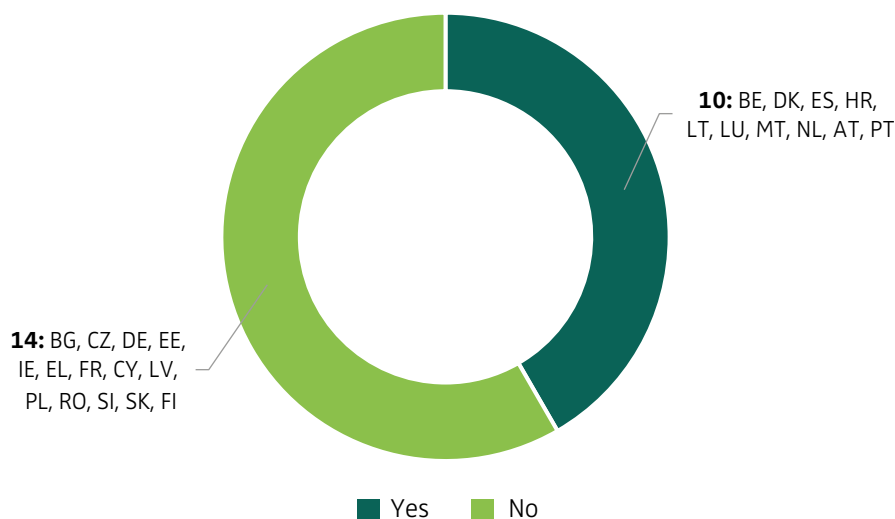
Therefore, subindicator H3c also captures Member States' efforts to raise awareness of gender equality among ministries and other governmental bodies and conduct gender equality training among governmental employees.

Language contributes to, produces and reproduces sexist and biased thoughts, attitudes and behaviours. Member States were asked about **the existence of any central initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of gender-sensitive language** among ministries and other governmental bodies in the past two years.

**Central initiatives to promote gender-sensitive language are found in a limited number of Member States. This limitation potentially reinforces existing biases in policymaking and results in less-inclusive and less-effective governance.**

In the last two years, 10 Member States (BE, DK, ES, HR, LT, LU, MT, NL, AT, PT) have implemented central initiatives to promote gender-sensitive language among ministries and other governmental bodies (see [Figure 5.12](#)). This marks a decline from 2021; such initiatives are no longer reported in six countries (DE, EL, CY, SI, FI, SE).

**Figure 5.12. Central initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of gender-sensitive language in the last two years, 2024**



NB: No data about Italy, Hungary and Sweden.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

In **Croatia** (Law 74/2015, Article 13, 2015) and **Portugal** (Law No 4/2018, of 2 September 2018), there are legal obligations to use gender-neutral and non-discriminatory language, respectively, when drafting policies.

In some Member States (BE, ES, LU, AT, PT), initiatives to promote gender-sensitive language take the form of guidelines and publications. For example, in **Belgium**, the Network for Federal Diversity published a comprehensive guide on gender-inclusive writing in May 2022 (Federal Public Service Policy and Support, 2022). Developed in a partnership between the Federal Diversity Network and the Federal Public Service Policy and Support, this guide helps civil servants adopt gender-respectful writing practices, with practical examples for drafting official documents.

Other initiatives focus on training and workshops (ES, LT, PT). In 2023, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour's Equal Opportunities Group in **Lithuania** held a remote lecture titled 'How to create a safe and inclusive work environment' for ministry employees and the Commission for Equal Opportunities. Attended by 150 participants, the session covered gender-sensitive language, racial and ethnic diversity and gender identity, providing practical guidelines for fostering a respectful and inclusive workplace. In the **Netherlands**, an event has been hosted to inform government staff working on EU topics about gender-sensitive language.

**Gender equality training is often not comprehensive across all governmental levels and is not mandatory.**

Gender equality training makes policymakers aware of gender equality issues, builds their gender competence and enables them to promote gender equality goals in their work at all levels (EIGE, 2016a). This data collection assesses how regularly governmental employees of different staff categories <sup>(54)</sup> participate in gender equality training.

**Employees at the highest political level are less likely to receive gender equality training than employees of the governmental gender equality body and those working in other ministries or departments across Member States. That disparity could affect the overall effectiveness of gender mainstreaming efforts.**

The data reveals significant variations in the involvement of governmental employees in gender equality training across different Member States and staff categories. Notably, employees at the highest political level (ministers, vice-ministers and senior cabinet members) generally show low levels of participation in gender equality training, with 15 Member States (BG, CZ, DK, DE, IE, EL, HR, CY, LV, HU, NL, PL, RO, SI, SK) reporting no training for this group on a regular basis. In nine Member States (BE, EE, ES, LT, LU, MT, PT, FI, SE), these high-level employees receive training only on an ad hoc basis. This suggests a potential gap in leadership engagement in gender equality initiatives, which could affect the overall effectiveness of gender mainstreaming efforts.

In contrast, employees of the governmental body for gender equality and some employees of other ministries/departments exhibit more frequent participation in training. For instance, in **Czechia** and **Denmark**, both categories of staff receive training on a regular basis (at least once a year), indicating a more structured approach to gender equality training in these countries. In **Finland**, some ministries include gender equality policy in induction training for new employees and offer special training on gender impact assessment for key programmes and projects. In addition, 14 other Member States (BE, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, CY, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, SI, SE) report ad hoc training for these groups, highlighting a reliance on irregular training sessions. **These findings underscore the need for more consistent and comprehensive training programmes across all levels of government to ensure sustained progress in gender equality.**

<sup>(54)</sup> Three categories of staff were included as part of this data collection: the employees at the highest political level (ministers, vice-ministers and senior cabinet members); the employees of the governmental body for gender equality; and some of the employees of other ministries/departments.

In **Austria**, the Federal Academy for Civil Servants offers mandatory basic gender equality and diversity training for all civil servants, with additional modules on gender mainstreaming (Federal Academy of Public Administration, n.d.). This is part of a broader strategy by the Council of Ministers to ensure sustainable gender mainstreaming across ministries, including structural anchoring, gender-specific data collection and increased employee involvement. In **Portugal**, the CIG provides regular gender equality training and annual awareness programmes for ministries and public bodies, including webinars and workshops. For instance, in December 2023, the CIG and the Directorate-General of Budgeting held gender-sensitive budget training to equip public administration professionals with gender analysis skills in budgetary policies (CIG, 2023).

**Low levels of mandatory gender equality training across the EU might affect awareness and understanding of gender mainstreaming methods and tools.**

In only three Member States (DK, FR, SK) is gender equality training mandatory for the employees of the governmental gender equality body, while in only four Member States (BE, CZ, HR, FR) is the training mandatory for some of the employees of other ministries or departments.

In **Czechia**, gender focal points and members of working groups for gender equality at line ministries are required to undergo annual training as part of the 2021–2030 gender equality strategy. Similarly, **Slovakia** mandates training for employees of the governmental body for gender equality. These examples illustrate a more systematic approach to gender equality training, ensuring that key personnel are regularly educated on gender issues, which could lead to more consistent and effective gender mainstreaming across public administration.

**In no Member State is gender equality training mandatory for employees at the highest political level, such as ministers, vice-ministers and senior cabinet members.**

Additional questions looked at the existence of centralised initiatives to raise awareness of gender equality among ministries and other governmental bodies. Those questions were not part of the scoring for H3, and relevant information is available in [Annex A2.5](#).

Even in countries with more structured gender equality training programmes, CSOs highlighted that those in charge of implementing gender mainstreaming often lacked specific expertise and knowledge of methods and tools, leading to ineffective communication and slow progress.

‘It has been officially acknowledged that there is a lack of training and expertise among the implementing authorities, such as law enforcement or social and health care authorities. This significantly weakens the effectiveness of the measures if there is no expertise at the implementing level.’

According to CSOs, the effectiveness of promoting gender equality within ministries varies widely, depending on the skills, qualifications and personal motivations of the individuals in charge. This highlights the need for competence development, including mandatory and regular gender equality training for all government employees to ensure that policies fully integrate gender perspectives and have a transformative impact.

**Successful implementation of gender mainstreaming requires not only a legal obligation and a gender mainstreaming structure but also political will, expertise and adequate resources.**

Countries with a strong commitment to gender mainstreaming often have well-developed structures and methods to support it (BE, DK, ES, HR, AT, PT). However, having a legal commitment alone does not guarantee successful implementation. Some countries with strong commitments still struggle with effective structures and methods (BG, DE, EE, EL, FR, LT, RO, SI, SK). Similarly, countries with robust structures for gender mainstreaming tend to have effective methods in place (BE, ES, AT, PT, SE). However, there are exceptions where strong structures do not always lead to effective methods (CZ, MT, FI), and vice versa (HR). This shows that, while structures are important, other factors also influence the success of gender mainstreaming efforts.

As discussed above, CSOs reported that some governmental gender equality bodies lack sufficient political power due to their secondary position in the government, which further undermines their capacity to be heard by more prominent and powerful ministries.

Another issue preventing the full implementation of gender mainstreaming is resourcing. The data collected illustrates that having sufficient personnel is another necessary ingredient for the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming. When analysing the personnel resources of governmental bodies alongside the scores for H3a, commitment, H3b, structures, and H3c, methods, there is variation in the scores of Member States with over 25 staff members (ranging from 2.5 in Greece to 8.0 in Belgium out of a possible 12 points). However, those with fewer than five staff members all scored between 0 (PL) and 3.0 (BG).

**Belgium** exemplifies how a well-resourced governmental gender equality body combined with a strong legislative framework for gender mainstreaming can have a significant impact on the implementation of gender mainstreaming. Since 2021, the number of personnel has more than doubled, with the outgoing government reportedly increasing the budget and staffing of the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men to manage the growing numbers. Interviews with CSOs indicate that gender mainstreaming has become more central over the past five years, as demonstrated by the implementation of the 2020–2024 federal plan on gender mainstreaming (Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, 2020). This commitment was further reinforced in 2021 when the State Secretary for Gender Equality presented a note to the board of ministers, resulting in a decision that all government members must include a gender dimension in their policies. This is reflected in Belgium's combined score for H3a, commitment, H3b, structures, and H3c, methods, which increased from 6.9 in 2021 to 8.4 in 2024, partially attributed to the addition of public events aimed at raising awareness of gender equality within ministries.

While they recognise some progress has been made in gender mainstreaming, CSOs across the EU also highlighted the remaining challenges to ensure its proper implementation and achieve transformative changes for gender equality.

'Advances have been made over the past five years, that is undeniable, but there is still much to be done, especially with the tools we already have, but we need funds to develop and implement them to achieve real structural change.'

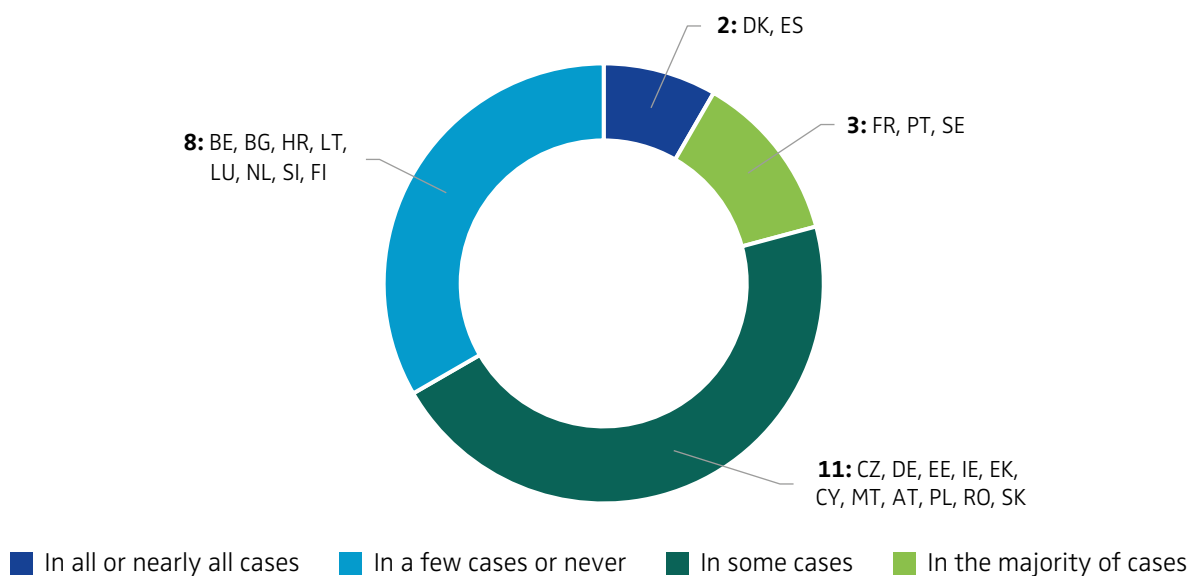
'Our and my involvement has lasted for the last five years. But it has changed a lot in the last five years, so when it comes to gender mainstreaming, we feel that it is being questioned in a way that was not the case five years ago. Five years ago, for example, when we had our conferences, then we could often go straight into talking about gender mainstreaming and be very method-oriented, while now we often need to spend much more time explaining why you should work with gender equality and mainstreaming.'

## 5.5. Systematic consultation of the independent gender equality bodies remains limited

Subindicator H3d measures the consultation of independent bodies on new policies, laws and programmes, alongside the frequency with which these consultations lead to adjustments in policies or legislative instruments. In consulting independent bodies, Member States can ensure that expertise on gender equality and gender mainstreaming is incorporated into the gendered impact of initiatives and the implementation of strategies (OECD, 2015).

**Regular consultation with independent bodies remains very rare, with five Member States (DK, ES, FR, PT, SE) consulting independent bodies in all or most cases** (see [Figure 5.13](#)).

**Figure 5.13. Consultation of independent bodies by departments or ministries on new or existing policies, laws or programmes in policy fields other than gender equality, 2024**



NB: No data about Italy, Latvia and Hungary.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

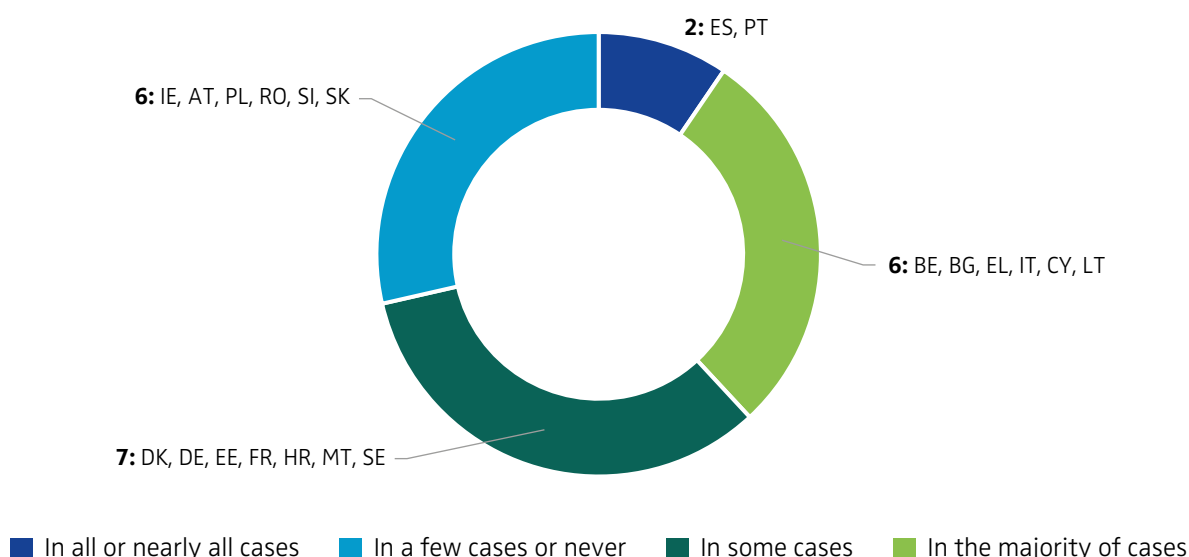
The only Member State to report an increase in the frequency of consulting independent bodies since 2021 is **Portugal**, although the same evidence has been provided for both 2021 and 2024. The CITE is consulted on the majority of policies, laws and programmes developed relating to its mission (equality between women and men in employment and vocational training), an increase from only some cases in 2021 <sup>(55)</sup>. In contrast, both **Croatia** and **Lithuania** reported consulting independent bodies less frequently in 2024 (in few cases or never, 0–25 %) than in 2021 (in some cases, 25–50 %).

<sup>(55)</sup> This reported increase might be linked to different interpretations by the NFPs. The CITE, which plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality within the labour market, has a focused remit. Most likely, 'all or nearly all cases' refers to relevant laws/policies, while the previously reported consultation on 'some cases' might have been in relation to all laws/policies.



**The rate of consultation with the independent body differs from the rate of adjustments following such consultations.** In five Member States (DK, AT, RO, SK, SE) the rate of consultation is higher than the rate of adjustment, whereas the opposite is observed in seven Member States (BE, BG, EL, HR, CY, LT, PT), with the rate of consultation being lower than the rate of adjustment. However, overall, **the number of consultations with the independent bodies that lead to adjustments is low** (see [Figure 5.14](#)). Eight Member States (BE, BG, EL, ES, IT, CY, LT, PT) record adjustments taking place in all or the majority of cases. In four of these Member States (BE, ES, IT, PT), the independent bodies focus exclusively on gender equality. Seven Member States (DK, DE, EE, FR, HR, MT, SE) indicate adjustments in some cases, and six Member States (IE, AT, PL, RO, SI, SK) report adjustments in few cases or never. In **Cyprus**, consultations take place when new or existing policies, laws and programmes are discussed before a parliamentary committee, and while the independent body, the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights, is only consulted in some cases, its opinions are embraced and taken into account in the final decision, often leading to adjustments.

**Figure 5.14. Consultation of the independent body leading to adjustments, 2024**



NB: No data about Czechia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary, the Netherlands and Finland.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

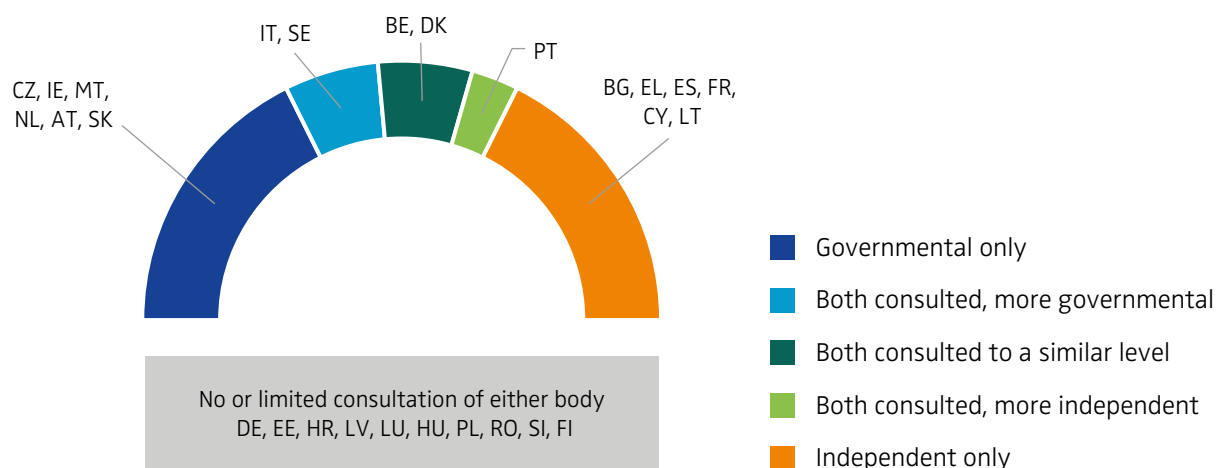
**Lithuania** reports the largest increase in consultation leading to adjustments in 2024 compared with 2021. While the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson is consulted only in a few cases, the majority of such consultations result in adjustments to policies (compared with only in a few cases in 2021). **Greece** reports an increase in its post-consultation adjustment rate to the majority of cases in 2024, compared with some cases in 2021. By contrast, **Estonia, Austria and Romania** report a decline in the number of consultations leading to adjustments in 2024 (compared with 2021) <sup>(56)</sup>.

**Rates of consultation with the independent body are lower than with the governmental body.** Only two Member States (DK, ES) consult the independent body in all or most cases, whereas five (CZ, DK, MT, AT, SE) consult the governmental body in all or most cases.

<sup>(56)</sup> Those reported increases might be linked to different interpretations by the NFPs. See the methodological report (EIGE, 2025) for additional information.



**Figure 5.15. Consultation rate, governmental and independent bodies**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**Denmark** is the only Member State where both the independent body and the governmental body are consulted in all or most cases. Each ministry is required to conduct its own gender equality assessment, which suggests that the independent body may supplement the work done within each ministry. This seems to demonstrate a robust commitment to ensuring that gender perspectives are systematically considered, while also promoting transparency and accountability in the development of these policies, laws and programmes. However, the rate of adjustment following consultation with the governmental body, the Ministry of Digital Government and Gender Equality, is unknown, and the adjustment rate for the independent body, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, is only 25–50 %.

In **Czechia**, the Rules of Procedure of the Government dictate that all materials submitted for a government meeting have to be presented to all ministers for their comment or opinion (Government of the Czech Republic, 2018), meaning that the governmental gender equality body, the Department for Gender Equality, is consulted in all cases. While the independent body, the Public Defender of Rights, in theory has access to comment on all documents that will be discussed by the government, its lack of resources means that this is beyond its capacity and that in practice consultations are provided only in some cases.

**Spain** is the only Member State that reports consultations with the independent body and resulting adjustments happening in all cases (scoring a maximum 2.0 for subindicator H3d). Meanwhile, there is no consultation procedure in place for Spain's governmental gender equality body, because all departments and ministries have their own requirement to complete gender impact assessments. The governmental body's lack of engagement in consultation, and its expanded remit to consider gender equality alongside other equality-related functions, may influence the increased reliance on consultation with the independent body, facilitated through their close structural link.

## 6. Despite a certain level of commitment to collect sex-disaggregated data and produce gender statistics, greater efforts are needed to ensure dissemination, accessibility and effective use

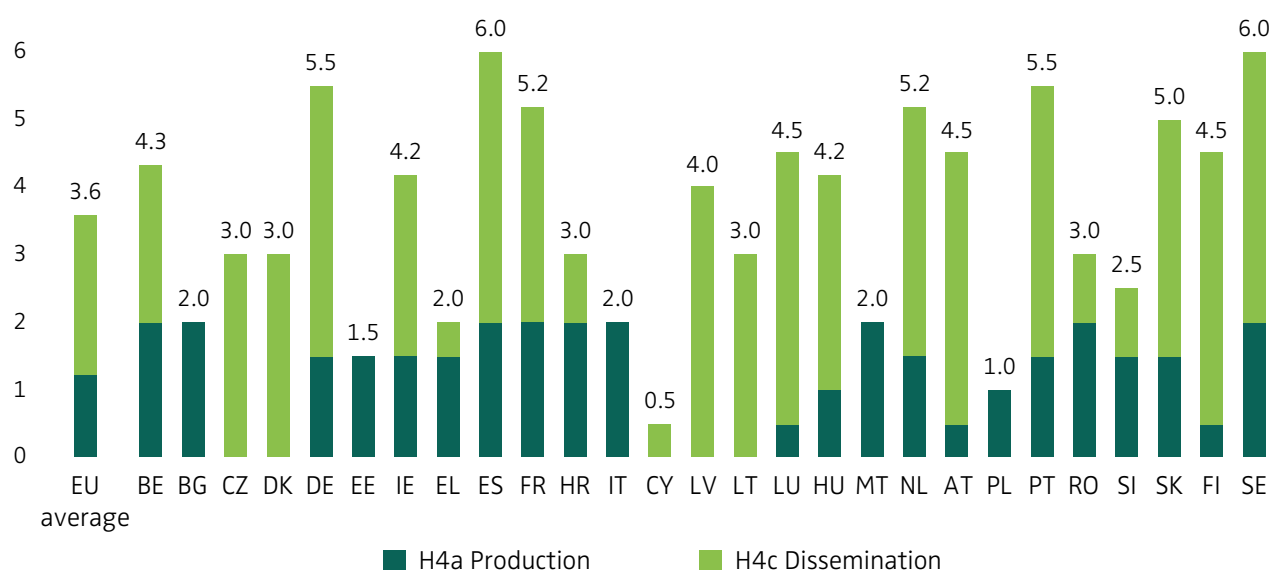
The BPfA emphasises the importance of collecting and using sex-disaggregated data to monitor progress towards gender equality in the third strategic objective of Area H. Indeed, such data is crucial to identify gender gaps and inequalities and to understand the different impacts of policies and programmes on women and men.

In response, indicator H4 comprises two subindicators, which measure Member States' commitments to the production of statistics disaggregated by sex (H4a) and the effectiveness of their efforts to disseminate those statistics (H4c).

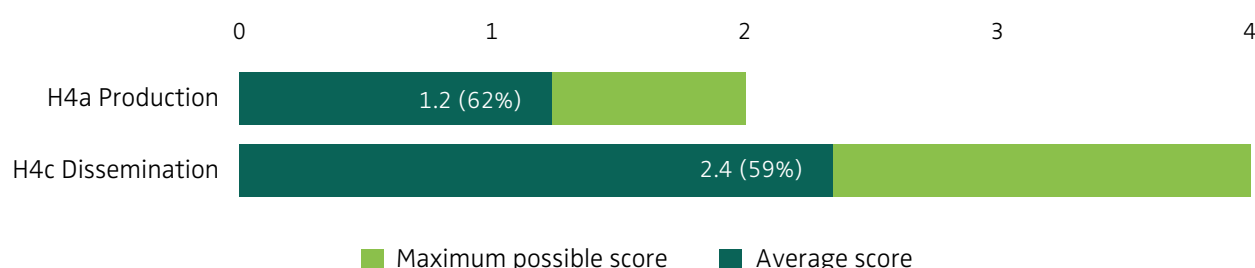
### 6.1. There are significant variations in commitments to produce and disseminate gender statistics

**While the average score for Member States on indicator H4 on gender statistics is 3.6 out of 6 (60 %), there are significant disparities between countries** (see [Figure 6.1](#)). **Spain** and **Sweden** both scored the maximum possible (6), closely followed by **Germany** and **Portugal** (both 5.5). In contrast, **Poland** scored 1.0 and **Cyprus** scored 0.5 out of 6. Average scores for the two subindicators were similar in relation to the maximum possible, with 1.2 out of 2, or 60 %, for H4a, dealing with commitments to produce gender statistics, and 2.4 out of 4, or 59 %, for H4c, dealing with dissemination (see [Figure 6.2](#)). However, because H4c contributes two thirds of the total score for indicator H4, it has more impact on the differences between countries.

Although a legal obligation on national statistical institutes and other public bodies to collect data disaggregated by sex (whenever it is relevant to do so) is clearly a useful mechanism to ensure that data describing the situations for women and men is available as an evidence base for policymakers, it is not a precondition. Indeed, the data shows four countries that score at least 3 out of 4 for their efforts to openly disseminate gender statistics without recourse to any legal obligation or other formal agreement to compile the data in the first place (CZ, DK, LV, LT).

**Figure 6.1. Scores for indicator H4, production and dissemination of statistics disaggregated by sex, 2024**

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**Figure 6.2. Average scores for each subindicator of indicator H4 (gender statistics), 2024**

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

The average score for indicator H4 (gender statistics) in 2024 (3.6) was slightly higher than in 2021 (3.4), though this partly reflects the inclusion of **France** and **Ireland** in 2024. If these countries are excluded from the comparison, the average score in 2024 was 3.5 – a minimal change from 2021. Nevertheless, there were some significant changes at the country level.

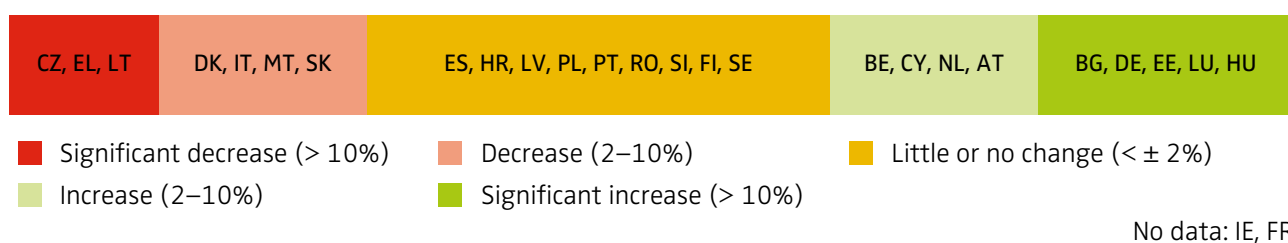
Five of the 25 countries for which a comparison is possible<sup>(57)</sup> scored significantly more (> 10 %) for indicator H4 in 2024 than in 2021 (see [Figure 6.3](#)), though for **Bulgaria** and **Hungary** this is at least partly linked to incomplete data being provided in 2021. For both **Germany** and **Luxembourg**, the improvements derive from higher scores for subindicator H4c (dissemination), while for **Estonia** it derives from subindicator H4a (production). This latter change reflects an obligation on the Ministry of Justice to collect sex-disaggregated crime data to meet the requirements of the Istanbul Convention.

<sup>(57)</sup> Data was not provided by Ireland and France in 2021.

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At the same time, there were significant decreases (> 10 %) in scores for indicator H4 in three cases ([Figure 6.3](#)). The declines in **Czechia** and **Greece** result from lower scores for subindicator H4c (dissemination), as one or more relevant websites for the open sharing of gender statistics have been closed down. **Lithuania** lost points from both subindicators.

**Figure 6.3. Changes in scores for indicator H4, 2021–2024**



NB: Changes for Bulgaria and Hungary at least partly derive from incomplete data for subindicator H4a in 2021.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

## 6.2. Governments have varying levels of commitment to the production of statistics disaggregated by sex

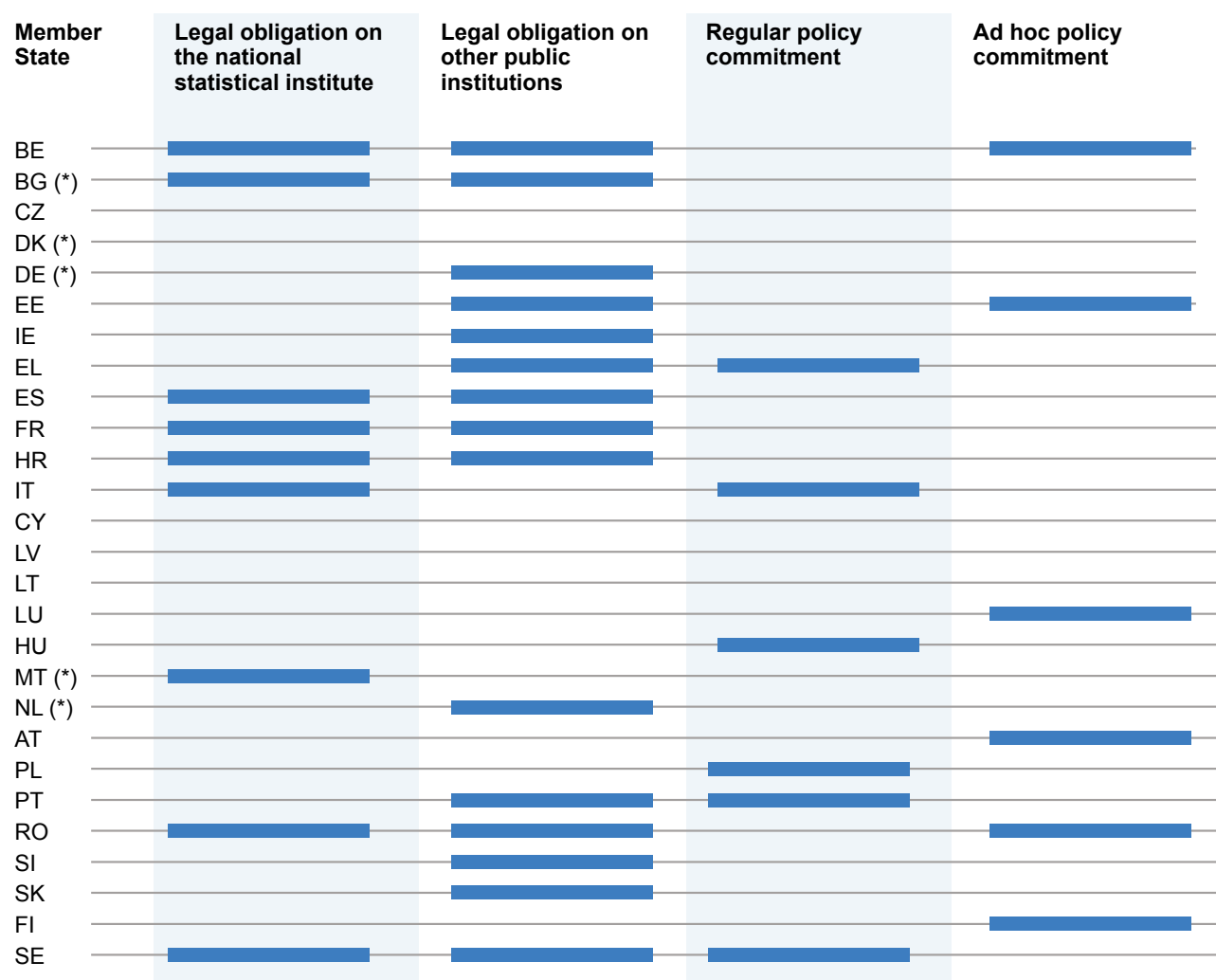
The European Commission's 2020–2025 gender equality strategy outlines the importance of gender statistics in achieving gender equality. It stresses the need for comprehensive and accessible data to support policymaking and track progress.

Subindicator H4a, production, assesses the extent and strength of Member States' commitments to producing sex-disaggregated statistics. It considers whether the commitment is a legal obligation (excluding EU regulations) or another type of agreement; which entities are responsible (e.g. national statistics offices or other public institutions); and the frequency of data collection (regular or ad hoc).

**In 2024, 22 Member States had some form of obligation or agreement in place to collect sex-disaggregated data. However, the levels of commitment vary, with only minor changes across a few Member States since the previous data collection<sup>(58)</sup> (see [Figure 6.4](#)).**

Member States' interpretation of what constitutes an 'other agreement' varies and can refer to cases of isolated actions to collect sex-disaggregated data by specific institutions. It can also refer to overarching agreements for administering sex-disaggregated data and producing gender statistics; the latter type of agreement reflects a stronger approach to mainstreaming gender in statistics.

<sup>(58)</sup> In 2021, 18 Member States reported having some form of obligation or agreement to collect sex-disaggregated data. By 2024, this number increased to 22 Member States. However, this apparent increase is due to the lack of data in 2021: Ireland and France did not provide any data, while Bulgaria and Hungary submitted incomplete data with 'Don't know' responses.

**Figure 6.4. Member States' commitments to collect sex-disaggregated data, 2024**

(\*) Data covers Member States that report 'Don't know' as an answer for one category.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**There is a legal obligation on the national statistical institute to collect sex-disaggregated data in nine Member States (BE, BG, ES, FR, HR, IT, MT, RO, SE). In 2021, such an obligation was reported in seven Member States (BE, ES, HR, IT, MT, RO, SE).**

One example of a legal commitment for national statistical institutes is in **Malta**, where Article 10 of the Malta Statistics Authority Act 2000 requires the National Statistics Office to provide information on a range of topics including 'gender issues'. Importantly, the article also requires that the information be made widely available, including to 'the general public'. In **France**, the Circular of 8 March 2000 on the adaptation of the state's statistical apparatus to improve information on the situation of women and men mandates that the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies should coordinate a network of statisticians in each ministry to develop and collect sex-disaggregated data. Based on this data, the institute should create an annual dashboard on gender equality issues to provide a clear overview of the status of women in society (Ministère de l'Économie, des Finances et de l'Industrie, 2000).

Extending this legal obligation to other public institutions can reflect a comprehensive approach to collecting sex-disaggregated data. **In 15 Member States (BE, BG, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, NL, PT, RO, SI,**

SK, SE), **other public institutions are legally required to collect sex-disaggregated data. There has been little to no progress on that statistic since 2021.** In **Romania**, Article 4 (d) of Government Decision No 177/2016 mandates that the NAEQ, the governmental body for gender equality, has a legislative obligation to incorporate the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data as part of its functions.

Of the nine Member States with a legal obligation on the national statistical institute to collect statistics disaggregated by sex, only **Italy** and **Malta** do not also have a legal obligation on other public institutions.

**Ireland** has strengthened its commitment to collecting sex-disaggregated data with the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021, which mandates certain employers to publish gender-based pay information. In 2024, the act was amended to require all organisations with over 150 employees to report their gender pay gaps. While Directive (EU) 2023/970 sets different reporting periods based on employee numbers<sup>(59)</sup>, **Ireland** requires annual reporting for all eligible workplaces (Government of Ireland, 2024).

A total of **12 Member States** (BE, EE, EL, IT, LU, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, FI, SE) **have other kinds of formal agreements to collect sex-disaggregated data, with limited progress since 2021.**

In six Member States (EL, IT, HU, PL, PT, SE), there are agreements to regularly collect sex-disaggregated data. Although these agreements may not carry the same weight as legal commitments, they still represent a structured and ongoing effort to recognise the importance of sex-disaggregated data. In **Greece**, in addition to a legal obligation on public institutions to collect sex-disaggregated data, there is a memorandum of cooperation between the General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights and the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT). This outlines a framework for cooperation in which ELSTAT commits to providing the Secretariat with comprehensive sex-disaggregated data from surveys, which the Secretariat can then use to inform and shape policies to promote gender equality (ELSTAT and General Secretariat for Gender Equality, 2014). In **Portugal**, the national statistical institute, Statistics Portugal, received a European Economic Area grant to enhance the national statistical system on gender equality by reviewing, updating and improving the Gender Database, creating an information system that covers various dimensions of gender (in)equality. This system will enable interregional and international comparability. It will also monitor policy measures from the action plan for equality between men and women that goes with Portugal's 2018–2030 strategy for equality and non-discrimination, and address other information needs, such as the sustainable development indicators.

Six other Member States (BE, EE, LU, AT, RO, FI) have agreements in place to collect sex-disaggregated data on an ad hoc basis. This type of commitment reflects efforts made by governments or national statistical institutes to address emerging policies or specific areas of concern. The national statistical institute in **Finland** produces data on gender equality, and regularly collaborates with public bodies such as the Finnish Institute for Welfare and Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. These efforts are complemented by ad hoc agreements between the Gender Equality Unit and Statistics Finland to carry out data collection on various issues, such as pregnancy discrimination. In **Luxembourg**, ad hoc agreements are set up between ministries and the statistical office to record sex-disaggregated data on specific issues (e.g. the interior and justice ministries record sex-disaggregated data in the context of violence against women). However, the lack of coordinated initiatives leaves the capture of gender statistics to the will of ministries and public institutions, which practise it infrequently. In **Estonia**, the Ministry of Justice is now required to collect crime statistics with a gender breakdown in accordance with the Istanbul Convention. Although this change is reflected in the score for subindicator H4a (up to 1.5 from 0.5), the scope of the improvement is clearly limited, affecting just a single ministry.

<sup>(59)</sup> Employers with over 250 employees must report their gender pay gap data annually to the relevant monitoring bodies, while employers with over 150 employees are required to report their data once every three years.

**The presence of multiple obligations in collecting and reporting sex-disaggregated data underscores the commitment to comprehensive gender statistics and the importance of such statistics in shaping effective policies.**

**In 2024, 11 Member States** (BE, BG, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, PT, RO, SE) **reported multiple agreements or commitments.** While implementing multiple obligations does not affect the score for H4a, it can provide an insight into how much importance a Member State places on gender statistics. Alongside existing legal obligations, both **Belgium** and **Romania** have adopted an ad hoc agreement for sex-disaggregated data collection involving some ministries and/or the gender equality bodies, while **Sweden** has implemented an agreement for the regular collection of pay data in companies with at least 10 employees <sup>(60)</sup>.

The multilayered legal framework present in each of these Member States, combined with their regular or ad hoc agreements, highlights a comprehensive approach to ensure that sex-disaggregated data is consistently collected and utilised. In turn, this facilitates informed policymaking and promotes gender equality across multiple domains.

### 6.3. Efforts to disseminate gender statistics and make them accessible vary widely

Access to high-quality data that describes the current situation and shows what progress is (or is not) being made is crucial not only as an evidence base for policymakers but also to raise awareness of gender equality issues among the general population. Accordingly, subindicator H4c assesses the effectiveness of efforts by Member State governments to ensure that sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics are readily available and accessible to the widest possible audience. The assessment considers the existence of dedicated websites or sections of websites specifically for gender statistics and the accessibility of the data and related information (reports and analysis).

**Sixteen Member States have either a specific website** (FI, DE, LU, ES) **or a section of the website of the national statistical institute** (CZ, DK, IE, FR, LV, LT, HU, NL, AT, PT, SK, SE) **dedicated to the dissemination of statistics disaggregated by sex** (see [Figure 6.5](#)).

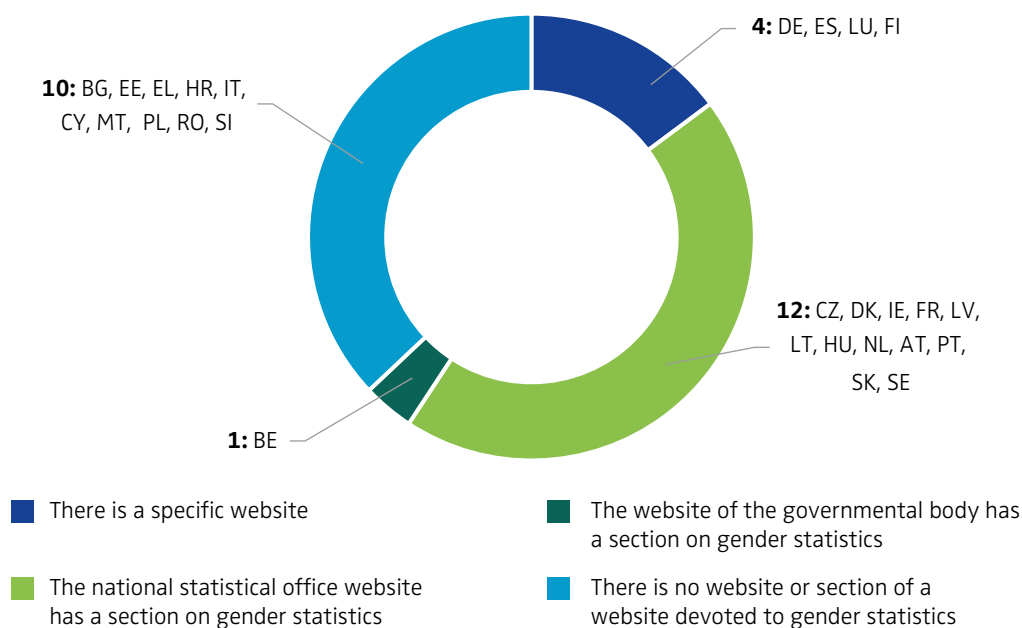
Having a dedicated website or a section of the national statistical institute website for gender statistics indicates that specific resources have been allocated to make sex-disaggregated data readily available to the public. This implementation not only enhances data accessibility but also demonstrates commitment to providing relevant gender statistics, which is essential for evidence-based policies. Similarly, when the national statistical institute includes a section on gender statistics, it reflects the integration of sex-disaggregated data into the country's main statistical framework. This approach highlights institutional recognition of the importance of this data, ensuring that users can access this information within the broader context of national statistics.

<sup>(60)</sup> All employers must conduct an annual pay survey to identify, address and prevent unfair gender pay differences and other unfair employment terms in the workplace. Employers with at least 10 employees must also document their survey and analysis efforts.



6. Greater efforts are needed to ensure dissemination, accessibility and effective use

**Figure 6.5. Use of government websites to disseminate statistics disaggregated by sex, 2024**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**Germany** provides accessible and comprehensive gender statistics through multiple dedicated online resources. The Online Gender Equality Atlas offers a comprehensive overview of gender equality across the different regions of Germany. Available in both German and English, this platform provides detailed data on gender disparities in areas such as employment, education and political participation. The bilingual availability ensures that both national and international stakeholders can access and utilise the data effectively. Similarly, **Luxembourg's** Observatory of Equality (Observatoire de l'Égalité) is a dedicated website that focuses exclusively on gender statistics. This platform offers extensive data on various aspects of gender equality, including employment, education, health and political participation.

**Spain** also demonstrates a strong commitment to providing accessible and comprehensive gender statistics through dedicated online resources. The Institute of Women hosts a dedicated website (Women in Numbers, or Mujeres en Cifras), which focuses exclusively on gender statistics. This platform provides a wide range of data on various aspects of gender equality, including employment, education, health and violence against women. The existence of a specific website for gender statistics highlights **Spain's** dedication to data transparency and accessibility, ensuring that stakeholders can easily access crucial data to inform policy and advocacy efforts.

**Spain** and **Germany** each dedicate a specific section of their national statistical institute to gender statistics. Since 2023, the website of **Germany's** Federal Statistical Office has had a dedicated section on gender equality indicators. Accessible from the main topics menu of the site, the page provides a range of regularly updated indicators focused on showing differences between the sexes and trends through time together with brief explanations of the data and why it is important. **Spain's** National Statistical Institute also contributes to the accessibility of gender statistics through its dedicated online publication on gender statistics. This section within the institute's website integrates gender statistics into the broader national statistical framework, reflecting an institutional recognition of the importance of gender-specific data.

In other countries, which do not have a specific website, specific sections of the national statistics offices are dedicated to gender statistics. This is the case in **Denmark**, where Statistics Denmark hosts a



dedicated section on gender equality, offering a wide range of data on various aspects of gender equality, including education, health, income and employment. This platform provides key indicators that illustrate the differences and similarities between the lives of men and women in Denmark. Similarly, **Austria's** national statistical institute also hosts a dedicated section on gender statistics, 'Gender Statistik', which provides extensive data on various aspects of gender equality readily available to the public. To cater to a broader audience and enhance the usability and reach of its gender statistics, Austria also offers an English version of its gender statistics section. **Slovakia's** Statistical Office publishes *Women and Men in Slovakia*, which provides a detailed overview of sex-disaggregated data across various fields such as demography, labour market, health, education, science and technology, criminality, violence and justice, public life and decision-making. The content is supplemented with international comparisons and graphical annexes, along with methodological notes to aid understanding.

The availability of these dedicated sections highlights Member States' efforts to improve data transparency and accessibility, ensuring that stakeholders can easily access crucial data to inform policy and advocacy efforts.

The website of **Belgium's** Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (Belgium's gender equality body) has a specific part on gender statistics and indicators, which includes a collection of sex-disaggregated statistics about a wide range of areas in which the federal government has authority. Such a set-up is scored slightly lower because, while it indicates that gender statistics are available, they are not hosted by the national statistical institute, which is typically the primary source for data seekers. This might suggest a less centralised approach to data dissemination, which could affect ease of access.

**Ten Member States** (BG, EE, EL, HR, IT, CY, MT, PL, RO, SI) **do not have a specific website or section of the national statistical institute website devoted to gender statistics, an omission that indicates a lack of readily accessible gender statistics.** This absence can hinder efforts to promote gender equality and make it difficult for stakeholders to obtain data necessary for informed analysis and evidence-based decision-making.

Some efforts are to be noted in both **Estonia** and **Romania**, where specific websites have been developed to monitor the situation with the 17 SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, and those have a section dedicated to SDG 5, on gender equality.

In **Greece**, the website that had been dedicated to the provision of gender statistics was no longer available in 2024. The disappearance of such a feature (a marked step backwards since 2021) has been attributed to budgetary issues, linked to the relocation of the gender equality body within a new ministry, which resulted in the stopping of funding allocated to updating the website. This information highlights how a lack of adequate resources can have a negative impact on the effectiveness of Member States' efforts to disseminate gender statistics and comply with the BPfA objectives.

The **accessibility of gender statistics** is crucial for ensuring that stakeholders can easily find and use the data. Therefore, some further questions sought to assess the comprehensiveness and user-friendliness of the websites, based on three key criteria (each contributing one third of a point to the total score): a thematic breakdown of statistics; providing direct access to relevant datasets that can be both viewed online and downloaded; and providing direct access to relevant publications and online analyses of gender statistics.

**Of the 17 Member States that have either a dedicated website** (FI, DE, ES, LU) **or a section of the website of the national statistical institute** (CZ, DK, IE, FR, LV, LT, HU, NL, AT, PT, SK, SE) **or of the gender equality body** (BE) **dedicated to gender statistics, 16** (all but France) **provide a thematic breakdown of the covered statistics** (see [Figure 6.6](#)).

## 6. Greater efforts are needed to ensure dissemination, accessibility and effective use

A thematic breakdown of statistics allows users to navigate the data more easily by categorising it into relevant topics such as employment, education and health. This organisation enhances the user experience by making it simpler to locate specific information. A website that includes a thematic breakdown demonstrates a commitment to user-friendly data presentation, which is essential for effective data utilisation.

Based on the information from the 16 Member States with websites providing thematic backgrounds of gender statistics (BE, CZ, DK, DE, IE, ES, LV, LT, LU, HU, NL, AT, PT, SK, FI, SE), it is possible to identify some common thematic breakdowns available on gender statistics websites across various countries (see [Figure 6.6](#)). The most prevalent themes include labour market issues (employment and income), education and health, with these breakdowns available in 15 countries (all but Finland). These topics often benefit from large-scale survey data, typically adhering to EU standards (e.g. Labour Force Survey, Statistics on Income and Living Conditions and European Health Interview Survey), in which a sex breakdown is mandatory, facilitating easier compilation. Data is also available on violence and crime in 13 of those 15 Member States (all but Ireland and Sweden) and on decision-making and power in 11 of the 15 (all but Ireland, Hungary, Austria and Sweden). Some themes are less frequently covered, such as care work, which is available in nine countries (DK, DE, ES, LV, LT, LU, HU, NL, AT). Five countries (BE, CZ, DK, LV, AT) include a thematic breakdown on social security, while two (IE, AT) provide data on transport. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics data is available in a few countries, including Czechia, Denmark and Austria.

**Figure 6.6. Thematic breakdown of gender statistics by country, 2024**

Member State	Labour market issues	Education	Health	Violence and crime	Decision-making and power	Care work / time use	Social security	Transport	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
BE									
CZ									
DK									
DE									
IE									
ES									
LV									
LT									
LU									
HU									
NL									
AT									
SK									
PT									
FI									
SE									

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**In 16 of the 17 Member States that have a website or section of a website dedicated to gender statistics (all but Belgium), the relevant website or section of a website provides direct access to the relevant datasets, which can be both downloaded and viewed online. In Belgium, data is only available for download in PDF, not a readily usable format for secondary use/analysis.**

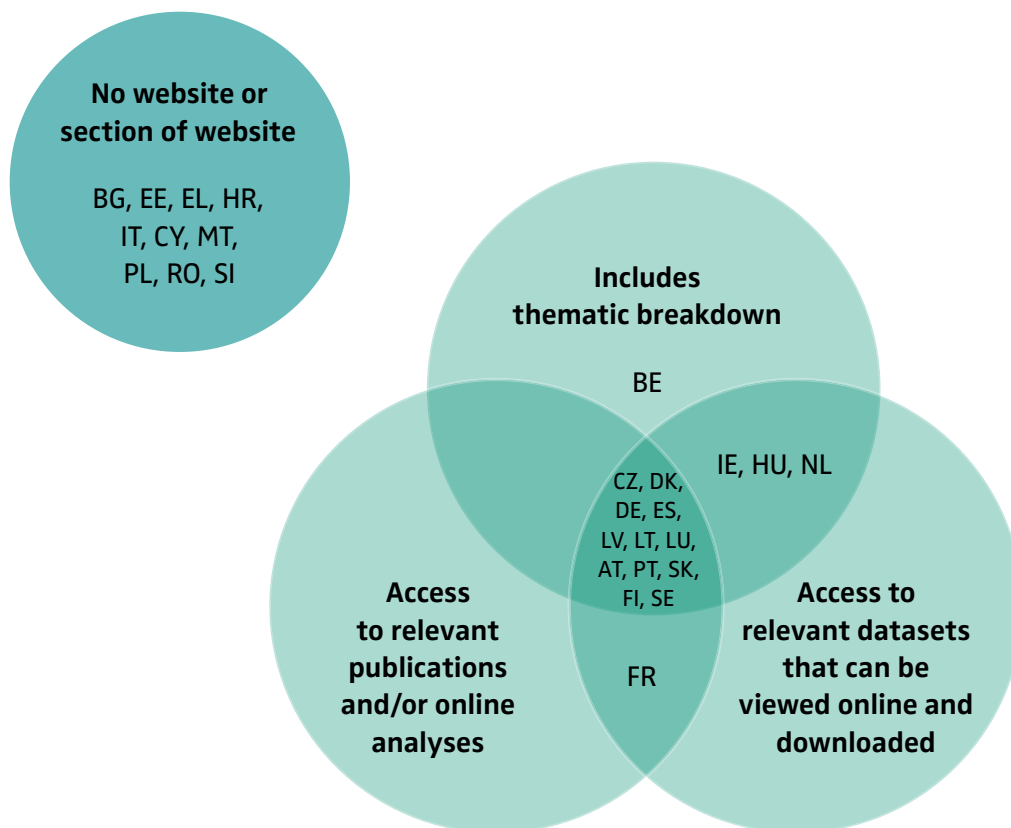
Providing direct access to relevant datasets that can be both viewed online and downloaded is critical for transparency and usability. This feature allows users to engage with the raw data, perform their own analyses, and integrate the data into their research or reports. Such functionality supports open data principles and empowers users to make data-driven decisions.

The inclusion of diverse topics and the ability to directly download datasets support detailed analysis and informed decision-making, reflecting efforts towards data transparency and accessibility.

**Of the 17 Member States with a website or section of a website, 13 (all but Belgium, Ireland, Hungary and the Netherlands) provide direct access to relevant publications and/or online analyses of gender statistics on their website or web page.** This feature is new for **Germany** and **Luxembourg** since 2021.

Direct access to relevant publications and online analyses of gender statistics provides users with context and insights derived from the data. These resources help users understand the implications of the statistics and how they relate to broader gender equality issues. By offering access to these materials, the website enhances its educational value and supports informed policymaking and advocacy ([Figure 6.7](#)).

**Figure 6.7. Accessibility of gender statistics, 2024**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

In **Estonia**, this data spans various domains such as population, economy and social life, and data is accessible through multiple platforms. Despite the comprehensive nature of these resources, the dispersion of datasets across different ministries can pose challenges for users seeking consolidated information. While the availability of sex-disaggregated data is still limited overall in **Romania**, the country reports some improvement since 2021 in updating its data collection and reporting systems, particularly in relation to monitoring SDG 5, on gender equality.

**Eighteen Member States** (BE, DE, EL, ES, FR, HR, CY, LV, LU, HU, NL, AT, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE) **report having regular** (i.e. ideally at least once a year) **publications**, such as reports or infographics by national statistics offices and/or other governmental bodies that analyse gender statistics. Examples include **France**, where a panorama on the state of gender equality (available in French and in English) is published every year. When possible, data is presented by sex and other characteristics, and each year a thematic dossier provides intersectional analysis of a specific issue (e.g. in 2023 the dossier specifically looked at inequalities faced by women aged 50+). **Cyprus** has launched an annual publication, *Gender Statistics*, consisting of a collection of indicators with sex-disaggregated data in 2023, albeit with limited analysis of the data (Cyprus Statistical Service, 2023).

In the **Netherlands**, the *Emancipation Monitor (Emancipatiemonitor)* is published every two years by Statistics Netherlands and the Netherlands Institute for Social Research. It provides comprehensive insights into the state of gender equality in domains such as education, labour, income and health (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2024).

**Romania's** gender equality body publishes gender statistics every year, based on its own data and data published by EIGE, in its Gender Statistics Database (Agenția Națională pentru Egalitatea de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați, n.d.). In addition, every two years, the national statistics institute publishes a countrywide analysis and data about the situations of women and men living and working in **Romania** (National Institute of Statistics, 2023).

An additional seven Member States (BG, CZ, DK, EE, IE, IT, PL) report having only ad hoc publications. While these publications might be important, their ad hoc nature suggests a lack of systematic effort. **Lithuania** and **Malta** report having no publications on gender statistics.

Subindicator H4c also considers the dissemination of gender statistics through alternative channels such as newsletters, social media posts and other innovative communication tools to ensure continuous and accessible updates on gender-related data.

**Almost half of the Member States** (BE, DE, ES, HR, LV, LU, NL, AT, PT, RO, SI, FI, SE) **report the regular use of alternative channels to bring information on gender statistics to a wide audience.**

More traditional dissemination methods like **press releases** are regularly issued in five countries (BE, HR, LV, NL, AT). These releases often coincide with significant dates, such as International Women's Day, to draw attention to gender statistics (e.g. Statistik Austria, 2024a). **Newsletters** remain a staple for keeping stakeholders informed on a regular basis in **Latvia** and **Finland**. For instance, Finland's Centre for Gender Equality Information used newsletters to provide regular updates on the latest data and analyses.

In several Member States (DE, EL, ES, HR, LV, LU, PT, RO, SI, FI, SE), national statistical institutes and other governmental bodies have adopted a multichannel strategy to maximise the impact and accessibility of gender-related data. These diverse and innovative dissemination methods ensure that gender statistics are not only accessible but also engaging and relevant to a wide audience, fostering greater awareness and understanding of gender equality issues.

**Social media** have become a powerful tool for engaging the public with gender statistics. Nine Member States (ES, HR, LV, LU, PT, RO, SI, FI, SE) report using platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok to share quick updates, infographics and links to more detailed reports. Innovative formats like **podcasts and videos** are also being used to disseminate gender statistics. **Portugal**'s CIG has launched a 'Gender in Perspective' podcast, discussing gender-related topics through statistics <sup>(61)</sup>, while **Spain**'s Institute of Women has produced a series of videos to highlight gender gaps in different areas (Instituto de la Mujer y para la Igualdad de Oportunidades, n.d.a). **Spain** also publishes a specialised biannual magazine, *InMujeres – Feminist monographs*, which focuses on disseminating and highlighting gender gaps, showcasing a commitment to raising awareness through detailed and thematic content (Instituto de la Mujer y para la Igualdad de Oportunidades, n.d.b).

<sup>(61)</sup> The podcasts are supported by a European Economic Area grant. See an example here: 'The impact of motherhood on wages' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rvgPKCwhoI>).

## 7. CSOs' perspectives on and experiences of institutional mechanisms for gender equality: key findings and insights

In the context of this official data collection exercise, and to reflect the aims of the BPfA with regard to the role of CSOs in contributing to the development and monitoring of the gender equality policy framework and in holding institutional mechanisms accountable, this study gathered the perspectives and experiences of CSOs, with a focus on ongoing trends in the status of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming at the country level.

This chapter presents an overview of these key findings.

### 7.1. CSOs highlight significant variability in the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms across Member States

**Although there has been legislative progress, the practical implementation of gender equality policies across Member States remains inconsistent, largely due to the lack of mandatory reporting and enforcement mechanisms, which undermines their effectiveness.**

Despite improvements in legal and policy frameworks, CSOs consider that the practical application of gender equality laws remains inconsistent across Member States. Their effectiveness varies significantly, with a lack of monitoring frameworks and tools making it difficult to assess their impact.

'Advances have been made over the past five years, that is undeniable, but there is still much to be done, especially with the tools we already have, but we need funds to develop and implement them to achieve real structural change.'

CSOs expressed concerns about the limited transformative impact of gender equality strategies and action plans, citing a lack of mandatory reporting and enforcement. They highlighted the need for comprehensive approaches that address various dimensions of gender inequality, including economic equality, decision-making and challenging gender stereotypes.

'This government's position is that we have a strategy, so we do what we want, they put the funding towards what suits them ideologically. They just don't implement that strategy if it doesn't suit them, and they don't trust the experts.'

'There is a theoretical commitment to gender equality, but there is no real binding implementation plan.'

**Political shifts and external events have hindered the prioritisation and implementation of gender equality initiatives.**

CSOs also noted that changes in government leadership and the rise of conservative or anti-gender movements have negatively affected the development and implementation of gender equality policies. External events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, have further strained the ability of governments to prioritise gender equality initiatives. CSOs were critical of the lack of proper implementation plans and financial resources for gender equality strategies and action plans.

'The current political elite does not see gender equality as an important issue that needs systematic investment of money and effort. They don't understand that it will cost us some money now, but it will result in a robust and efficient economy soon.'

**The integration of an intersectional approach in gender equality policies is still limited and requires greater awareness and understanding.**

Despite these challenges, some progress has been identified in integrating an intersectional approach into key legislative and policy documents for gender equality in a few Member States. However, CSOs consider that this remains an emerging practice, with many stakeholders lacking awareness and understanding of how sex and gender interplay with other personal characteristics. CSOs emphasised the need for comprehensive and inclusive policies that address the diverse and intersecting needs of all individuals.

'Yes, at least on the surface and in discourses we see more of recognition of intersectionality. But at this stage it is a little unclear how profound the change is.'

## 7.2. CSOs note an impact on their effectiveness in promoting transformative changes

**While CSOs noted some positive developments, such as the establishment of dedicated ministries or departments for gender equality, they consider that these institutions are often relegated to a secondary level within the governmental architecture.**

CSOs reported that changes in government and structural reorganisations have sometimes led to stronger commitments and more resources for gender equality. CSOs consider that dedicated ministries or departments for gender equality are more effective in ensuring targeted policy development and implementation. However, they noted that, in many cases, the integration of gender equality responsibilities into broader ministries has diluted the focus and resources needed to address these issues effectively.



'The Ministry of Equality has a lot of political will, they are eager to do things and are moving things forward.'

'The main obstacle I see is the political weight of this ministry within the government. The minister meets with us and says it's great. But in reality, the Ministry of the Interior ... doesn't care, and the Ministry of Justice ... doesn't care either. So it goes nowhere. My feeling is that it is a sub-ministry with very few resources and, most importantly, it does not have a favourable balance of power when it comes to obtaining something from the Ministry of the Interior or the Ministry of Justice.'

'[Gender equality] is not a priority area for the department. And look, you know in, in a way it's understandable because they have so many competing priorities'.

**CSOs highlighted that insufficient resources and lack of coordination limit the effectiveness of gender equality bodies.**

Effective coordination is essential for ensuring that gender equality policies are implemented consistently and comprehensively across all sectors. However, according to CSOs, lack of coordination and clear mandates among different ministries and departments often leads to fragmented efforts and limited transformative impact on gender equality issues. This fragmentation results in duplicated efforts, gaps in service delivery and missed opportunities for collaboration, ultimately weakening the overall impact of gender equality initiatives.

CSOs expressed concerns about the limited power and insufficient human and financial resources of gender equality bodies, which hinder their ability to implement gender equality initiatives and gender mainstreaming effectively. Without adequate funding and staffing, these bodies struggle to carry out their mandates and achieve meaningful progress.

In some Member States, CSOs reported that regional and local authorities play a significant role in gender equality policies, but their efforts are often uncoordinated and under-resourced. This lack of coordination between the national, regional and local levels can lead to inconsistencies in policy implementation and a lack of comprehensive strategies to address gender equality issues. Regional and local authorities may also face challenges in accessing the necessary resources and expertise to effectively implement gender equality initiatives, further exacerbating the problem.

Similarly, independent bodies, such as ombudspersons for gender equality, are seen as having potential but often lack the power and resources to make a significant impact. In some Member States, CSOs regretted or feared the merging of gender equality responsibilities in larger or less independent bodies. CSOs worried that the move to create a body with a multi-ground mandate could strain resources (and expertise) allocated to gender equality.

'There is also some pressure to combine the Ombudsman for Gender Equality and the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman. It is difficult to say is it political pressure or pressure from the state administration. It is also difficult to say would that be beneficial or a negative development and what is the rationale behind it, is there pressure to diminish the resources provided for the Ombudsman for Gender Equality? We don't know.'



CSOs pointed out that the implementation of gender mainstreaming is inconsistent across various sectors and levels of government. In their opinion, that is often due to insufficient political power, lack of clear mandates and inadequate resources. They reported that the lack of a unified approach and the absence of strong leadership and accountability mechanisms result in uneven progress and missed opportunities to advance gender equality comprehensively. For example, CSOs reported that, without clear mandates, different sectors may prioritise gender equality differently, leading to gaps and inconsistencies in policy outcomes.

'The political weight of the action plans, including the mainstreaming efforts, is quite low. This means that the efforts cannot be very ambitious, nor is their implementation monitored.'

### 7.3. CSOs' involvement often lacks systematic and regular consultation processes

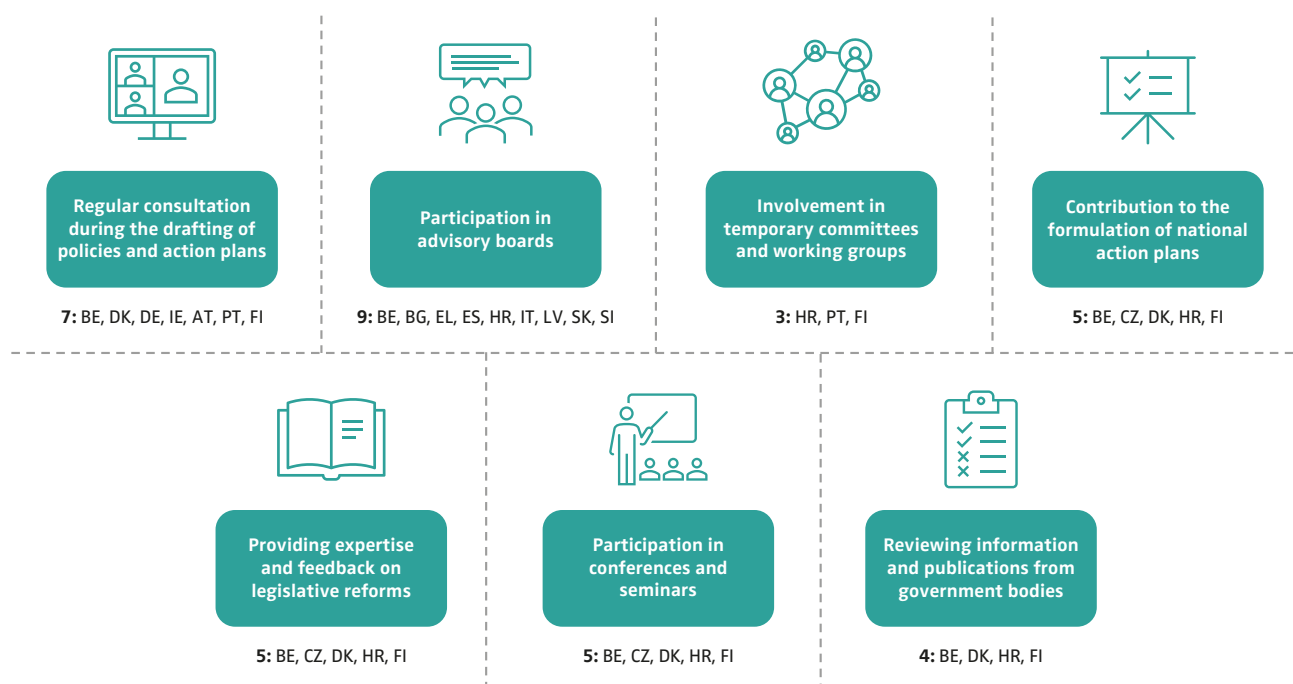
The findings identify issues in relation to the accountability mechanisms of institutional frameworks for gender equality and the role of CSOs in contributing to gender equality policy development and monitoring.

**Consultation and involvement of CSOs in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies are limited, in spite of formal mechanisms being in place.**

Involving CSOs is a crucial way to ensure their expertise informs the development and success of gender equality policies. Indeed, the actions identified for governments under Area H of the BPfA include ensuring the involvement of a 'diverse range of institutional actors in the public, private and voluntary sectors'. In addition, BPfA paragraph 201 (b) mentions the following precondition for the effective functioning of these bodies: 'Institutional mechanisms or processes that facilitate, as appropriate, decentralized planning, implementation and monitoring with a view to involving non-governmental organizations and community organizations from the grass-roots upwards' (United Nations, 1995).

The 2024 data collection explored the existence of formal mechanisms for the involvement of CSOs in the development of gender equality policy; this question was not scored, though. Almost all Member States (except the Netherlands and Poland) report that there is a formal mechanism in place for the involvement of CSOs in the development of new or existing policies, law or programmes in gender equality policy (see [Figure 7.1](#)). They are regularly consulted during the drafting of policies and action plans (BE, DK, DE, IE, AT, PT, FI), participate in advisory bodies (BE, BG, EL, ES, HR, IT, LV, SK, SI) and are involved in temporary committees and working groups (HR, PT, FI). CSOs also contribute to the formulation and monitoring of national action plans, provide expertise and feedback on legislative reforms and participate in conferences and seminars (BE, CZ, DK, HR, FI). In addition, CSOs often receive information and publications from governmental bodies, ensuring they are well informed and can effectively contribute to gender equality initiatives (BE, DK, HR, FI). Their involvement is facilitated through formal mechanisms such as advisory councils, national platforms and consultative bodies, which help integrate their insights and ensure that gender equality policies are comprehensive and effective.

**Figure 7.1. Involvement of CSOs in the development of new or existing policies, laws or programmes in gender equality, 2024**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

One such consultative body is the Gender Equality Committee in **Latvia**, which promotes cooperation among public institutions, CSOs, social partners, local authorities and other stakeholders to develop and implement policies on equal rights and opportunities for women and men. In **Portugal**, the CIG includes an advisory body with three sections: interministerial, NGO and technical-scientific (Decreto Regulamentar n.º 1/2012). The NGO section has grown from 12 associations in 1975 to 40 representatives today, focusing on citizenship, human rights, women's rights and gender equality. Its roles include contributing to policy definition, collaborating on policy implementation and providing opinions on the CIG's annual programme and projects.

However, in spite of formal mechanisms identified in almost all Member States, CSOs across the EU described how their involvement often occurs on an ad hoc basis, lacking a systematised and regular consultation process. CSOs overwhelmingly reported that consultations through existing consultative bodies are not conducted systematically, but only occur when a new law, action plan or strategy is being prepared. Several CSOs expressed frustration that, instead of being a genuine co-creation process, these consultations have become mere formalities.

'Consultation with civil society feels like just ticking a box.'

'There is no strategic cooperation. And also in relation to the ministries. It is very much up to the individual politicians whether they find it interesting. ... This means that our involvement in discussions and decision-making processes related to gender equality is often inconsistent and subject to the discretion of those in political power.'

'Since it's not something institutionalised, this collaboration depends a lot on the minister in place. ... it's very much linked to the choice of the minister. Really, you can see that there are ministers who collaborate, others who don't. ... Since it's not institutionalised and it's a bit ad hoc, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.'

'Another challenge is that the ability to influence policies and legislation isn't formalised. This means it often depends on individual government ministers or officials and how much they value involving civil society organisations. As a result, there's a lot of variability, making the process inconsistent and unpredictable.'

'In this legislature, they have tried to listen to us, at least with more attention.'

'In the last two years, collaboration with the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men has been very good, largely depending on the secretary of state's openness to have consultation meetings with us and support our projects.'

CSOs also reported an absence of follow-up mechanisms regarding their input, leading to scepticism about the meaningfulness of their participation.

'The participation in these councils or spaces does not mean that what women's organisations decide will be taken into account. The fact that it is not binding leaves the work and effort somewhat unanchored.'

'Government bodies and offices typically do not favour official meetings or collaborations with civil society organisations. It often happens that the proposals and opinions submitted by civil society organisations are ignored or only formally acknowledged without having a real impact on decision-making processes. As a result, civil society organisations often feel that their efforts are in vain, as the government does not take the issues and suggestions they raise seriously.'

'We are not structurally part of any committee or advisory group, but through ad hoc consultation moments, we sometimes feel listened to, for example during the development of the national action plan.'

'Typically, the process focuses more on informing CSOs of government activities, with less emphasis on actively seeking and considering their positions. Ideally, the process should involve a two-way exchange, where CSOs are not only informed of government activities but also have their perspectives heard and considered.'

### **The lack of transparency and inclusivity in consultation mechanisms hinders the inclusion of marginalised groups in gender equality policies.**

In addition, the lack of clear selection criteria for CSOs to participate in consultation processes was identified as an important issue and often resulted in favouring larger and better-known organisations over smaller and/or regionally located organisations. CSOs interviewed noted that it is easier for well-established and well-known organisations to use 'unofficial channels' to interact with government bodies.

In contrast, smaller CSOs mentioned that they struggle to be heard and to contribute due to their lack of connections within government bodies. It was also noted through several interviews that marginalised groups of women are often represented by smaller CSOs. Their limited access to consultation platforms hinders the inclusion of an intersectional approach in gender equality policies, as the voices of marginalised groups are not adequately represented, leading to a lack of diverse perspectives in policy development.

'The general tendency is probably that it is easier to be a large civil society organisation than a smaller one, and there is a *mastodon tendency*, which is also supported by the way, for example, funds are distributed, giving enormous amounts to those who are already giants and then giving much poorer and much more uncertain grants to those who are small.'

'There was a lack of involvement for migrant women, and there was actually not even a mention of migrant women in that strategy as such. So we always felt left out, when these discussions are being held on gender equality in particular and when the government is organising and planning for them.'

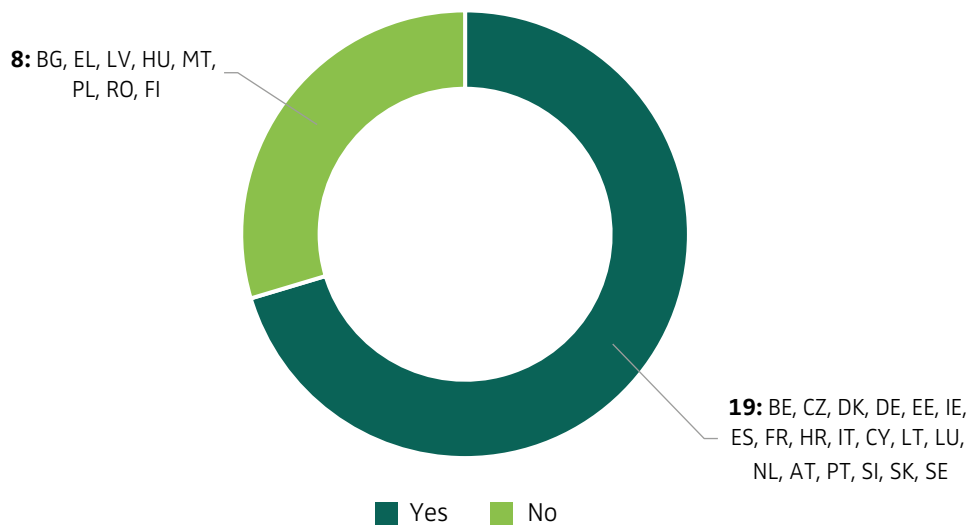
'Our impression is that that more involvement is invited from CSOs that are more specialised and can bring expertise on intersectionality, for example organisations that represent and have expertise on gender and sexual minority issues and rights, of racialised and ethnic minority groups and so on.'

## **7.4. CSOs often have to compete against each other for limited resources**

Sufficient resourcing for governmental gender equality bodies is crucial not only for enabling these bodies to perform their functions effectively but also for ensuring they can fully support and fund the work of CSOs working to promote gender equality. According to paragraph 350 of the BPfA, governments should play a role in strengthening the capacity of NGOs to mobilise resources for gender equality. The European Commission's 2020–2025 gender equality strategy aligns with this goal by emphasising the 'joint responsibility' required to achieve gender equality in the EU, which necessitates collaboration between EU institutions, Member States and civil society (European Commission, 2020). Indeed, NGOs play a vital role in implementing gender equality policies and programmes in the EU by advocating for gender equality, providing essential services, raising awareness, holding governments accountable and ensuring that the voices of diverse communities are included in policymaking processes.

Therefore, a question was added to the 2024 data collection about whether the governmental body had distributed funds to NGOs in the past five years. This question was not scored. In total, 19 Member States provided funding to NGOs, while 8 Member States did not ([Figure 7.2](#)).

**Figure 7.2. Distribution of funds to NGOs by governmental body in the last five years, 2024**



NB: Greece, Cyprus, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Finland and Sweden each have two governmental bodies. Austria, Portugal and Sweden each have one governmental body that distributes funds to NGOs and one governmental body that does not, so they are captured as 'Yes' above.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

While the data collected does not specify the exact purposes for which governmental bodies distribute funds, **Belgium, Lithuania, Slovenia** and **Sweden** have reported distributing these funds towards general gender equality issues, while countries like **Croatia** specify providing funds to address specific forms of gender discrimination, such as for the protection of women with disabilities (Office for Gender Equality, Government of the Republic of Croatia, n.d.; Croatian Union of Associations of Persons with Disabilities, 2023). Meanwhile, **Czechia, Estonia, Spain** and **Portugal** distribute funds to gender equality and other equality- and discrimination-related fields, such as LGBTQI issues (CIG, 2022). Finally, funding from **Spain, Cyprus** and **Austria** is provided to address and prevent gender-based violence (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2023).

CSOs remarked that the reallocation of funding towards other equality-related areas often comes at the expense of broader gender equality initiatives. CSOs explained that, while addressing these issues is important, the limited resources available mean that equality-related CSOs can be made to compete rather than cooperate with each other. Limited resources create reliance on unpaid contributions from CSOs, which can have a detrimental operational impact, meaning that collaboration and consultation with the government can be time-consuming and financially burdensome. This financial insecurity limits the number of participating CSOs, particularly smaller CSOs, which become reliant on uncertain and competitive sources of funding, an issue that has been reported in several countries.

'The ministry does not allocate funds for small projects or small organisations. Practically, it is extremely difficult for new organisations to start and develop.'

'There is no specific funding for women's associations. Even the technical and financial support from the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality to women's NGOs has supported organisations that promote equality but are not women's associations.'

**The lack of long-term, sustainable funding represents a structural barrier to the involvement of CSOs and hinders their capacity to foster long-term transformative changes in gender equality.**

In almost all Member States, CSOs reported that consultation mechanisms rely on CSOs' unpaid contributions, which is particularly burdensome for smaller organisations that lack the necessary resources to participate. Although funding for CSOs has increased in some Member States, it is often provided on an annual basis, making it difficult for these organisations to implement long-term, sustainable actions towards transformative changes.

Insufficient funding (as well as the regulations governing such funding) has a negative impact on CSOs' performance, human resources and ability to participate in advisory activities for the state. It also means that governments do not sufficiently use the expertise and capacity of CSOs to implement gender equality and gender mainstreaming policies.

'In reality, between two commissions, we do a lot of free work for the High Council for Equality to compensate for a structural lack of funding.'

'We don't have the capacity to organise long-term advocacy campaigns around those policy proposals. ... While we can develop and submit policy proposals based on our research and insights, sustaining advocacy efforts over an extended period requires resources and infrastructure that we currently lack. This gap in our capabilities means that our proposals may not receive the continuous support and pressure needed to drive legislative or policy changes.'

'Organisations with more than 10 employees have more clout to delve into file building and writing applications for subsidies. For small organisations, this is difficult.'

'We are constantly figuring out how we can get the next funds. The entire women's movement spends an enormous amount of resources figuring out how to survive for two years.'

## 7.5. National changes have weakened CSO involvement in gender equality policy development

In some Member States, CSOs reported a noticeable decline in involvement in policy development, attributed to national political shifts and structural changes in consultation bodies. This decline has weakened the role of CSOs in co-designing public policies and reduced their influence on gender equality initiatives. The absence of follow-up mechanisms to ensure that CSO input is considered and acted upon further diminishes the meaningfulness of their participation.

'The associations are somewhat weakened in their role of participating in public policies, and the Ministry of Equality between Women and Men is also weakened.'

'Our view is that the possibilities of involvement are diminishing. We have experienced difficulties in getting contact with ministries and their secretaries of states; they will not give us their time. But this development is quite recent; for a long time it felt that our ability to influence the government was stable ... We perceive that the number of committees or working groups set up for renewing and drafting of legislation has diminished, thus we are invited to participate less often to give our views on legislative reforms. It appears as if legislation is drafted more by the state officials (administrators in ministries) and thus there is less external involvement'.

'It was a very good committee, but it no longer functions, it no longer exists. It is currently being reformed and is being diminished. ... However, with the reform, it will become, in our analysis, a recording room of policies managed by the government.'

## 7.6. The rise of conservative anti-gender movements poses significant challenges to gender equality advocacy

The emergence of new actors, including conservative anti-gender movements, has also been identified as a significant challenge by CSOs. These movements have gained social and political influence, hindering efforts towards substantive change in gender equality. This has created a polarised environment in which advocacy for gender equality faces significant opposition and political obstacles.

'Now it's going downhill on this issue, all the efforts we've been making, they've been going in a good direction, they're coming back against us.'

'Then various people from different organisations began to be nominated, where the criterion was that you are a representative of an organisation that works with women, instead of being a representative of an organisation that works with gender equality.'

'Well, there are some competing aims and actors; for instance, anti-gender agendas and organisations are gaining more foothold and they are competing for the same resources for funding.'

In conclusion, the perspectives and experiences of CSOs provide invaluable insights into the current state of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming across the EU. The involvement of CSOs is crucial for ensuring that gender equality policies are comprehensive and effective, yet their participation often occurs on an ad hoc basis, undermining their potential impact.

Establishing systematic and regular consultation processes that genuinely incorporate CSO input into policy development and implementation remains crucial. The challenges of limited resources, political shifts and the rise of conservative movements continue to affect the environment for gender equality. The role of CSOs and their involvement are key factors in achieving transformative changes in gender equality across the EU.



# Conclusions

EIGE's fourth data collection exercise on the status of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming to inform the monitoring on Area H of the BPfA shows small gains since 2021. This highlights the need for increased efforts to drive further advancements on gender equality, especially since comparisons between the strength of institutional mechanisms have shown that strong gender equality bodies go hand in hand with more gender-equal societies.

BPfA Area H strategic objective 1 emphasises the importance of robust national mechanisms and other governmental bodies to promote gender equality effectively. EIGE's findings reveal **notable disparities in the status of commitment to the promotion of gender equality (indicator H1) between Member States, with modest progress**. Despite visible commitments to gender equality, a key area for improvement is governmental accountability, particularly in the form of actionable and measurable action plans for gender equality alongside a system for regular and mandatory reporting.

In most Member States, responsibility for gender equality is vested in a senior government minister. However, governmental gender equality bodies are most often established as a unit or section within a ministry rather than being an entire ministry. This position affects the visibility and influence of those bodies, and their ability to effectively promote gender equality policy implementation and more effective gender mainstreaming.

While most governmental gender equality bodies carry out all the functions identified by the BPfA as crucial for achieving gender equality, a minority of Member States have bodies with a mandate that focuses exclusively on gender equality. Expanding a governmental body's mandate to consider other equality-related functions can offer an integrated approach that addresses intersecting inequalities and multiple forms of discrimination simultaneously. However, such expansion may pose challenges for the focus on gender equality and may strain resources, making it difficult to address all areas effectively. Similar trends are observed in independent gender equality bodies. In the few countries where bodies focus exclusively on gender equality, independent bodies are better able to perform all functions identified as essential by the BPfA.

Effective gender equality bodies require a minimum number of dedicated staff and sufficient financial resources to fulfil their mandates and carry out policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. **While the number of personnel in governmental gender equality bodies has largely remained the same, the number of personnel in independent equality bodies has increased since 2021 (indicator H2)**. However, since the majority of governmental and independent equality bodies have shared mandates, efforts to promote gender equality-related issues could be boosted if more resources were allocated.

Governmental gender equality bodies with mandates exclusively focused on gender equality tend to be better resourced, and have seen the biggest increases in personnel since 2021. In contrast, those with shared mandates face significant variability in personnel, which highlights the risk to their effectiveness, particularly in executing functions related to gender equality issues. Meanwhile, most independent equality bodies dedicated solely to gender equality have fewer personnel than those with broader mandates. In addition, the majority of independent bodies that have increased their personnel since 2021 have a wider remit. However, despite these increases, those with wider mandates often have a small number of personnel working on gender equality, limiting the work carried out on gender equality issues. Therefore, both types of gender equality bodies need more resources to effectively carry out their functions.



**Data on financial resources for gender equality remains non-comparable and incomplete, indicating gaps in transparency and accountability** and the need for improvement in the availability and reporting of financial data.

BPfA Area H strategic objective 2 emphasises the importance of integrating gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects. The existence of dedicated structures is needed to support effective gender mainstreaming to facilitate coordination and ensure that gender perspectives are considered in all policy areas. Alongside structures, demonstrating a commitment to gender mainstreaming and implementing gender mainstreaming tools and methods are also key.

**While the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the Member States shows significant variability, the findings reveal a concerning decline in Member States' efforts to commit and implement gender mainstreaming since 2021 (indicator H3).**

Some countries have established comprehensive frameworks and dedicated resources to ensure the integration of a gender perspective, while others lag behind, resulting in inconsistent application and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming policies. Member States with strong legal frameworks tend to perform better in implementing gender mainstreaming. These frameworks often include legal obligations for gender impact assessments, gender budgeting and the integration of gender perspectives in all stages of policy development. However, the presence of legal frameworks alone is not sufficient to ensure enforcement and concrete implementation.

Data shows that the use of gender mainstreaming tools, such as gender impact assessments, gender budgeting and gender-sensitive language, is not widespread. These tools are essential for systematically integrating gender perspectives into policies, programmes and projects. Member States that use these tools effectively demonstrate a more comprehensive approach to gender mainstreaming.

The availability of dedicated resources, both financial and human, regular capacity development and training initiatives has a significant impact on the implementation of gender mainstreaming. The BPfA highlights that, without sufficient resources and a clear mandate, the ability to drive meaningful change in gender equality is severely limited.

**The integration of an intersectional approach into the gender equality policy framework remains limited due to a lack of understanding and use of adequate tools** in most Member States. While many national strategies for gender equality acknowledge the importance of intersectionality, CSOs report that policies fail to implement this perspective in practice, revealing a gap between the recognition of intersectionality and its effective implementation. Key stakeholders frequently lack awareness and understanding of intersectionality, leading to inadequate policy responses. This highlights the need for increased awareness of and training on gender and intersecting inequalities, to ensure that policies effectively address the needs of all groups of people.

BPfA Area H strategic objective 3 emphasises the importance of producing and disseminating gender-disaggregated data to monitor and evaluate progress towards gender equality. **The production and dissemination of gender statistics have improved slightly since 2021 across Member States, but dissemination efforts are not consistent (indicator H4).**

Collecting sex-disaggregated data is essential for understanding gender inequalities and informing policies aimed at achieving gender equality. While many Member States have made significant commitments to this effort, the strength and scope of these commitments vary. Some countries have legal obligations on their national statistical institutes to collect such data, while others rely on regular

or ad hoc agreements with public institutions. Consequently, the robustness of these frameworks differs, with some countries adopting more comprehensive approaches than others.

The findings also show that the dissemination of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics is still lacking. This gap highlights the need for better efforts to make gender statistics accessible and useful for planning and evaluation. Comprehensive and accessible data contributes to monitoring progress and making informed decisions to advance gender equality.

An intersectional approach to gender statistics is essential for addressing the diverse challenges faced by women with different characteristics, such as socioeconomic status, race or ethnicity, disability, age or sexual orientation. This approach ensures that policies are inclusive and effective. Indeed, the BPfA highlights that, without detailed and disaggregated data, it is challenging to develop and implement policies that are truly inclusive and effective in promoting gender equality. However, the findings reveal room for improvement in the practical implementation of intersectionality in data collection and analysis across the Member States.

The BPfA underscores the importance of involving civil society, particularly women's organisations and other NGOs, in the development and implementation of gender equality policies. **The effectiveness of formal mechanisms for involving CSOs in gender equality policy development varies, with many Member States lacking structured, inclusive and adequately resourced processes.** Most Member States have some type of formal mechanisms for involving CSOs in policy development, recognising the valuable and critical role that civil society plays in promoting gender equality. These mechanisms often include advisory boards (comprising representatives from CSOs as well as experts or representatives from various sectors), consultation processes and partnerships. These structures provide a platform for CSOs to contribute to the development, implementation and monitoring of gender equality policies.

The effectiveness of these mechanisms varies, with most of the Member States only consulting CSOs on an ad hoc basis. Transparency and inclusivity in consultation mechanisms are lacking, posing barriers for smaller organisations representing diverse perspectives. Resource constraints and reliance on unpaid contributions further challenge CSOs, particularly smaller ones, in their efforts to contribute meaningfully to gender equality initiatives. Financial insecurity and lack of follow-up on CSOs' input are common challenges, limiting the effectiveness of their involvement. The findings highlight the need for more structured and inclusive mechanisms to facilitate CSOs' participation and ensure their contributions are valued and impactful. This includes long-term, sustainable funding.

# Recommendations

The research findings set out in this report lead to the following evidence-based recommendations to strengthen the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms in Member States and advance Area H of the BPfA in the pursuit of addressing structural gender inequalities.

## Strengthen government commitments to gender equality

### Recommendations for EU Institutions and bodies

1. **Strengthen Member States' obligations to align with the EU policy framework by:**
  - 1.1. strengthening the **integration of gender equality into the EU's macroeconomic framework**, incorporating stronger obligations on Member States to address gender equality within the European semester process, including by setting specific targets and indicators for gender equality in national reform programmes and country-specific recommendations, with clear guidelines and monitoring mechanisms to track progress;
  - 1.2. setting **gender equality as an objective of the EU long-term budget** with budgetary targets for gender equality and gender mainstreaming interventions and activities;
  - 1.3. **mandating the application of gender mainstreaming** methods, such as *ex ante* impact assessment and gender budgeting, in the EU's long-term budget and across investment programmes and the EU funds.
2. **Promote a formation of the Council of the European Union dedicated to gender equality** that would regularly bring together EU ministers responsible for gender equality and gender mainstreaming.
3. **Consider initiating a legislative process for an EU directive on substantive gender equality** to address persisting inequalities between women and men across the EU. This directive would provide a robust legal framework to ensure that all Member States adopt and implement measures aimed at achieving transformative and substantive equality between women and men. By harmonising gender equality and gender mainstreaming standards across the EU, this directive would address persisting structural inequalities to help to realise a gender-equal society.
4. **Promote the gender-responsive incorporation into national law and implementation of the directives on standards for equality bodies**, by aligning them with the gender equality provisions of the treaties, the EU gender equality directives, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and BPfA obligations on gender equality, and the highest gender mainstreaming standards.

### Recommendations for Member States

1. **Adhere to the European Commission roadmap for women's rights and its implementation** by developing comprehensive and long-term gender equality strategies and related action plans with specific targets, indicators, adequate budgets and appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure effective implementation, accountability and sustained progress. These strategies provide a clear roadmap for gender equality efforts. Measurable goals and secured funding enable progress tracking and data-driven decision-making. Long-term strategies ensure consistency and commitment across political cycles.

2. **Address intersecting inequalities in strategic documents, with dedicated resources (including budgets).** By incorporating an intersectional perspective, policies can better tackle the unique challenges faced by different groups of women and men and therefore be more inclusive and effective. Strategic documents should include specific actions to tackle intersecting inequalities, supported by data collection and analysis to understand diverse gender experiences based on characteristics such as socioeconomic status, racial or ethnic origin, disability, age or sexual orientation. Adequate resources, including financial, human and technical support, need to be allocated to ensure the successful implementation of these initiatives.
3. **Establish accountability mechanisms to monitor the effective implementation of gender equality policies, including regular parliamentary reporting for transparency.** Official reports need to include quantitative targets and gender statistics to highlight progress and areas for improvement. Accountability mechanisms also involve empowering independent gender equality bodies to objectively assess and recommend actions for further progress towards gender equality goals and targets.
4. **Ensure the gender-responsive incorporation into national law and implementation of the directives on standards for equality bodies,** by aligning them with the gender equality provisions of the treaties, the EU gender equality directives, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and BPfA obligations on gender equality, and the highest gender mainstreaming standards.

## Strengthen the architecture and role of gender equality bodies

### Recommendation for EU institutions and bodies

1. **Strengthen gender equality mechanisms within EU institutions and bodies.** Dedicated structures, units or focal points focused on gender equality need to be established or strengthened within EU institutions and bodies to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into all policy areas. Increasing their resources and influence will enable these structures to ensure that gender equality remains a priority and is effectively mainstreamed across all EU policies and programmes. This includes strengthening EIGE by increasing its human and financial resources so that it can provide more extensive and comprehensive support to Member States and EU institutions.

### Recommendations for Member States

1. **Assign responsibility for gender equality policies to the highest levels of government.** High-level responsibility signals a strong commitment, and helps to prioritise gender equality, allocate appropriate resources and drive comprehensive and coordinated efforts across different sectors. A dedicated ministry of gender equality with its own seat on the council of ministers would further strengthen this commitment. This ministry would be responsible for developing and implementing gender equality policies, coordinating efforts across government departments and ensuring that gender equality remains a central focus in all national policies, budgets and initiatives.
2. **Build capacity and allocate sufficient personnel to gender equality bodies to enable them to carry out their functions.** Gender equality bodies need enough staff with specialised knowledge of gender

equality issues and should regularly collaborate with external experts and CSOs to enhance the capacity and credibility of these bodies.

3. **Secure dedicated budgets for the effective operation of gender equality bodies.** Dedicated funding allows gender equality bodies to plan and implement long-term strategies, conduct research, provide capacity development and support initiatives that promote gender equality. Increased funding transparency and accountability measures, such as regular audits, help to build trust and ensure that the allocated resources are making a tangible impact on gender equality.
4. **Enhance resources and collaboration with independent bodies.** Strengthening independent gender equality bodies involves enhancing their resources and fostering collaboration with CSOs. If these bodies are provided with adequate funding, staffing and training, they can operate more effectively and fulfil their mandates. Leveraging the strengths of independent gender equality bodies can create a more robust and effective framework for advancing gender equality.

## Strengthen the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming

### Recommendations for EU institutions and bodies

1. **Renew the EU's political commitment to gender mainstreaming by adhering to the European Commission roadmap for women's rights, and ensuring the adoption of a post-2025 gender equality strategy that has gender mainstreaming as a priority area with specific objectives and concrete actions.** Sustained political commitment is crucial for the long-term success of gender mainstreaming initiatives. This commitment materialises in strong leadership and accountability on the part of EU institutions; human resources and expertise; sufficient funding for gender mainstreaming activities; and the systematic inclusion of gender mainstreaming and its methods, such as *ex ante* impact assessment and gender budgeting, in the EU's strategic agendas.
2. **Implement the gender equality provisions of the better regulation agenda and the Financial Regulation and embed gender mainstreaming in key EU strategic policy documents across all policy areas (not only in those specifically dedicated to gender equality) and EU funding programmes.** By incorporating *ex ante* impact assessment and gender budgeting into all strategic documents, supported by robust data collection and dedicated resources, the Commission and EU institutions can promote gender equality more comprehensively, demonstrating a strong commitment to and vision of promoting transformative gender equality into all aspects of policy and governance, and fostering broader support from national and EU stakeholders.
3. **Communicate practical benefits of gender mainstreaming in all sectors, to gain broader support and commitment from national and EU stakeholders.** Highlighting the positive economic and social impacts of gender-responsive policies can demonstrate the value of gender mainstreaming beyond its ethical and legal dimensions and how it can lead to improved economic performance, stronger democracies, enhanced social cohesion, and better health and education outcomes. By effectively communicating these benefits, the Commission and other EU institutions can build a stronger case for gender mainstreaming and encourage its adoption across all sectors.

## Recommendations for Member States

1. **Renew the commitment to, and enhance the status of, gender mainstreaming in governance and policymaking processes.** This includes the following.
  - 1.1. **Make gender mainstreaming obligations enforceable**, by establishing legal and regulatory frameworks that mandate gender mainstreaming across all levels of government and policy areas.
  - 1.2. **Develop strategies and implementation plans for gender mainstreaming.** These plans need to outline specific steps, timelines and responsibilities for integrating gender perspectives into all policy areas, and the specific gender mainstreaming tools required to achieve this.
  - 1.3. **Ensure gender equality expertise and dedicated staff/units** with specialised knowledge on gender equality issues and budgetary resources in line ministries and governmental agencies to effectively integrate gender perspectives into all policy areas.
  - 1.4. **Establish formal structures** with the mandate of coordinating and overseeing gender mainstreaming efforts across the government and closing the implementation gap. Place these structures high in the ministry's hierarchy to strengthen their influence and effectiveness, and provide them with dedicated funding and the capacity to implement their mandates effectively.
  - 1.5. **Establish robust accountability mechanisms**, including regular monitoring, evaluation and transparent reporting, to ensure commitments are being met and gender mainstreaming efforts are effective. This includes ensuring that **independent oversight institutions** such as courts of auditors, parliaments and independent gender equality bodies are involved in overseeing gender mainstreaming initiatives to ensure transparency and accountability.
2. **Develop comprehensive gender institutional transformation strategies.** These would include competence development, targeted training and access to resources on gender mainstreaming, to equip public officials with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively integrate gender perspectives into their work.
3. **Strengthen commitment to, and the practical implementation of, gender budgeting and gender impact assessment.** This requires political will and leadership, high-level commitment from public administrative institutions, improved technical capacity of civil servants, involvement of CSOs, and the production and dissemination of gender statistics to ensure consistent application across all sectors. It is also essential to establish clear responsibilities for implementation. In addition, effective monitoring, evaluation and transparent reporting mechanisms should be instituted to track progress and hold stakeholders accountable.
4. **Address challenges and share good practices on gender mainstreaming.** Sharing successful examples and good practices from other Member States can provide valuable insights to identify and tackle specific obstacles, such as resistance to change, lack of data and insufficient resources, and can provide inspiration to overcome these challenges.



# Improve the production and dissemination of gender statistics

## Recommendation for EU institutions and bodies

1. **Promote binding instruments mandating the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data,** reporting of gender statistics, full integration of gender-sensitive indicators into official statistics and ensuring that gender considerations are embedded in all statistical activities. These binding instruments should follow the standards and fully utilise EIGE's capacity on gender statistics.

## Recommendations for Member States

1. **Enhance the integration of gender-sensitive indicators into official statistics to better capture gender inequalities.** This involves identifying and incorporating indicators that reflect gender-specific issues across policy sectors, and allocating sufficient resources for data collection to ensure that these indicators are accurately measured and reported.
2. **Develop comprehensive guidelines and provide training for data collectors** to ensure consistent and accurate sex-disaggregated data collection and development of gender statistics. Follow EIGE's standards on gender statistics and ensure that the guidelines outline standardised procedures for data collection, definitions, methodologies and reporting formats, and that training equips data collectors with the necessary skills and knowledge to apply these guidelines effectively, ensuring reliable statistics for gender-sensitive policymaking.
3. **Allocate sufficient resources for the comprehensive collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics.** This includes securing financial resources, establishing robust technical infrastructure and employing skilled personnel. Dedicated funding enables continuous and thorough data collection, while technical infrastructure ensures efficient data processing and analysis. Skilled personnel are crucial for interpreting the data and generating insights to inform policy decisions.
4. **Develop effective channels and tools for disseminating gender statistics** and making them easily accessible through specific websites or user-friendly sections of existing websites. This includes providing direct access to relevant datasets, publications and online analyses. Effective dissemination ensures that gender statistics are widely available and utilised to inform policy and practice.

# Ensure accountability and improve CSO involvement

## Recommendations for EU institutions and bodies

1. **Enhance public consultations on new and existing EU gender equality policies and legislation,** ensuring greater and broader participation of national gender equality and women's rights organisations in EU policymaking.
2. **Set up regular consultations with CSOs on key EU strategic policy processes across all policy areas and funding instruments** (beyond those specifically dedicated to gender equality) and make available funding to secure participation and build the capacity of CSOs working on gender equality to fully participate in all stages of the process, from planning to evaluation.



3. **Promote networking and the development of collaborative strategies to counter the influence of conservative anti-gender movements** and ensure that gender equality initiatives are not undermined by misinformation and regressive agendas.
4. **Ensure sustainable access to funding for CSOs** and enable CSOs working on gender equality to plan and execute long-term strategies, by developing multiannual schemes and long-term grants, build strategic partnerships as part of innovative funding structures, simplify the procedures, adjust for inflation costs and reserve funding for awareness raising and provision of advice, services and support on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

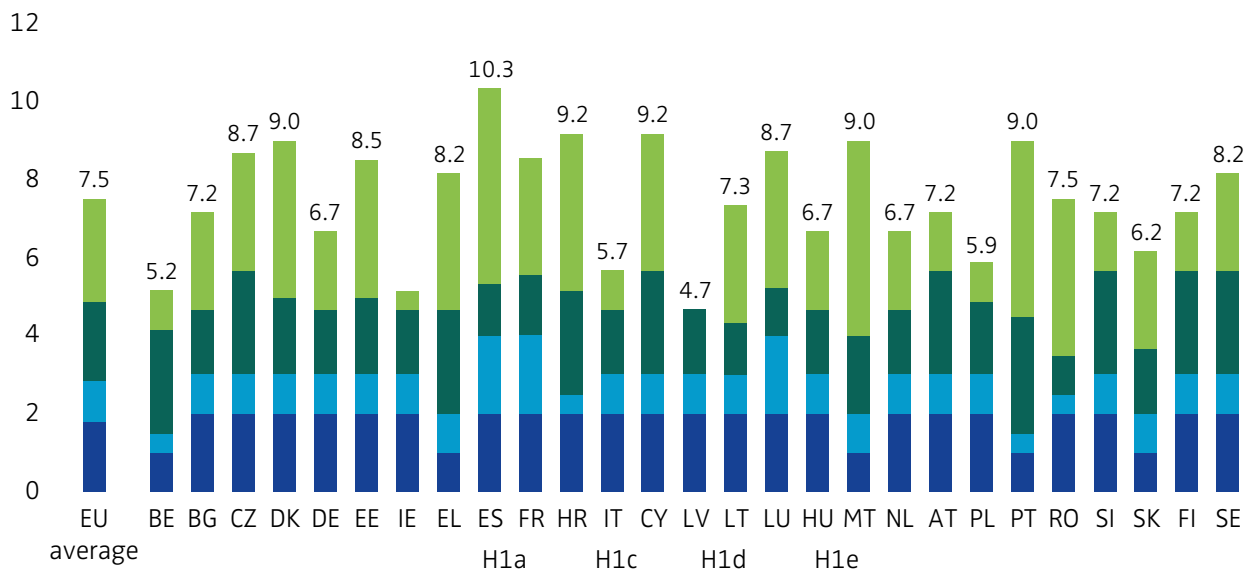
## Recommendations for Member States

1. **Establish and institutionalise regular and transparent processes for consultation with CSOs** to ensure their meaningful participation in policy development and monitoring. By establishing a structured consultation framework, governments can ensure that CSO input is integrated into policymaking in a timely and effective manner. This approach not only enhances the quality of policies but also fosters a collaborative relationship between the government and civil society.
2. **Develop clear criteria to ensure diverse representation of CSOs, including smaller and regional groups.** Involving forums or umbrella associations of CSOs that include smaller organisations helps promote an intersectional approach by ensuring that the voices of various marginalised and underrepresented communities are heard. By broadening the selection criteria, governments can ensure that policy development is informed by a wide array of perspectives and experiences, leading to more comprehensive and equitable outcomes.
3. **Set up follow-up mechanisms to act on CSOs' input and provide feedback on their inputs, to enhance transparency and accountability.** These mechanisms should include clear transparent procedures for documenting CSO contributions, assessing their feasibility and incorporating them into policy decisions where appropriate. Follow-up mechanisms ensure that the consultation process is not merely symbolic but leads to tangible actions and improvements in policymaking.
4. **Ensure adequate and predictable funding for CSOs working on gender equality.** Provide financial stability and enable transformative action, including on countering anti-gender movements and misinformation, by developing multiannual schemes and long-term grants, build strategic partnerships as part of innovative funding structures, simplify the procedures, adjust for inflation costs and reserve funding for awareness raising and the provision of advice, services and support on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

# Annexes

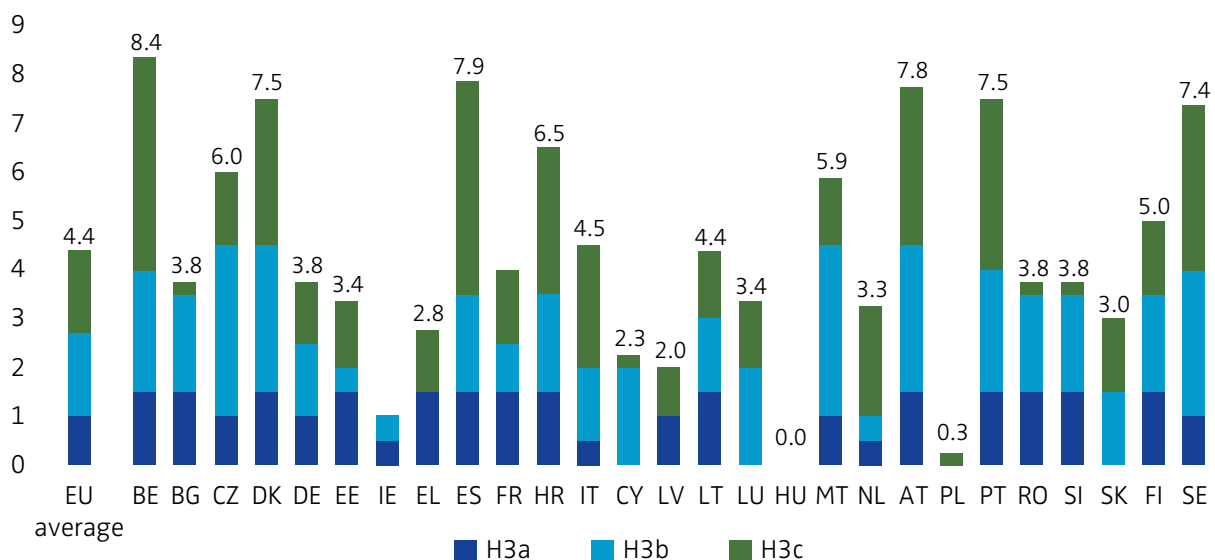
## Annex 1. Overall scores aligned with the officially adopted indicators H1 and H3

**Figure A1.1.** Scores for indicator H1, status of commitment to the promotion of gender equality, 2024 (governmental commitment only – H1a to H1e)



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

**Figure A1.2.** Scores for indicator H3, gender mainstreaming, 2024 (governmental commitment only – H3a to H3c)



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

## Annex 2. Additional (non-scored) information

### A2.1. H1e, accountability of the government gender equality body

#### A2.1.1. National gender equality action plans

[Table A2.1](#) lists the national gender equality action plans identified as being current at the time of data collection and whether these have been costed (i.e. budget set for each of the actions planned), whether they have quantitative indicators designed to monitor progress with outcomes and objectives (e.g. to reduce a specific inequality) rather than just monitor implementation (e.g. number of actions completed), and whether these indicators are regularly monitored.

**Table A2.1. National action plans**

Country	Action plan	Costed	Indicators	Monitoring
BE	No action plan			
BG	National action plan for promotion of equality between women and men 2023–2024 (Национален план за действие за насърчаване на равнопоставеността на жените и мъжете за периода 2023–2024 г.)	Partly	No	No
CZ	Annex 1: task section of gender equality strategy for 2021–2030 (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021, p. 124)	No	Yes	Yes
DK	Perspective action plan (Perspektiv- og Handlingsplan)	Yes	No	Yes
DE	No action plan			
EE	Gender equality and equal treatment programme 2024–2027 (Soolise võrdsuse ja võrdse kohtlemise programm 2024–2027)	Partly	Yes	Yes
IE	No action plan			
EL	National action plan on gender equality 2021–2025 (Εθνικό Σχέδιο Δράσης για την Ισότητα των Φύλων 2021–2025)	Yes	No	No
ES	Strategic plan for the effective equality between women and men 2022–2025 (Plan Estratégico para la Igualdad Efectiva de Mujeres y Hombres 2022–2025)	Yes	Yes	Yes
FR	Interministerial plan for gender equality 2023–2027 'All equals' (Plan interministériel pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes 2023–2027 "Toutes et tous égaux")	Partly	Yes	Yes
HR	Action plan for Implementation of the national plan for gender equality for the period until 2024 (Akcijski plan za provedbu nacionalnog plana za ravnopravnost spolova za razdoblje do 2024)	Yes	Yes	Yes

Country	Action plan	Costed	Indicators	Monitoring
IT	No action plan			
CY	National strategy on gender equality 2024–2026 (Εθνική Στρατηγική για την Ισότητα των Φύλων 2024–2026)	Yes	No	No
LV	No action plan			
LT	Action plan for equal opportunities for women and men 2023–2025 (Motery ir vyrų lygių galimybių 2023–2025 metų veiksmų planas)	Partly	No	Yes
LU	National action plan for equality between women and men (Plan d'action national pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes)	No	No	Yes
HU	Strengthening the role of women in the family and society (2021–2030) action plan (A nők szerepének erősítése a családban és a társadalomban (2021–2030) akcióterv)	No	Yes	Yes
MT	Gender equality and mainstreaming strategy and action plan (Strategija u Pjan t'Azzjoni favur l-Ugwaljanza bejn il-Generu u l-Integrazzjoni tal-Generu)	Yes	Yes	Yes
NL	No action plan			
AT	No action plan			
PL	National action plan on equal treatment 2022–2030 (Krajowy Program Działania na rzecz Równego Traktowania na lata 2022–2030)	Partly	No	No
PT	Action plan for equality between women and men (2023–2026) (Plano de Ação para a Igualdade entre Mulheres e Homens (2023–2026))	Yes	Yes	Yes
RO	Action plan for the implementation of the national strategy for the promotion of equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for 2021–2027 (Plan de acțiune pentru implementarea Strategiei naționale privind promovarea egalității de șanse și de tratament între femei și bărbați și prevenirea și combaterea violenței domestice pentru perioada 2021–2027)	No	Yes	Yes
SI	No action plan			
SK	Action plan for equality of women and men and equality of opportunity 2021–2027 (Akčný plán alebo rovnosť žien amúžov a rovnosť príležitostí 2021–2027)	No	No	No
FI	No action plan			
SE	No action plan			

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

### A2.1.2. Gender mainstreaming strategies / action plans (non-scored question)

Fewer than half of Member States (BE, CZ, EL, ES, HR, CY, MT, AT, PT, RO, SI, FI, SE) have adopted gender mainstreaming strategies and action plans applicable across government.

**Table A2.2. Overall governmental strategy or action plan on gender mainstreaming applicable across government**

Country	Overall governmental action plan applicable across government	Overall governmental action plan but application is optional	Separate action plan in all or most ministries (more than 50 %)	Separate action plan in some or a few ministries (fewer than 50 %)
BE	Yes	No	Yes	No
BG	No	No	No	No
CZ	Yes	No	No	No
DK	No	No	No	No
DE	No	No	No	Yes
EE	No	No	No	No
IE	No	No	No	Yes
EL	Yes	No	No	No
ES	Yes	No	No	No
FR	No	No	No	No
HR	Yes	No	No	No
IT	No	No	No	No
CY	No	No	Yes	No
LV	No	No	No	No
LT	No	No	No	No
LU	No	No	No	No
HU	No	No	No	No
MT	Yes	No	No	No
NL	No	No	No	No
AT	Yes	No	Don't know	Don't know
PL	No	No	No	No
PT	Yes	No	No	No
RO	Yes	No	No	No
SI	No	No	No	No
SK	No	No	No	No
FI	Yes	No	Yes	No
SE	No	No	Yes	No

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

## A2.2. H1f, mandate and function of the independent gender equality bodies

Table A2.3. Functions of the independent body, 2024

Member State	Prevention, promotion and awareness raising	Assistance to victims	Formal investigations of complaints and participations in related litigation	Cooperation				
				International/EU	National/subnational	Civil society	Consultation and recommendation	Data collection and research
BE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Don't know
BG	Partly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
CZ	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Partly	No	Yes	Yes
DK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DE	Partly	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EE	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ES	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CY	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes	Partly	Partly	Partly	Partly
LV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
LT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
LU	Yes	Yes	No	Don't know	No	Don't know	Yes	Yes

Member State	Prevention, promotion and awareness raising	Assistance to victims	Formal investigations of complaints and participations in related litigation	Cooperation			Consultation and recommendation	Data collection and research
				International/EU	National/subnational	Civil society		
<b>HU</b>	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>MT</b>	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes
<b>NL</b>	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>AT</b>	Partly	Yes	No	Partly	Partly	Partly	Yes	Yes
<b>PL</b>	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly
<b>PT</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>RO</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>SI</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>SK</b>	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>FI (*)</b>	Partly	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes	Partly
<b>SE</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

(\*) Finland has two independent bodies.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.



## A2.3. H3b, structures for gender mainstreaming

### A2.3.1. Resources of the gender mainstreaming structure (non-scored question)

**Table A2.4.** Personnel resources of gender mainstreaming structures (as currently reported)

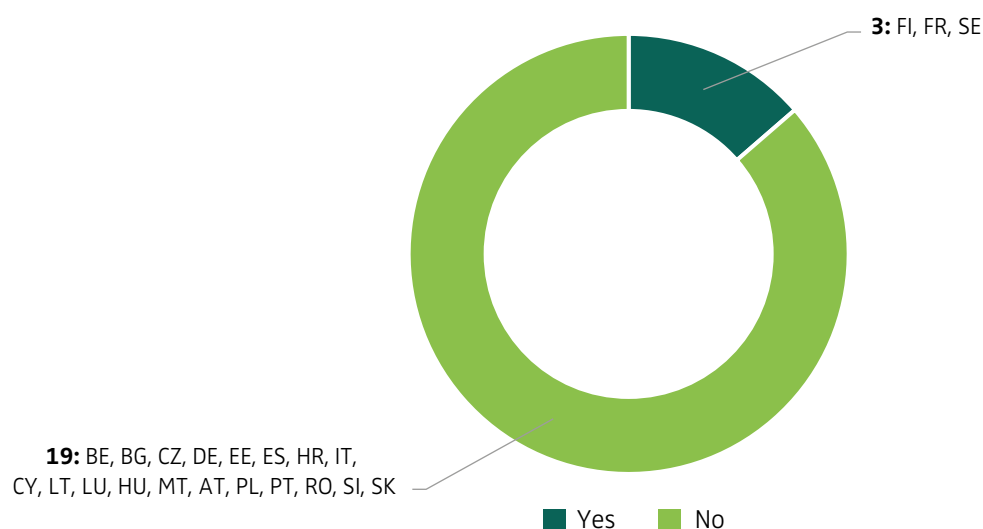
Total staff	Countries
< 5	
5 to < 10	FR, LT, SK
10 to < 25	CZ, IT, CY, LU, PT, SI, FI, SE
> 25	BE, BG, ES, HR, MT, AT, RO

NB: No structure in Ireland, Greece, Latvia, Hungary, the Netherlands and Poland. No data about Denmark, Germany and Estonia.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

### A2.3.2. Action plan for the gender mainstreaming structure (non-scored question)

**Figure A2.1.** Presence of an action plan for the governmental gender mainstreaming structure, 2024



NB: No data from Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Latvia and the Netherlands.

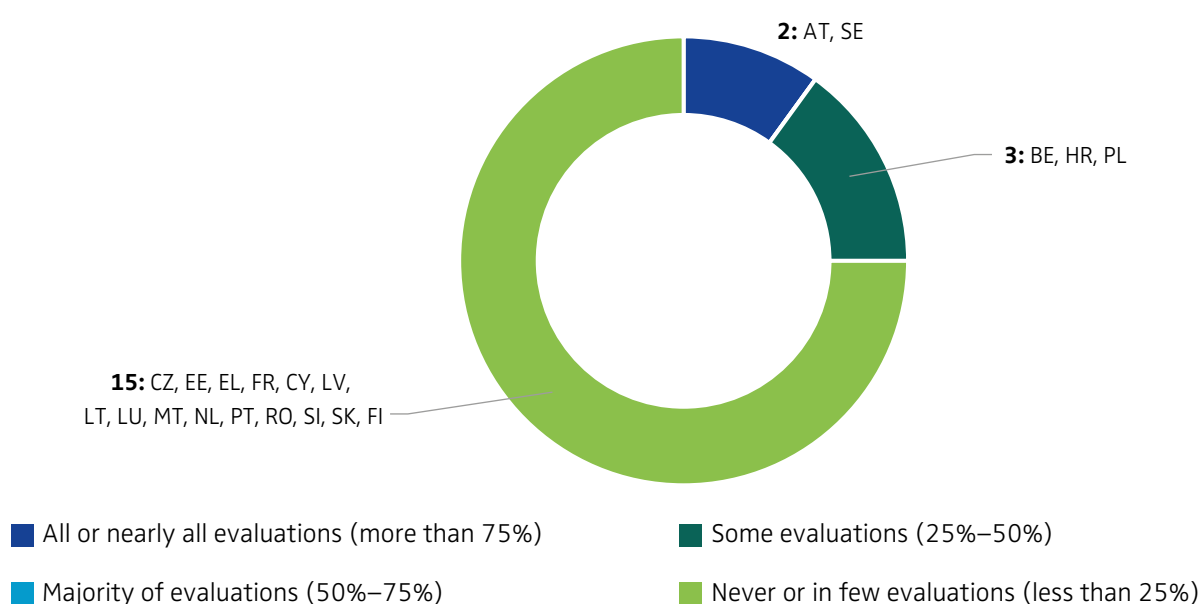
Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

## A2.4. H3c, methods and tools for gender mainstreaming

### A2.4.1. Use of gender-responsive evaluation (non-scored question)

As in 2021, very few Member States carry out gender-responsive evaluations on most policies, programmes and projects, potentially leading to unintended negative impacts for women, less accountability and a lack of progress towards gender equality objectives.

**Figure A2.2. Frequency of gender-responsive evaluations by Member States, 2024**



NB: Data about Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Ireland, Italy and Hungary is 'Don't know'.

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

### A2.4.2. Central initiatives to raise awareness about gender equality among ministries and other governmental bodies (non-scored question)

Member States were asked about the existence of central initiatives aimed at raising awareness of gender equality among ministries and other governmental bodies over the previous two years. These initiatives included public events, such as speeches that government employees were invited to attend; the distribution of printed materials like leaflets, brochures, books and audiovisual resources; workshops; and any other central initiatives.

**Table A2.5. Central Initiatives to raise awareness of gender equality among ministries and other governmental bodies in the previous two years, 2024**

Member State	Public events (e.g. public speeches that governmental employees were invited to attend)	Distribution of printed material (e.g. leaflets, brochures, books, audiovisual resources)	Workshops	Other	Total completed
BE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3
BG	No	Yes	Yes	Don't know	2
CZ	Yes	Yes	Yes	Don't know	3
DK	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	0
DE	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	0
EE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
IE	No	No	No	No	0
EL	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	3
ES	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
FR	No	No	No	No	0
HR	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3
IT	Yes	No	No	Yes	2
CY	No	No	Yes	Yes	2
LV	No	No	No	No	0
LT	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3
LU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
HU	No	Don't know	No	Don't know	0
MT	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3
NL	No	Yes	Yes	No	2
AT	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	3
PL	Yes	No	Yes	No	2
PT	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3
RO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
SI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
SK	No	No	No	Yes	1
FI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4
SE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3

Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

## A2.5. H3d, consultation with the independent bodies

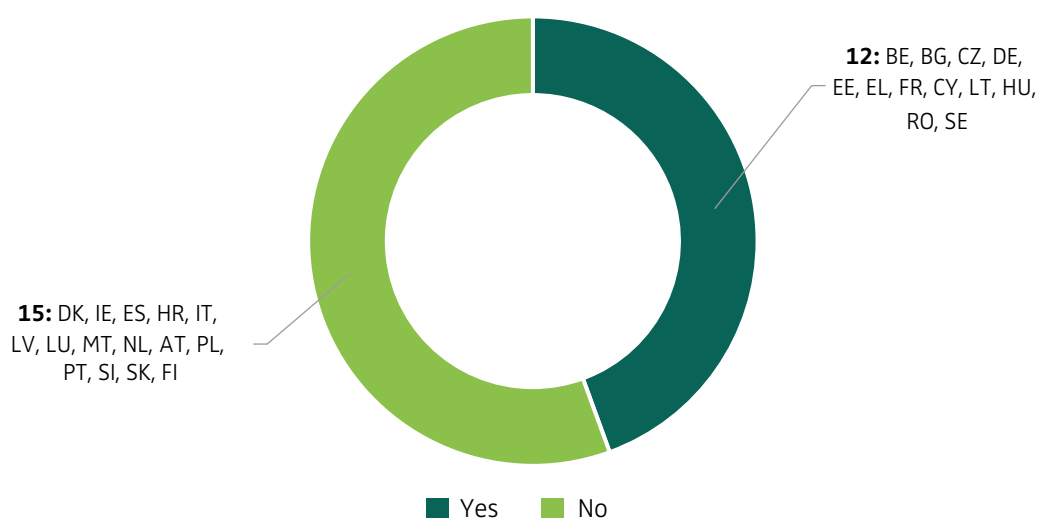
### A2.5.1. Transparent procedures for independent body consultations (non-scored question)

Article 15 of Directive (EU) 2024/1500 recommends that Member States put in place procedures to ensure that the government and public authorities consult equality bodies on legislation, policy, procedure and programmes related to the rights and obligations derived from Directives 2006/54/EC and 2010/41/EU.

To address this, answers to an additional, non-scored, question were captured in 2024, measuring whether there is a transparent procedure to ensure that the government and other public institutions can consult the independent body on legislation, policy, procedure, programmes and practice in policy fields other than gender equality. The existence of such a procedure should be set out in a binding document, such as the mandate of the independent body.

**In total, 12 Member States had a procedure in place, while 15 Member States did not.**

**Figure A2.3. Existence of a transparent procedure to ensure consultation with independent bodies, 2024**



Source: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms.

## Annex 3. Statistical correlations

Monitoring institutional structures and processes and their outputs (laws, policies, programmes) is inherently difficult because of the variety of possible approaches. The measurement framework considers compliance with objectives set out in the BPfA and a theoretical assessment of the relative merits of different structures, processes and outputs, but may not reflect all possible scenarios. The fact that the indicators have been adopted at the EU level implies an official endorsement of their validity, but any evidence that the results confirm the underlying premise of the monitoring – that stronger institutional mechanisms promote greater gender equality – would be a welcome confirmation of the approach.

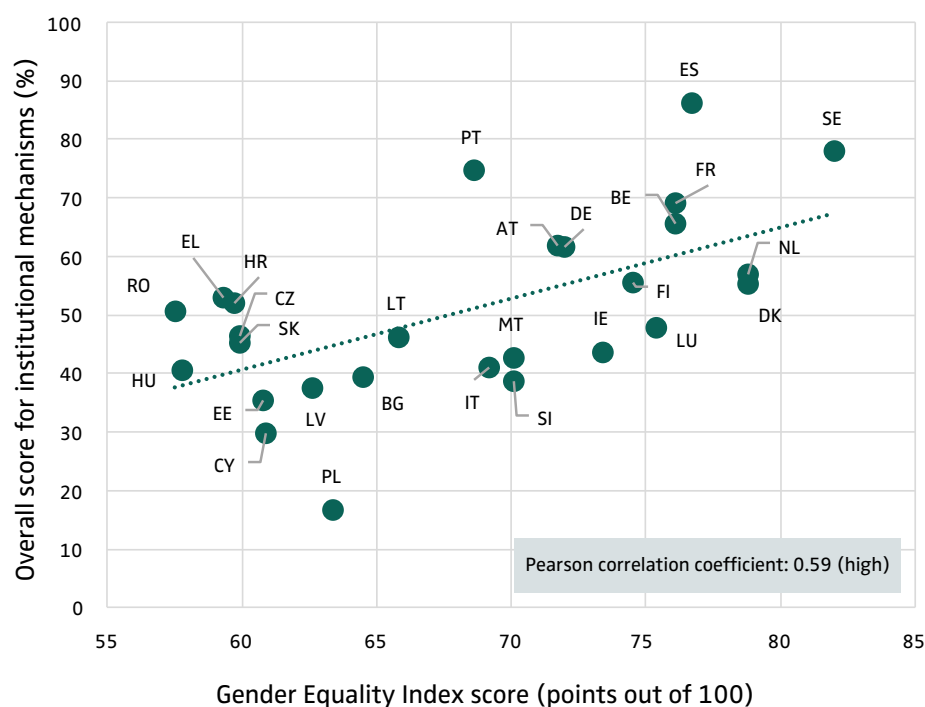
This annex examines the existence of statistical correlations between EIGE's ratings for institutional mechanisms and EIGE's [Gender Equality Index](#), which is a comprehensive quantitative measure of gender equality. The exercise is intended not to provide proof of cause and effect (in either direction) <sup>(62)</sup>, but rather to validate the concept that stronger institutional mechanisms are associated with more gender equality.

The analysis looks at correlations with the Index scores (2024 edition), firstly for the overall scores for institutional mechanisms and then for each of the four constituent indicators.

### A3.1. Stronger institutional mechanisms coincide with greater gender equality

The results of EIGE's 2024 assessment show that the strength of institutional mechanisms varies considerably across the EU, with an overall score of 86 %. The 2024 overall scores for institutional mechanisms and the Index scores ([2024 edition](#)) show a **high degree of correlation** ( $r = 0.59$ ; Figure A3.1), which is statistically significant ( $p$ -value = 0.001). Repeating the test, firstly using 2021 data and secondly combining the data for 2021 and 2024 in a single comparison, gives similar results in both cases ( $r = 0.57$  and  $r = 0.59$ , respectively), strengthening confidence in the existence of a meaningful correlation.

**Figure A3.1. Correlation between overall scores for institutional mechanisms and Gender Equality Index scores, 2024**



Sources: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms and Gender Equality Index.

<sup>(62)</sup> If there is cause and effect (which cannot be proven), it could happen in either direction: countries with inherently greater equality could invest more in related support structures (and therefore have stronger institutional mechanisms) or stronger institutional mechanisms could drive progress towards greater equality.

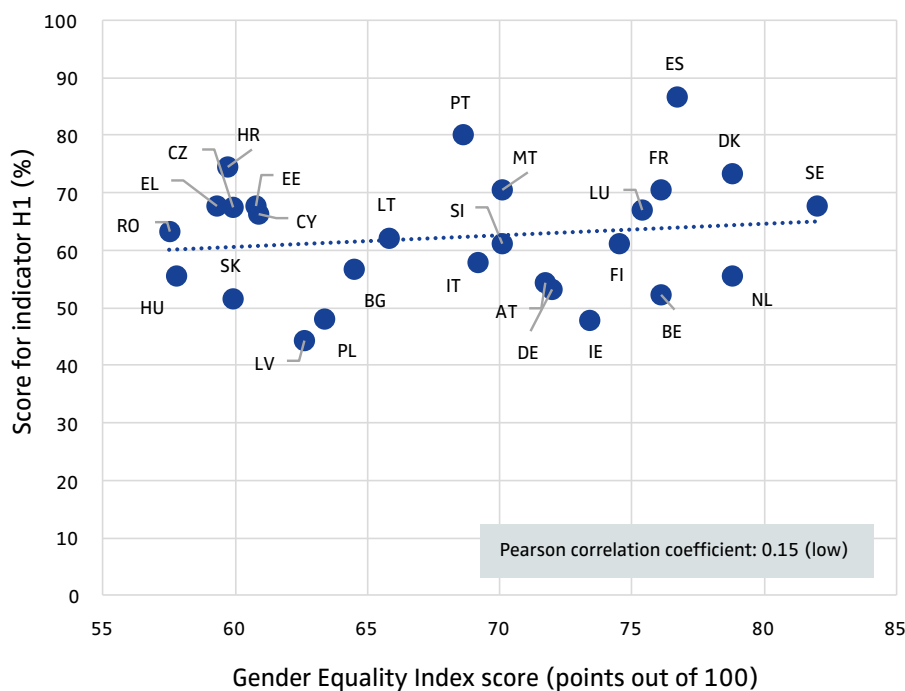
It is known that correlations can be distorted by outliers<sup>(63)</sup>. In this case (2024 data), the data points for Poland, Portugal and Spain are farthest from the trend line, and removing all three from the test increases the strength of the correlation slightly ( $r = 0.63$ ). In practice, however, this creates no difference in terms of the strength rating (the result is still in the range 0.5–0.7, which is rated as high), so there is no value in excluding these countries from the overall rating.

Since the data shows a high degree of correlation, it can be concluded that stronger institutional mechanisms (as measured by EIGE's indicators) are, as hypothesised, associated with greater levels of equality between women and men (as measured by EIGE's Gender Equality Index), but not that one causes the other. Importantly, while the indicators on institutional mechanisms measure compliance with the objectives set out in Area H of the BPfA, they do not measure their effectiveness in terms of their impact on gender equality in general or more specifically on other BPfA areas of concern. This exercise can be seen as a first exploratory step in establishing such links.

### A3.2. Visible commitments to the promotion of gender equality show little correlation with actual levels of equality

The results of EIGE's 2024 assessment for **indicator H1, status of commitment to the promotion of gender equality**, show an average score of 9.4 out of 15 (62 %) for indicator H1, with considerable variation across countries. These scores show a **low degree of correlation** with levels of gender equality ( $r = 0.15$ ; [Figure A3.2](#)). Moreover, excluding the four main outliers (IE, ES, LV, PT) does nothing to improve this; rather, the correlation coefficient weakens ( $r = 0.04$ ).

**Figure A3.2. Correlation between scores for indicator H1, commitment, and Gender Equality Index scores, 2024**



<sup>(63)</sup> <https://www.statisticssolutions.com/pearson-product-moment-correlation/>.

Sources: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms and Gender Equality Index.

One reason for the lack of any significant correlation might be that giving high visibility to gender equality, for example by allocating the portfolio to a senior government minister, does not necessarily translate into meaningful action. Indeed, formality, hierarchy and mandates do not necessarily make institutional mechanisms effective in delivering greater gender equality unless they are backed up by appropriately focused action plans (Díaz-García, 2019). Accordingly, the largest part of the score for indicator H1, and the driving factor of differences across countries, derives from the existence of a national gender equality action plan and whether it is budgeted, has clear quantitative targets against which to assess progress and is regularly monitored. This can be considered a proxy for the effectiveness of the structures in driving progress towards equality.

Having no current plan in place significantly limits the score achievable for this indicator and creates immediate and significant differences from countries that do have an active plan. Moreover, since such plans are typically adopted for a three- to five-year period, there can be gaps in provision that create volatility in the indicator results. While it is welcome that countries take the trouble to carefully evaluate the success (or failure) of each plan before adopting a replacement, if this process is too slow there can be a significant time when there is no clear government programme of action to promote gender equality. That represents a major lack of commitment to furthering gender equality.

Indicator H1, and in particular its emphasis on accountability, remains important within the monitoring framework to demonstrate current commitments to gender equality policy and goals. However, the current scoring approach, which creates a big jump in scores (rather than a progressive increase) depending on the existence (or not) of a gender equality action plan and the potential volatility of scores between years (as plans start/end), appears to limit the prospect of any consistent correlation with levels of gender equality.

### A3.3. More resources for gender equality bodies could help boost gender equality

In the 2024 assessment, the average score for **indicator H2, human resources of the national gender equality bodies**, was 1.7 out of 4 (43 %), with scores ranging from 88 % to zero. The indicator is effectively based on just two observations (staff of governmental body and staff of independent body), each scored in size groups, so there is a limited number of possible scores (0.5 intervals out of a maximum score of 4). This is why there can be multiple countries with the same score, and the data points in the chart appear in horizontal rows ([Figure A3.3](#)).



**Figure A3.3. Correlation between scores for indicator H2, human resources, and Gender Equality Index scores, 2024**



Sources: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms and Gender Equality Index.

Nevertheless, the results show a **medium-strength positive correlation** with the level of gender equality ( $r = 0.46$ ), which is statistically significant ( $p$ -value = 0.02). Moreover, if the two most extreme outliers (Greece and Poland) are excluded, **the strength of the correlation increases to high** ( $r = 0.58$ ). From the information available, there would be some justification in these exclusions. Greece is one of just six cases (EL, CY, AT, PT, FI, SE) in which two governmental bodies are reported, one of which is a large research centre<sup>(64)</sup>, which provides important analytical input but does not have any direct involvement in policy development. This puts it on the borderline for consideration as a governmental gender equality body based on the definition used in the questionnaire, but its size contributes to elevate the score for indicator H2. At the other extreme, responsibility for gender equality policy in Poland was shifted from the Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Policy to the Chancellery of the Prime Minister during 2024 and (reportedly) at the time of data collection the team for the Department for Equality was still being established. The reported staff numbers may therefore underestimate the expected headcount.

Extending the exclusions further to include Luxembourg and Romania, which are the next farthest on either side of the overall trendline, has an even greater impact and results in a **very high correlation** for the 23 remaining countries ( $r = 0.73$ ). Nevertheless, even without excluding the outliers, there is a statistically significant, medium-strength, positive correlation between the scores for indicator H2 on human resources and the level of gender equality. This is a welcome finding since access to adequate resources is surely key to the type of effective action that is needed to drive progress towards greater gender equality.

<sup>(64)</sup> Research Centre for Gender Equality ([Κέντρο Ερευνών για Θέματα Ισότητας](#)).

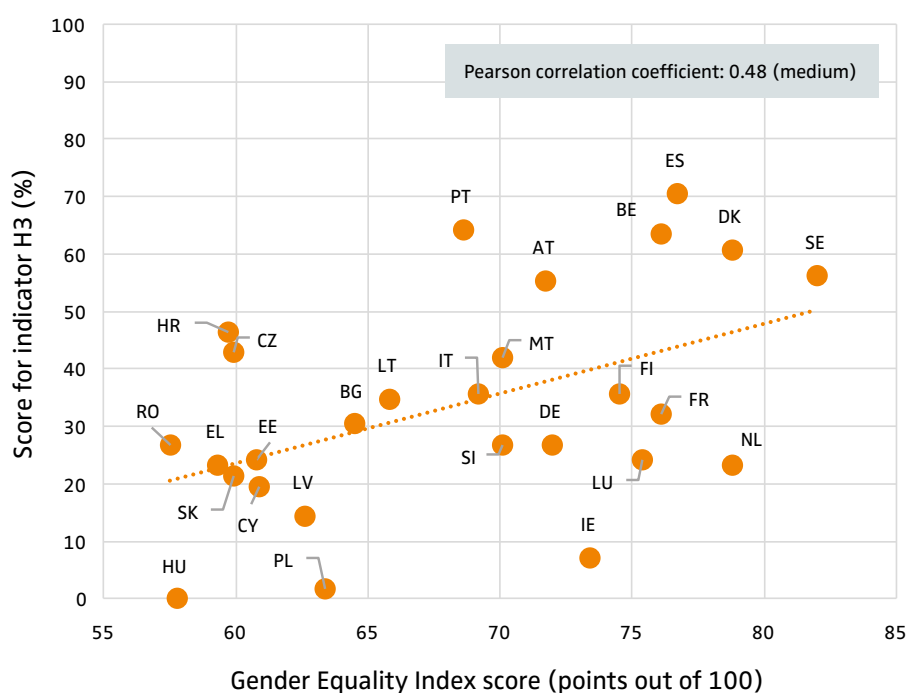
### A3.4. Gender mainstreaming can boost gender equality but more efforts are needed

In EIGE's 2024 assessment, the results for indicator **H3, gender mainstreaming**, were the lowest among the four indicators, with an average score of 4.7 out of 14, or 34 % of the maximum possible. Scores ranged from 71 % to zero, with 21 Member States scoring less than 50 %.

Despite the generally low scores, there is still sufficient variation between countries to show a statistically significant **medium-strength correlation** with Index scores ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $p$ -value = 0.01). Moreover, if the two most extreme outliers (Portugal and Ireland) are excluded, the **strength of the correlation increases to high** ( $r = 0.57$ ; [Figure A3.4](#)). Also excluding the next farthest outliers (ES, HR, NL, PL) strengthens the correlation still further ( $r = 0.68$ ), though it remains just within the high band.

Given the importance of gender mainstreaming in furthering gender equality, it is a welcome finding that there is a clear positive correlation between the strength of gender mainstreaming efforts as measured by EIGE's indicator and the level of gender equality.

**Figure A3.4. Correlation between scores for indicator H3, gender mainstreaming, and Gender Equality Index scores, 2024**



Sources: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms and Gender Equality Index.

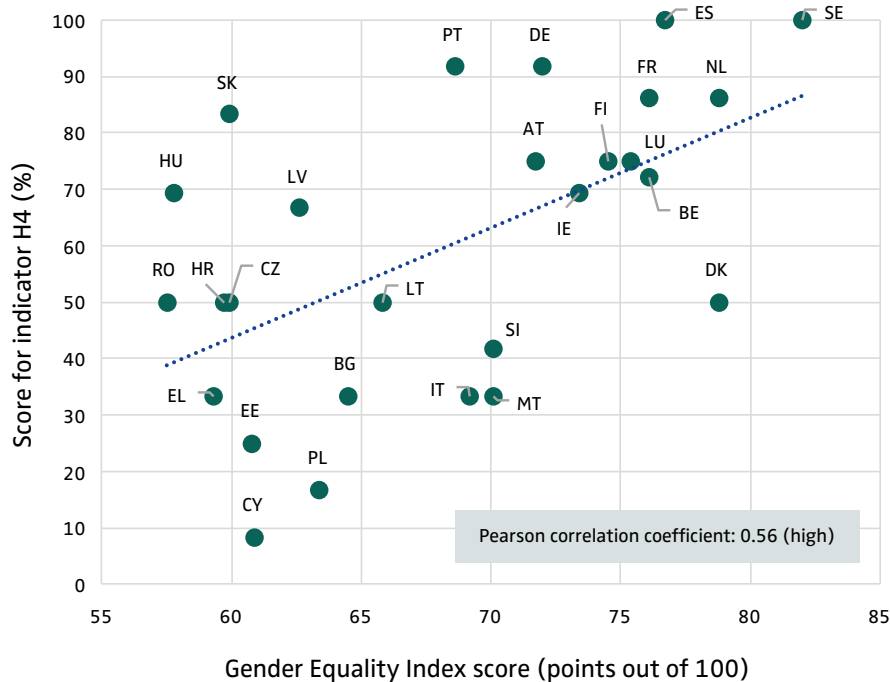
### A3.5. Strengthening statistical capacity can contribute to greater gender equality

The average score for indicator **H4, production and dissemination of statistics disaggregated by sex**, in 2024 was 3.6 out of 6 (60 %), but there were significant differences between countries, with scores ranging from 100 % down to 8 %. Comparison of scores for indicator H4 with the Index scores shows a

**high degree of correlation** ( $r = 0.56$ ), which is statistically significant ( $p$ -value = 0.002). The strength of the correlation can be increased slightly ( $r = 0.60$ ) if the three most extreme outliers (CY, PL, SK) but can be **elevated to very high** ( $r = 0.79$ ) by also excluding the next four outliers (DK, HU, MT, PT).

Before starting this exercise, correlations with H4 were perhaps expected less than with the other indicators (H1 to H3), yet in practice the data shows the strongest correlation. While the idea that good statistics are an essential input to good policy (e.g. to set a baseline, understand the reasons behind the current situation or predict the possible impact of policy options), it is likely that many policies with a gender impact have been developed without such a strong foundation. It is encouraging, therefore, to find that EIGE's measurement of national commitments to the development and use of gender statistics shows a positive correlation with the level of gender equality. It may not be proof of cause and effect, but it does leave open the suggestion that strengthening capacity for the production and use of gender statistics can contribute to the development of more targeted and effective gender equality policies and thereby greater gender equality.

**Figure A3.5. Correlation between scores for indicator H4, gender statistics, and Gender Equality Index scores, 2024**



Sources: EIGE, data collection on institutional mechanisms and Gender Equality Index.

### A3.6. Conclusions on statistical correlations

Comparison of the strength of institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and actual levels of gender equality in each of the Member States has shown statistically significant positive correlations overall and for three of the four indicators on institutional mechanisms.

The strength of the correlations is rated as high overall and for indicator H4 (gender statistics) and medium for indicators H2 (human resources) and H3 (gender mainstreaming). However, ratings for both H2 and H4 increase to very high after the exclusion of small numbers of outliers, while the rating for H3

similarly increases to high. These results confirm that stronger institutional mechanisms go hand in hand with greater gender equality, though not necessarily that one causes the other.

There is only a low degree of correlation for indicator H1 (commitment). This derives from the high contribution of scores for government accountability (as a proxy for commitment in policy and by public administrations), which rely on the existence (or not) of gender equality action plans and related implementation measures, creating all-or-nothing differences between countries rather than a progressive scale that would more easily correlate with different levels of gender equality.

The premise of calls for stronger institutional mechanisms in the BPfA is that they are fundamental to ensuring the integration of gender concerns throughout government action and, thereby, advancing gender equality. It is welcome, therefore, to find a clear statistical correlation between the two. The results also serve as a valuable endorsement of EIGE's approach to the inherently challenging task of measuring the strength of institutional mechanisms.

### A3.7. Methodological note

All correlations use the Pearson correlation test, which measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. The validity of the test relies on the variables (Index scores and institutional mechanisms scores) being independent and normally distributed. The strength of the correlation is measured by the value of the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) using [Table A3.1](#).

**Table A3.1. Measuring strength of correlation**

Value of $r$	Strength of correlation
0.0 to < 0.1	None
0.1 to < 0.3	Low
0.3 to < 0.5	Medium
0.5 to < 0.7	High
0.7 to < 1	Very high

Source: <https://datatab.net/tutorial/pearson-correlation>.

The statistical significance of the correlation is assessed using a two-tailed  $t$ -test. Statistical significance is indicated by a  $p$ -value less than 0.05.

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