France

About

<table>
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<th>Indicator</th>
<th>EU-28</th>
<th>France</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Status of the government’s commitment (0-2 points)</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender mainstreaming structures (0-4 points)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment to and use of the methods and tools for gender mainstreaming (0-10 points)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
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<td>Total score (0-16)</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
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The first explicit references to gender mainstreaming in national policy documents emerged in 2000, when the re-establishing of a state secretary for women's rights and equality in the workplace coincided both with a new spur to gender-equality policies at the domestic level, and the full integration of gender equality in the European Union (EU) legal framework. From 2001 onwards, a summary of gender-equality policies was included in the Orientation Act of the Finance Law (Loi d’orientation de la loi de finance, LOLF), which was later (2010) transformed into a comprehensive Transversal Policy Document on Gender Equality, also appended to the LOLF.

This situation has changed dramatically since 2012, when effective gender-equality policies received impetus following the victory of left-wing parties during presidential and parliamentary elections. This political backdrop also provided the context for the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

This electoral breakthrough coincided with a paradigm shift, which was characterised by an unprecedented commitment to gender equality, and took concrete form in the re-establishment of an independent Women's Rights Ministry, which had been shut down over two decades before. As a result, the adoption of a gender-equality action plan by each ministry became compulsory and gender-equality officers, answerable to the Women's Rights Minister, were appointed in each policy area.

In the absence of a gender-equality act covering a variety of issues, attempts to implement gender mainstreaming remained scarce over the 2000s, and were mostly limited to non-binding documents, such as the Charter for Gender Equality (Charte pour l’égalité) presented by the Minister of Parity and Equality in the Workplace in 2004, which contemplated policy actions in favour of gender equality within sectorial administration and ministries.

Although the French legislative and policy framework on gender equality had developed increasingly complex measures in the areas of reproductive rights, work, social protection, pensions, violence against women, access to decision-making and fighting gender-based discrimination, only in 2014 was a comprehensive act on gender equality, the Act on Equality between Men and Women, adopted. This text, which summarises previous legislative steps and enhances the effectiveness of implementation measures in various gender-equality areas, contains the first explicit reference to gender mainstreaming in its first article.

**Legislative and policy framework**
Transversal policy documents have been produced since the mid-2000s in a number of policy domains, including gender equality, and annexed to the LOLF. Produced with contributions from relevant ministries, these documents collate all programmes and policy actions related to gender equality, which are then integrated into government priorities.

Increased attention has been paid to cross-sectorial and/or interministerial work in policy documents, providing institutions with more detailed guidelines for the design of gender-equality action plans, both at national and regional level. This is the case of the ‘Gender’ Strategic Orientation Document (2007), the most comprehensive strategic document ever produced by public authorities to support gender mainstreaming, although its application is limited to international development policies. Not only does it provide an updated definition of gender mainstreaming and related concepts (including gender budgeting), it also offers a detailed framing of this approach and its implementation in the field of development policies. More recently, the national framework for tackling gender inequalities in every policy field has been provided by the interministerial action plan, which was adopted by the Interministerial Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in November 2012. Since the same year, following the re-establishment of a Women's Rights Ministry, the adoption of a gender-equality action plan by each ministry has become compulsory. A specific reference to gender mainstreaming is contained in the first article of the 2014 Act on Equality between Men and Women (see above).

At regional level, the Delegations for Women's Rights and Gender Equality play a proactive role in mainstreaming gender in regional policies through the Regional Gender-Equality Strategic Plans.

Gender-equality policy arrangements vary widely across regions. The most recent policy development at the regional level regarding the implementation of gender mainstreaming is a governmental notice issued by the General Directorate for Social Inclusion in 2011. It provides a comprehensive framework for the adoption of Regional Strategic Gender-Equality Plans, as part of an initiative co-funded by the EU through the PROGRESS programme. The ultimate goal of these plans is to ‘establish a long-lasting and homogenous system covering the whole territory, and mobilise all actors to fully integrate gender into public policies’. These plans must be twofold, and address (1) gender equality in economic, professional, political and social life, and (2) gender-based violence. This institutional framing of regional plans also specifies the monitoring structure for their implementation, making regional prefects accountable, and also involving delegates at departmental level. Additionally, evaluation procedures are also addressed, emphasising gender mainstreaming as a goal.
**National Structures:** The Service for Women's Rights and Equality between Women and Men (SDFE) is the government body in charge of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, placed under the responsibility of the General Directorate for Social Cohesion, within the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health and Women's Rights. Created in 2010 as part of the general reform of public policies, the directorate promotes women's rights and gender equality at national, regional and departmental level. The SDFE coordinates 26 regional and 100 district Delegations for Women's Rights and Gender Equality, thus providing France with a dense institutional network to implement a mainstreaming strategy.

In 2012, an Interministerial Committee for Women's Rights and Gender Equality was established: it comprises all ministers and aims to adopt measures relevant to the promotion of women's rights in all policy areas. It is required to adopt a transversal action plan to tackle gender inequalities in every policy field. Since 2012, respective ministers report to the Interministerial Committee for Women's Rights and Gender Equality concerning the implementation of the interministerial action plan, which is a set of measures tackling gender inequalities in different areas. This set of measures provides a general framework to be detailed and supported by monitoring and evaluation measures in the form of gender-equality action plans at the ministry level.
Since 2012, each ministry has appointed hauts fonctionnaires à l’égalité (high-ranked public officials for gender equality), coordinated by the Ministry of Women’s Rights. Their mandate is to implement a mainstreaming approach and design gender-equality plans for their respective policy areas. They are members of the High Gender Equality Council, a consultative gender-equality body instituted in January 2013 and placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Women's Rights. The council brings together several bodies that had previously worked separately, but are now endowed with new competencies in relation to gender impact assessments and the evaluation of gender-equality policies.

Regional structures: In France, delegates for women's rights and gender equality (Délégations régionales aux droits des femmes et à l’égalité, DRDFEs) were established in each of the 26 regions to implement national gender-equality policies. These regions are:

- Paris
- Strasbourg
- Bordeaux
- Clermont-Ferrand
- Caen
- Dijon
- Rennes
- Orléans
- Chalon-en-Champagne
- Ajaccio
- Besançon
- Rouen
- Montpellier
- Limoges
- Metz
- Toulouse
- Lille
- Nantes
- Amiens
Regional delegates, usually supplied with a small staff, are either attached to the General Secretary for Regional Action, which is directly related to the regional prefect (préfet de région), or to the Regional Directorate for Social Inclusion, Youth and Sports. In charge of implementing state gender-equality policies at the regional level, DRDFEs also coordinate regional and local actors such as the centres d’informations des droits des femmes et des familles (women and families information centres), which were created in 1972. However, as indicated in several evaluation reports, there is a lack of coordination between the departmental delegates (that were previously under the responsibility of the Regional Delegation for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality). This explains the limited activity of many departmental delegates as well as their high rates of absenteeism.

Although the coordinating capacity of the central gender-equality apparatus has been questioned vis-à-vis decentralised structures, recently efforts have been made to improve the accountability of regional services towards the central administration. Since 2012, the Ministry of Women’s Rights has been playing an important coordinating role. Nonetheless, incentives provided by the ministry are currently concentrated in the most advanced regions (i.e. Brittany, Rhône-Alpes and Île-de-France), due to regional delegates’ uneven activity and capacity (in terms of expertise and local political support).

Methods and tools
In terms of methods, there are some elements of gender budgeting within the cross-cutting policy documents on gender equality annexed to the LOLF. In addition, the concept of gender impact assessment, which is to be carried out for ‘relevant’ legislation, is receiving greater attention: guidelines are soon to be issued, after an experimentation period (2013), and gender impact assessments are now to be assessed ex ante by the High Gender Equality Council.

**Good practices**

Browse all France methods and tools

Browse all France good practices