

Western European and Others Group 2

Committee Background Guide

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Western Europe and Others 2

About this Committee

The Western European and Others Group (WEOG) is one of several unofficial regional groups in the United Nations that act as voting blocs and negotiation forums. Almost all members are in Western Europe, but the WEOG is unusual in that geography is not the sole defining factor; Europe is divided between the WEOG and the Eastern European Group, and the WEOG also contains Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which are culturally and politically descended from Western European states but are located far away from them. The group also contains one observer, United States (which cannot vote but can put forward candidates for the General Assembly), and one temporary full member, Israel (on a basis of "permanent renewal of temporary full membership").

There are 28 member states

Andorra	Iceland	Norway
Australia	Ireland	Portugal
Austria	Israel*	San Marino
Belgium	Italy	Spain
Canada	Liechtenstein	Sweden
Denmark	Luxembourg	Switzerland
Finland	Malta	Turkey*
France	Monaco	United Kingdom
Germany	Netherlands	United States of America
Greece	New Zealand	

Special cases:

* Israel

In May 2000 Israel became a WEOG full member, on a temporary basis (subject to renewal), in WEOG's headquarters in the US, thereby enabling it to put forward candidates for election to various UN General Assembly bodies. In 2004 Israel obtained a permanent renewal to its membership.

* Kiribati

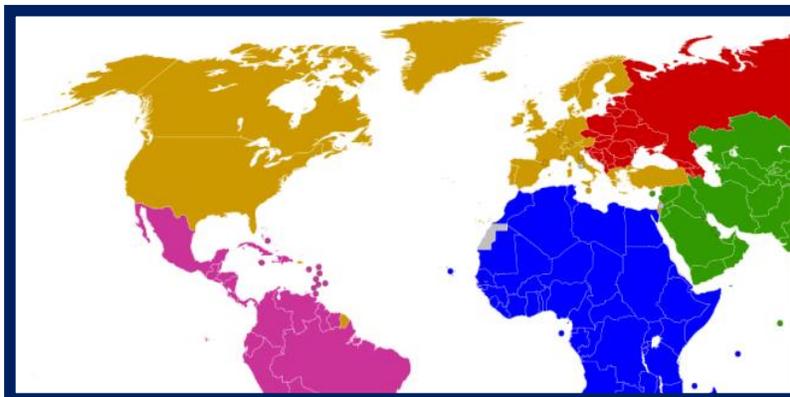
Kiribati (geographically in Oceania) is not a member of any regional group, despite other Oceania nations belonging to the Asian group. Despite its membership in the United Nations, Kiribati has never delegated a permanent representative to the UN.

* Turkey

Turkey, participates fully in both WEOG and Asian Group, but for electoral purposes is considered a member of WEOG only.

* United States of America

The United States of America is not a member of any regional group, but attends meetings of the Western Europe and Other States Group (WEOG) as an observer and is considered to be a member of that group for electoral purposes.



Regional Information

Achieving gender equality requires measures to compensate for existing disadvantages that prevent equal opportunities from being presented to both men and women.

The economic crisis has exacerbated problems faced by disadvantaged people in the EU and poses new challenges for the promotion and mainstreaming of equality. Key challenges include: a shrinking workforce; the need to increase the employment rate for women, young people and older workers; 80 million people with low or basic skills; and 20 million people in or at risk of poverty in the EU.

The under-representation of women in positions of power across WEOG constitutes a serious democratic deficit, which undermines the legitimacy of the contemporary democratic ideal. Parity democracy and the promotion of women in decision-making positions are therefore important areas of action for WEOG. Parity democracy implies the equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions

The economic independence of women is crucial to achieving equality between women and men. Women's employment rate across WEOG (62.1%) fall short of the EU target of 75%, and work patterns continue to reflect traditional gender roles: women are four times more likely than men to work part-time; the average hourly pay-gap in the EU stands at 16.4%; the employment rate for women falls by 12.1 percentage points when they have children under 12, while it rises by 8.7 points for men.

Despite widespread violence against women, political responses and resources allocated to this issue have been piecemeal, unequal and mostly inadequate at both national and regional level.

Considerable progress has been made towards the recognition of the need to take into account gender in immigration, integration and asylum policies and legislation. However, the challenge remains to see these commitments being implemented in practice by the adoption of concrete and strong measures such as gender-based guidelines in asylum.

Gender stereotyping in the media is of great concern. Women and the media remains one of the objectives of the BPfA which is most neglected by Member States. Women suffer from a serious lack of visibility in the mainstream media: in Europe, there are four men for every woman who gets news coverage, women are central to a news story only 10% of the time, and only 32% of principal TV characters are female. Stereotyping as homemakers, victims and sex-objects is also widespread: adverts showing boys place them outdoors 85% of the time while those featuring girls place them inside the home more than half of the time; women are more than twice as likely as men to appear in the news as victims and they are more than twice as likely to be portrayed in (semi-) nudity.

UNECE has identified several key areas where economic disadvantages for women currently exist in the region, as well as policy and programmatic strategies implemented in many of its member States to target them.

These key areas include:

The central role that promoting equal pay, a gender-sensitive work environment, and equitable opportunities for advancement play in eliminating the gender pay gap. Strategies highlighted to reduce gender inequalities in the workplace target the wage differentials that remain a persistent challenge in the UNECE region. For example, countries such as Denmark and Germany have offered positive incentives for private companies to identify gender differences in their wage structures and take actions to close the gender pay gap, whereas countries such as Portugal have enacted new Labour Codes that enforce equal pay guidelines with monetary fines.

The way in which micro and small enterprises (many of which are run by women) are supported is an important tool to create new opportunities for women to generate income and new sustainable patterns of production of goods and services. Programmatic responses to address issues in the region such as the need for networking opportunities and support systems for women entrepreneurs, as well as the need for specialised knowledge and skills training are highlighted.

The importance of increasing the proportion of women in top-down administrative decision-making positions in the region as a key pathway to women's empowerment. Several gender quota schemes implemented in the public (Poland, Norway) and private (Netherlands, Denmark) sector are presented as well as an example of an international coalition to increase women's decision-making power at the community level in the area of climate change.

The need for facilitating a balance between work and family life as a means to overcome women's persistently disadvantaged position in the labour market.

Challenges

Major challenges remain including:

- The gap between legislation and implementation
- Decent work for women and measures to counteract labour market segregation
- The gender pay gap
- Women's participation in decision-making in National Parliaments and the public service
- The persistence of gender stereotypes including in the media
- The lack of sex-disaggregated data and the lack of gender-sensitive indicators
- The lack of engendering national policies and programmes ('Gender Mainstreaming')
- The role of men in advancing gender equality including through increased sharing of family responsibilities

Furthermore, available data also suggest that a country's governance effectiveness impacts on gender equality, pointing to a certain correlation between the achievement of gender equality and distinct features of democratic governance.

Availability of gender statistics

The World's Women 2010 has benefited from an increase in the availability of gender statistics in the last 10 years. The majority of countries are now able to produce sex-disaggregated statistics on population, enrolment, employment and parliamentary representation.

In addition, gender statistics in some newer areas are becoming available. For example, statistics on child labour are now collected by a larger number of countries. Similarly, surveys on time use and on violence against women were conducted in both developed and developing countries although international standards in these two statistical fields have not yet been fully developed.

However, the preparation of *The World's Women 2010* was hampered by the fact that statistics in certain domains are not available for many countries. Furthermore, even the statistics that are available are often not comparable because concepts, definitions and methods vary from country to country. Data are also lacking in detail in many cases.

In other areas, the absence of internationally agreed measurement standards and methods has resulted in a lack of gender statistics relating to disease prevalence, home-based workers, access to credit, the worst forms of child labour, human trafficking, femicide, intrahousehold poverty, individual ownership of land and losses associated with natural disasters.

In conclusion, increasing the capacity to produce reliable, accurate and timely statistics, in particular gender statistics, remains a formidable challenge for many countries.

Questions for Research:

1. What are the key issues for your country and region?
2. What action has your country taken to promote the equality and empowerment of women on a national and international level?
3. How is your country promoting the economic empowerment of women?
4. How is your country promoting participation of women?
5. How has your country implemented legislation that promotes equality and empowerment?
6. What legal safeguards are in place for women in terms of key issues such as trafficking, 'honour' crimes, VAW and other issues?
7. Do national polices take account of gender ('Gender Mainstreaming')
8. Does your country keep and submit data on gender equality and the empowerment of women?
9. Does your country promote the sharing of family roles and responsibilities?

Read the relevant guides to the '12 Areas of Action' from the Beijing Platform on the delegate preparation website and the 'useful websites' as a starting point for research

Useful Websites:

Contains summary information on national action plans and strategies for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/country/national/westsum.htm>

University of Nottingham Research document on Gender and European Welfare States (search for your country name):

[http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/807/1/Gender and European Welfare States.pdf](http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/807/1/Gender+and+European+Welfare+States.pdf)

Women in the News Media:

<http://iwmf.org/pdfs/IWMF-Global-Report-Summary.pdf>

The Gender Dimension of Domestic Work in Western Europe: Focus on Women Migrants

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/download/imp/imp96.pdf>

Various briefing papers from Women Lobby Europe

<http://www.womenlobby.org/?lang=en>

http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?action=acceder_document&arg=773&cle=6e80889e348b0d86b9a9f7a018733270635b362b&file=pdf%2Fewl_position_paper_on_vaw_december_2010-2.pdf

[http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?action=acceder_document&arg=16&cle=f4afa206b87df7845b23216aaddfa86f0b0e7fc0&file=pdf%2FEWL PositionPaper on Women and health EN.pdf](http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?action=acceder_document&arg=16&cle=f4afa206b87df7845b23216aaddfa86f0b0e7fc0&file=pdf%2FEWL+PositionPaper+on+Women+and+health+EN.pdf)

[http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?action=acceder_document&arg=17&cle=45b652b778306f325b1bcdd5878d89ddb0a7e10a&file=pdf%2FFINAL EWL Position paper on Women and Conflict October 2009.pdf](http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?action=acceder_document&arg=17&cle=45b652b778306f325b1bcdd5878d89ddb0a7e10a&file=pdf%2FFINAL+EWL+Position+paper+on+Women+and+Conflict+October+2009.pdf)

[http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?action=acceder_document&arg=29&cle=69bc9a083e53b4b64165bc780bae35623984f763&file=pdf%2FFinal EWL position paper girl child CSW 2007 EN.pdf](http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?action=acceder_document&arg=29&cle=69bc9a083e53b4b64165bc780bae35623984f763&file=pdf%2FFinal+EWL+position+paper+girl+child+CSW+2007+EN.pdf)

http://www.unifem.org.nz/?page_id=20

http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/new_zealand

Other useful sites:

http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/decent-work-and-women-economic-empowement_policybrief.pdf

[http://www.unwomen.org/focus-areas/?show=Economic Empowerment](http://www.unwomen.org/focus-areas/?show=Economic+Empowerment)

<http://www.unfpa.org/gender/empowerment1.htm>

Gender mainstreaming

UNECOSOC formally defined concept:

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality



Keywords

Empowerment: increasing the spiritual, political, social, or economic strength of individuals and communities.

Development: planning and building to help improve communities and lives.

Discrimination: unfair treatment of a group based on a certain characteristic.

Gender equality, women's empowerment and the MDGs

Gender equality and women's empowerment is central to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Yet, while there are some positive trends in gender equality, there are still many areas of concern. Girls account for the majority of children not attending school; almost two-thirds of women in the developing world work in the informal sector or as unpaid workers in the home. Despite greater parliamentary participation, women are still outnumbered four-to-one in legislatures around the world.

Gender equality is a condition for inclusive, democratic, violence-free and sustainable development.