

2. Gender Equality in Legislatures

Introduction

Women have entered elected office in ever increasing numbers across the globe, yet the achievements to date are fragile and unfinished. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in 2017, women still represent globally only 23.4% of members of parliament. The OECD average is only slightly higher.

The 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life (GEPL) promotes a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in political and public institutions. It focuses on measures that have proven effective in closing gender gaps; efforts to scale up inclusive approaches to policy making and public service delivery; and the importance of monitoring continuous progress to ensure sustainability and accountability for gender equality results.

Parliaments and legislatures are key gatekeepers of institutional efforts to promote gender equality in public life and in society more broadly. Within parliaments, laws and policies that create the legislative and regulatory framework for promoting gender equality and preventing as well as responding to gender-based discrimination are initiated, debated and adopted. In turn, these laws and policies help shape societal attitudes to women's roles, capacities and responsibilities. Given the prominent role parliaments play in promoting and instilling gender equality norms and values, it is critical that parliaments themselves serve the needs of women and men as well as manifest the values they seek to promote through legislative processes.

Gender-sensitive parliaments ensure that “both men and women have an equal right to participate in its structures and processes, without discrimination and without recrimination” (IPU, 2011). This requires that gender considerations inform and infuse parliaments' working culture, formal processes and informal practices. To this end, the 2015 GEPL encourages:

... [A] greater role for parliaments and parliamentary committees to support progress in gender equality, for example, by integrating gender perspectives in parliamentary practices, legislation and budgets, by promoting legislative initiatives focusing on gender equality and by providing oversight of the implementation of gender equality and mainstreaming strategies and initiatives.

In order to promote - and provide appropriate guidance for - the implementation of the 2015 GEPL across its Member States, the OECD is collecting data to assess the current state of play as regards gender-sensitive governance in the OECD region. This data will serve as the baseline against which to measure progress in implementing the 2015 GEPL in the future.

This chapter focuses on OECD Member State efforts to promote gender equality within parliaments/ legislatures, with a focus on five key areas:

- Parliamentary/legislative gender equality frameworks
- Gender-balanced decision-making
- Mainstreaming gender equality in parliamentary/legislative work
- Mechanisms for gender equality oversight and;
- Electoral systems and political party practices as regards gender equality

The chapter presents baseline data, highlights existing good practices, and identifies remaining gaps and challenges in promoting gender equality within parliaments/legislatures.

Parliamentary/Legislative Gender Equality Frameworks

Gender Equality Policies and Strategies

Gender equality policies and strategies provide an overarching framework to guide efforts by institutions such as parliaments to implement gender-sensitive procedures, processes, practices and programs. In short, such documents facilitate efforts to achieve a “gender-sensitive parliament”, defined by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) as one whose “structures, operations, methods and work respond to the needs and interests of both men and women”. To realize a gender-sensitive parliament requires that gender equality policies and strategies move beyond measures such as gender quotas and targets, and aim to transform parliamentary work cultures themselves.

Box 2.1. Gender-Sensitive Parliaments

If modern parliaments are to serve the needs and interest of both men and women, they need to ensure that “both men and women have an equal right to participate in its structures and processes, without discrimination and without recrimination.”

Source: OECD, Inter-Parliamentary Union (2011)

The OECD survey suggests that only a handful of parliaments/legislatures have adopted a **formal policy or strategy to guide parliamentary gender equality efforts**. Of the 18 respondents, five (27.8%) indicated that a gender equality policy or strategy has been adopted to govern the conduct of parliamentary staff (Austria, Germany, Hungary, Japan and Sweden) in the lower house while two respondents (11.1%) had adopted such a policy/strategy for the lower house (European Parliament, Sweden). No parliaments had adopted a gender equality policy or strategy for the upper house.

While only a few parliaments have adopted formal or overarching gender equality policies, a number of respondents identified **oversight practices or mechanisms** that have been introduced to monitor parliamentary gender equality efforts. Austria, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Sweden indicated that gender equality efforts are monitored and evaluated by an autonomous body. Canada, the European Parliament and Sweden noted that monitoring and evaluation is also undertaken by a parliamentary body; in Canada by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, in Sweden by the Committee on the Constitution and in the European Parliament in the form of a gender equality report presented by the Gender Equality Committee (FEMM).

Gender Equality Provisions in Other Parliamentary Policies

Gender equality provisions have been integrated into a range of other policies adopted by parliaments to govern and regulate parliamentary behaviour. For example, of the 18 respondents, three (16.7%) have adopted a **code of conduct and/or ethics guidelines** that contain a gender component as a means to guide parliamentary behaviour in the lower house (Denmark, Latvia, Sweden), while four or 22.2% (Austria, Germany, Latvia, Sweden) have adopted codes of conduct that apply to parliamentary staff.

More parliaments (50%) have adopted policies that address **acts and threats of sexual harassment** than on gender-based harassment. In Canada, both practices are covered by the “House of Commons Policy on Preventing and Addressing Harassment”, while in Denmark, such behaviour is prohibited by the Danish “Act on Prohibition against Discrimination in the Labour Market”. The lower houses of Greece, Luxembourg and Sweden have adopted a **grievance procedure to address gender-based discrimination**, harassment and/or violence against MPs, while Austria, Germany, Luxembourg and Sweden have adopted such procedures in reference to its parliamentary staff.

A handful of parliamentary lower houses have adopted policies addressing **gender-based discrimination** in access to leadership positions (Denmark, European Parliament, and Sweden) or participation in parliamentary bodies and/or processes (Belgium, Sweden). For example, in Belgium, the position of chair of the Advisory Committee for Social Emancipation must be given to a woman. A total of 33.3% of parliamentary lower houses (Austria, Denmark, Greece, Japan, Luxembourg, and Sweden) have introduced provisions to ensure **equal access to resources** (for example, parliamentary benefits, allowances, office space, equipment); this is also the case for the Austrian and Japanese upper houses.

A number of parliaments/legislatures have begun to adopt provisions to protect specific vulnerable or marginalized groups, such as the **disabled, minorities, or those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, inter-sex or queer (LGBTIQ)**, targeting MPs and/or parliamentary staff. In Canada, all these groups are protected under its “House of Commons Policy on Preventing and Addressing Harassment”. Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Portugal and Sweden have adopted specific policies to address **social media, including cyber-bullying**, for their chamber(s), while Sweden has adopted such a policy for its parliamentary staff.

Of 18 respondents, five (27.8%) indicated that some **parliamentary committees** have adopted their **own gender equality policies or strategies** to guide and monitor gender efforts. Only the Swedish parliament, however, requires all committees to adopt individual gender equality plans; all 15 committees are required to report to the Riksdag Board regarding implementation of the Board’s Action Plan for a More Gender Equal Riksdag, necessitating the adoption of specific actions by each committee to further gender equality efforts.

Gender-Sensitive Communications and Outreach

A number of parliaments/legislatures have begun to address issues related to gender-sensitive language and representation in internal and external parliamentary materials. Six of the 18 respondents (33.3%) indicated that provisions have been adopted, formally or informally, to promote gender equality as regards communications and/or media strategies. Spain clarified that it is common practice to apply a gender equality lens to all parliamentary website articles and press releases, although formal provisions have not

been adopted. In the Danish parliament, all job advertisements contain a statement urging individuals to apply for positions regardless of sex, ethnicity or religion.

Box 2.2. Good Practices from New Zealand

Parliamentary Website: The Parliament ensures that imagery and language is well-balanced in terms of genders, especially for articles that have a broad scope, where it would be easy to default to generic photos of men. We use the website to celebrate milestones in women's rights, like suffrage and the introduction of policewomen. The guidelines for images on our website include the following statement: "The website must not discriminate because of gender..."

Press Releases: All communications are expected to be gender neutral. Writers are expected to consult the website guidelines which provide specific guidance.

Gender-sensitive Language: Our style guide has specific requirements on gender-neutral and inclusive language: "Avoid words that are gender-specific, unless gender is relevant. Use 'people' or 'humans', not 'mankind' or 'man'. Use 'they/them/their' instead of 'he/him/his' or 'she/her/hers', as long as the subject of the sentence or clause is still clear.

The Slovenian parliament pays close attention to the use of gender-sensitive language, for example, using both the male and female version of the term "parliamentarian" in all communications and ensuring that the term "deputy" is applied equally to women and men. The parliament publishes statistics on the proportion of women MPs on its website and commemorates events of special significance to women, such as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Gender-Sensitive Dress Codes

Five of the 18 respondents (27.8%) indicated that their parliament/legislature has adopted a formal or informal **dress code** (Canada, Denmark, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden). In Canada, there is no formal dress code prescribed by standing orders, but Speakers have ruled that only Members wearing "contemporary business attire" will be recognized; this means jackets, shirts and ties for men (no similar requirements for women were noted). In 2003, the Standing Orders Committee of the parliament of New Zealand judged that "appropriate business attire" should be worn, whether male or female. In the Swedish parliament, appropriate attire can mean both pants and skirts for women.

None of the respondents indicated that any of the dress code provisions could be considered discriminatory. Denmark noted that the President of the Parliament can reprimand members for dress that is considered undignified. Interestingly, Denmark also indicated that comments as regards dress code (for example, skirt lengths) tend to be used as a means to send political messages.

Gender-Balanced Decision-Making

Gender Composition in Parliament

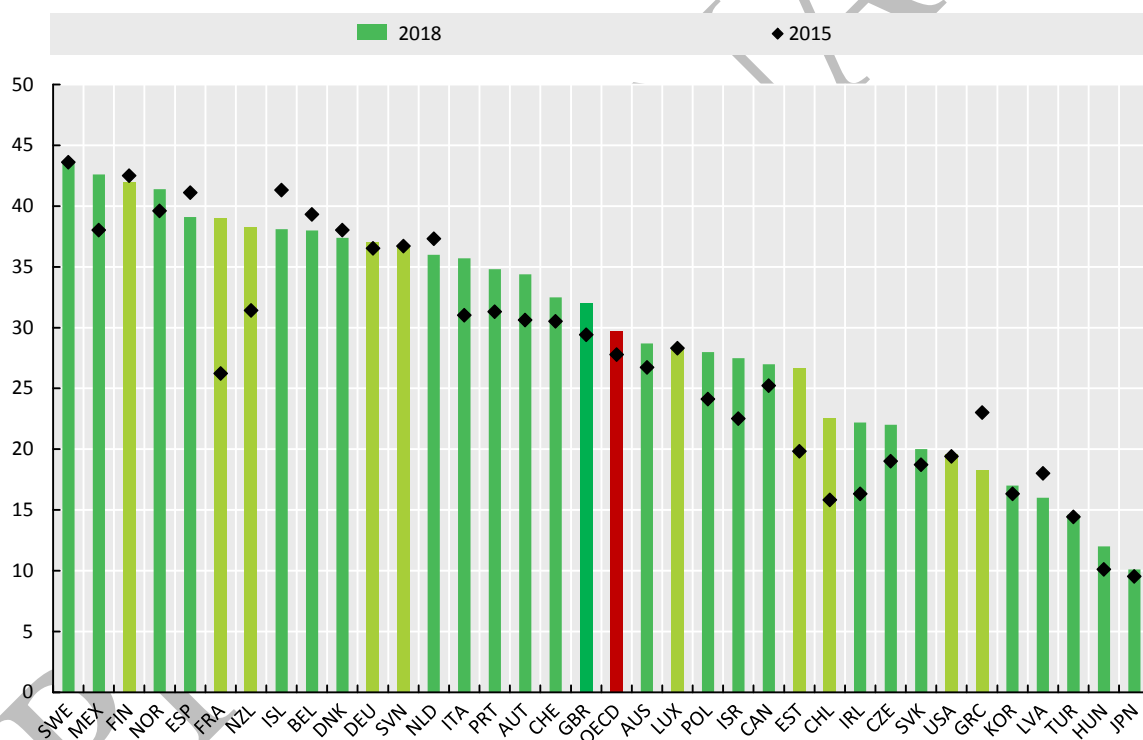
Over the past decade, there has been a clear upward march in terms of women's representation in the lower houses of parliament in select countries, for example, in

Germany, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia. In the case of Poland, Portugal and Slovenia, this could be attributed to the adoption of legislated gender quotas, with a minimum threshold for gender representation and sanctions for non-compliance.

In other countries, however, it is difficult to discern trends when comparing women's representation in 2016 to that in 2010 and 2005. In Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Latvia, Spain and Sweden, the proportion of women in elected office was actually higher in 2005 than in 2016. Spain reached parity by 2010 (50%), then dropped to 39.7% (a decrease of 10.3 percentage points) by 2016. The Czech Republic increased by five percentage points to 20% in 2016 compared to 2005, but dropped one point compared to 2010.

Such findings suggest that special measures can lead to a significant increase in women's representation, and if properly implemented, will yield sustainable increases over the long-term. However, these results also suggest that gains in women's representation are not irreversible. Ensuring substantive women's representation requires vigilance; even when women's political participation is an accepted cultural norm, setbacks are possible.

Figure 2.1. Share of women parliamentarians and legislated gender quotes, 2015 and 2018



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) PARLINE (database), and IDEA Quota Project (database).

Notes: Bars in light green represent countries with lower or single house parliaments with legislated candidate quotas as of May 2018.

Gender Composition of Parliamentary Leadership and Committees

In terms of leadership positions in lower houses, among the respondents as a collective, there has been a clear increase in the number of women serving as leaders of political groups (12 countries in 2016 compared to seven in 2005); leaders of political parties (10 countries in 2016 compared to five in 2005); minority leaders (four in 2016 compared to two in 2005); majority leaders (three in 2016 compared to zero in 2005); and leaders of

government business (two in 2016 compared to zero in 2005). Canada is the only country that recorded a woman as a caucus leader (in both houses in 2005, in the lower house in 2010 and in the upper house in 2016). Those countries with female whips remained the same in 2016 compared to 2005 (Austria, Canada, Germany, New Zealand), but the number of whips tripled in Austria (from one to three) and almost doubled in Germany (from 9 to 15).

In terms of the highest positions within parliament – those of Speaker and Deputy Speaker – the trends are less definitive. More women held the position of Speaker and Deputy Speaker in lower houses in 2010 (six and 10 respectively) than in 2016 (five and nine respectively). Two women served as Presiding Officers in the lower houses of Spain and Slovenia in 2016, however, compared to only one in 2010 (Slovenia) and one in 2005 (Latvia).

Unsurprisingly, in terms of the **gender composition of parliamentary committees**, among the 16 respondents, men held the majority of chair positions in all parliaments, in both upper and lower houses, at times by wide margins. A similar picture emerges in terms of the positions of deputy or vice-chair. Only in Belgium and Sweden did women outnumber men and this by only a small percentage. Only Germany reported on the gender composition of rapporteurs, with 60.9% of such positions held by men and the remaining 39.1% held by women.

Special Measures to Promote Parliamentary Gender Balance

Seven of 15 respondents (46.7%) indicated that **special measures** have been put in place in order to facilitate gender balance among parliamentarians/legislators (Austria, Greece, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden). Such measures range from legislated gender quotas (gender neutral or women specific) to voluntary quotas and targets. Reserved seats are not a common practice in the OECD region. Nor have parliaments among the respondents adopted special measures to promote gender balance in specific parliamentary bodies (e.g., committees, leadership positions).

Of those that have introduced legislated quotas, Greece, Portugal and Slovenia have adopted gender-neutral quota provisions, meaning that maximum and/or minimum thresholds apply to both genders, while the relevant legislation in Poland and Spain explicitly refers to a minimum percentage of women on candidate lists. In Slovenia, scrutiny of candidate lists is performed by constituency electoral commissions upon submission of lists by political parties. The commissions ascertain whether the lists were submitted on time and whether they are in accordance with the Elections Act, including provisions related to the gender quota. A constituency electoral commission is authorized to reject lists where candidates are not nominated in line with the Elections Act.

Gender Balance and Gender Equality Measures within Parliamentary Administrations/Secretariats

Women hold the majority of **lower house parliamentary administration** positions in most respondent countries (12 of 14 respondents); only in Canada and Greece do men outnumber women. In almost half a dozen countries, however, men and women's representation is almost equal (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg and Poland). Moreover, women's representation in parliamentary administration as a whole has remained remarkably steady over the course of a decade (2016 compared to 2005). It has decreased very slightly in Canada (e.g., 40.4% in 2005 to 39.3% in 2016), Denmark,

Germany, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia, and increased by miniscule amounts in Austria, Latvia and Spain and by three percentage points in New Zealand.

More interesting is to analyse women's representation in different types of parliamentary administration positions, namely those of a more clerical or administrative nature compared to those positions of a managerial, supervisory or political nature. Of those who responded, only Austria noted that men and women occupy **secretarial and administrative** positions in equal numbers; in Canada, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Slovenia and Spain, women outnumbered men, often by significant amounts. For example, in Latvia no men occupied a secretarial position in 2016, while in Canada, 92 of the 107 administrative positions (86%) and in Germany, 214 of the 219 administrative positions (97.7%) were occupied by women. Austria specified that, as part of its "Women's Advancement Plan", the parliament seeks to ensure gender balance in the parliamentary administration in all positions, but especially aims to ensure women's equal representation in higher administrative positions. Only in Austria and the Czech Republic did women and men serve as **parliamentary assistants** in roughly equal numbers. In Germany, Hungary, Latvia, New Zealand, Portugal and Slovenia, women outnumbered men.

As positions become more senior, men begin to outnumber women in more countries, though a good many have managed to achieve more or less gender balance. Women outnumbered men in **advisory and research** positions in Hungary, Latvia, Portugal and Slovenia, while more men held this position in Canada and Germany. Gender balance was achieved in Austria, Luxembourg and New Zealand. More women than men served as **department heads** in Latvia, New Zealand and Spain, and more men in Canada, Germany and Luxembourg; men and women were more or less equally represented in Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark and Slovenia. Only in Slovenia did more women hold the position of **senior manager**. In Austria, Canada and Luxembourg, more men were represented as senior managers, while gender balance was achieved in the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Latvia and New Zealand.

Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave in Parliaments

Of 15 respondents, nine (60%) indicated that provisions regarding **maternity leave** for MPs are the same as those prescribed by national law. Four (Canada, Greece, Latvia, New Zealand) noted that the parliament has adopted its own policies; in the case of Latvia, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Saeima and in the case of Greece, in accordance with law no. 3528 of 2007. In New Zealand, the provisions of the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act do not apply to MPs; instead, internal party rules apply.

In terms of **paternity leave**, seven (46.7%) noted that the provisions are the same as those prescribed by national law while three parliaments (20%) had adopted their own policies (Austria, Latvia, New Zealand). Eight respondents (53.3%) indicated that **parental leave** provisions were not applicable, five noted that the provisions were the same as those prescribed by national law, and two indicated that the parliament/legislature had adopted its own provisions.

One of the key challenges concerning maternity, paternity and parental leave is that, conventionally, national legislation and/or regulations on pay and benefits apply only to parliamentary staff and not MPs. For example, in Austria, MPs are considered neither employed nor self-employed in the conventional sense according to employment/labour laws. At the federal parliamentary level, MPs will be excused to take "maternity leave"

when appropriate. There is no provision or practice that allows an MP to take parental leave (that is, and have a substitute for the MP's absence from parliament during that period.) It is noteworthy, however, that some regional diets (councils) in Austria have adopted maternity, paternity and/or parental leave for parliamentarians.

The Danish Gender Equality Committee was active in the passage of a private proposal on parental leave in May 2017 in cases where a mother loses her new-born. Previously, the mother had a right to paid leave for three months while the father was only given two weeks. The proposal obliges the government to provide the same amount of time for both parents. Although the government is not yet prepared to vote on its passage, the majority of parties have agreed to address the issue in the 2018 annual budget.

Six of the 15 respondents (40%) indicated that some sort of provision existed to ensure that following maternity/paternity/parental leave, **parliamentary staff can assume the exact position** they had when they left (Canada, Czech Republic, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovenia). For example, in Slovenia, all the provisions of the employment contract remain in force, including the ones relating to assignment to a specific post. In Luxembourg, as the replacement is only temporary, the exact position is held for an individual on leave. In the Czech Republic, national legislation guarantees that employees can return to the exact same or similar position (depending on the particularities of the situation).

Parliamentary Working and Sitting Hours

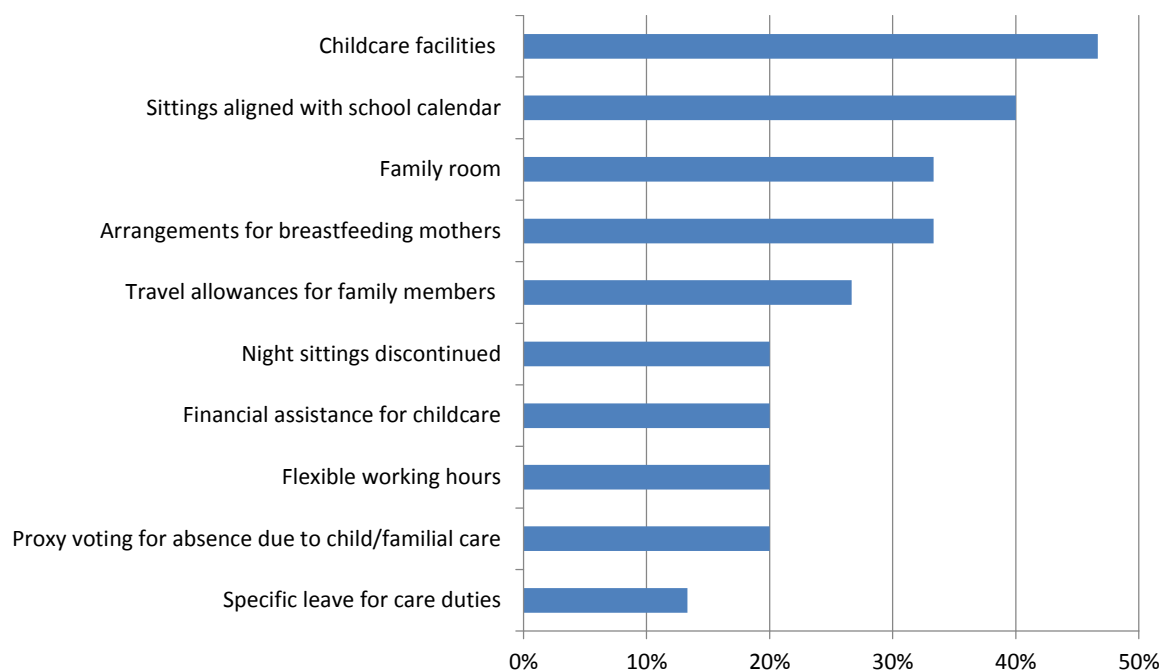
The OECD also asked respondents about the operating hours of their parliaments. Of those that specified sitting hours in lower houses, the majority took place during the 2pm to 7pm period and did not change drastically over the three-year period, with the exception of Luxembourg, which did see its number of sitting hours increase. Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Sweden noted that sittings also took place in the evening period, averaging three hours in Hungary and Sweden, five hours in New Zealand, 10 to 12 hours in Luxembourg, to a high of 21 to 25 hours in Germany. The number of hours spent in evening sittings did not change significantly in any of the countries over the three-year period. Only Poland responded that sittings also took place on the weekends or during holidays, showing an increase from 52 hours in 2014 to 53 hours in 2015 and 67 hours in 2016.

Box 2.3. Setting Committee Meeting Times: The Case of the German Bundestag

In Germany, the chair of a committee may convene a meeting at his/her discretion within the scope of the timetable drawn up by the Council of Elders. However, if a parliamentary group or five percent of Members so demand, or a committee group unanimously agrees, the chairperson is authorized to convene meetings outside the parliamentary timetable if the President of the Bundestag gives his/her permission.

Promoting Work-Life Balance for Parliamentarians and Staff

It is clear that, among the 15 respondents to this survey question, parliaments are making strides in introducing a range of measures to **facilitate work-life balance for parliamentarians**, particularly those with family and/or care obligations. The table below provides a summary of the type of work-life balance measures that have been adopted by different parliaments in the OECD region.

Figure 2.2. Work-life balance arrangements in the parliaments

PRELIMINARY

Table 2.1. Promoting Work-Life Balance for Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Staff

Work/Life Measure	Adopted	Debated, but not Adopted	Comments
Childcare facilities	Canada, Germany, Greece, Latvia, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden	Austria	Canada: An on-site daycare, Children on the Hill Pre-School Centre, has been built with space for 30 children. Priority is given to Senators, MPs, parliamentary staff, Library employees, members of the press gallery and employees of the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner Latvia: Childcare is provided until the age of 3 New Zealand: Onsite crèche is open to parliamentary staff and MPs. Normal attendance rates apply; parliamentary placement is less expensive than non-parliamentary placement
Arrangements for breastfeeding mothers	Austria, Germany, Hungary, New Zealand, Poland	Czech Republic, Sweden	Hungary: Based on individual queries by MPs New Zealand: Since 2013, members can seek permission to be absent from parliamentary precincts on account of an issue of a personal nature (Standing Order 38 of 2014). Absent members are not counted towards their parties' 25% proxy vote limit (Standing Order 155(3))
Proxy voting for absence due to child/familial care	Luxembourg, New Zealand, Sweden	Canada, Germany	Luxembourg: Proxy voting is not limited to absence due to childcare or familial responsibilities New Zealand: The party vote procedure allows a party leader or whip to cast a party's votes orally in Chamber. Party votes are cast en bloc and can include votes of members present anywhere in parliamentary precincts along with proxy votes for members who are absent from the precincts. Each party's proxy votes are limited to 25% of the party's parliamentary membership. Parties may agree to a member being included in its proxy vote quota for reasons of child care or other familial responsibilities but that is an internal party decision
Sittings aligned with school calendar	Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Slovenia, Sweden		New Zealand: The House does not sit during school holidays
Flexible working hours	Austria, Germany, New Zealand	Canada	Germany: Provision does not apply to the Bundesrat (legislative body representing Länder)
Family room	Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Poland, Sweden	Austria	Canada: A room was recently opened for parents caring for young children in Centre Block, equipped with appropriate amenities New Zealand: A room near Chamber can be made available for MPs for the purposes of breastfeeding or other child care
Financial assistance for childcare	Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg		Luxembourg: General financial assistance also provided for citizens Hungary: Based on the relevant law
Travel allowances for family members	Canada, Greece, New Zealand		New Zealand: Remuneration Authority's Members of Parliament Accommodation Services for Members and Travel Services for Family Members and Former Prime Ministers Determination 2014 provide for unlimited domestic travel for members' children aged under 5, and up to 8 one-way trips per year for children aged 5-17. Members' spouses/partners qualify for 20 one-way trips per year and 30 one-way trips per year for the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, a Minister and the Leader of the Opposition
Reviewing internal procedures	Germany		Germany: In general, but does not apply to the Bundesrat
Longer stays in districts	Sweden	Canada	

Night sittings discontinued	Luxembourg, Portugal, Sweden	Germany
Specific leave for care duties	New Zealand, Sweden	Germany

A number of parliaments have earmarked resources **from the parliamentary budget for gender-specific facilities, programmes or activities** as a means to support work-life balance. For example, of 15 respondents, seven (46.7%) parliaments allocate resources for the provision of childcare facilities. In Greece, childcare facilities provided by the parliament are co-financed by the parliament itself, while in Luxembourg; the law regulates access to childcare services. Three parliaments (20%) provide childcare subsidies (Austria, Greece and Luxembourg), while the parliaments of Germany and Greece provide additional subsidies for other care responsibilities. None of the parliaments have allocated resources to cover the cost of gender-sensitivity training for the workplace.

Of the 15 respondents, only Germany indicated that its lower house has undertaken an **evaluation of the impact of gender-friendly parliamentary practices** in order to facilitate work-life balance for parliamentarians. Germany noted that there is an annual gender equality evaluation among the parliamentary staff to assess the allocation of positions within parliaments to women and men; results indicate that gender balance targets have been achieved in recent years.

Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Parliamentary/Legislative Work

Gender Equality Committees: Roles and Responsibilities

Of the 17 respondents, 14 (82.3%) indicated that the lower house of the parliament has established a **committee that addresses gender equality issues**, all of which were permanent. Of these, the majority (11 parliaments or 78.9%) were multifunctional and three or 21.4% were specialized gender equality committees. In those parliaments with upper houses, Austria, Spain and Mexico have established multifunctional gender equality committees, although Mexico's is only of a temporary nature.

In Sweden, all committees address gender issues that fall within their policy sphere. In Mexico, the gender equality commission is mandated to examine initiatives, minutes and bills assigned to it by the parliamentary board which address gender equality. In Belgium, at the request of the House, another committee or at its own initiative, the Advisory Committee on Social Emancipation gives advice on gender equality, within the period set by the requesting body. The Gender Equality Committee in the parliament of Denmark is mandated to examine all legislative proposals issuing from the Ministry for Equal Opportunities and Nordic Cooperation. When a **proposal falls within the jurisdiction of multiple committees**, a political majority determines which committee should have responsibility. If the proposal also pertains to gender equality, the Committee can initiate a parallel examination of the proposal. In Germany, any committee can claim responsibility or a right to give an opinion on bills, and the parliamentary leadership either endorses the claim or issues responsibility to another committee.

In Hungary, **responsibility for specific aspects of gender equality is split among different committees** (e.g., the Committee on Justice addresses legal aspects of non-discrimination, the Committee on Business Development discusses issues relating to equal pay, the Committee on European Affairs covers issues relating to EU gender

obligations, and the Sub-Committee on Women's Dignity deals with women's empowerment). A similar arrangement is in place in the Latvian Saeima.

In Luxembourg, the relevant committee is responsible for **bills relating to gender equality but has no influence on the selection of the responsible committee for a given proposal**, which remains the purview of the Conference of Speakers. However, each committee is empowered to draft an opinion on each proposal. Likewise, in Austria, the gender equality committee has no general competence to review draft proposals from a gender perspective; it is only empowered to review laws that relate to gender issues specifically. Sub-committees in Portugal are not granted decision-making powers except on procedural matters; as the body responsible for gender equality is a sub-committee, this means it has no mandated authority to scrutinize legislative proposals.

Table 2.2. Mandates and Roles of Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality

Committee Powers	Lower House	Upper House	Comments
Supervision of compliance with gender equality national and international standards	Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Sweden		Latvia: The Committee invites the relevant ministries and other competent institutions to report and provide updates on gender equality issues
Preparation of gender equality-related legislative proposals	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Spain, Sweden	Mexico, Slovenia	Latvia: The submitted proposals must comply with the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and other major sectoral laws and regulations that contain the principle of gender equality
Examination of all draft laws and budgets from a gender equality perspective	Latvia, Sweden	Mexico, Slovenia	Latvia: The Committee has the right to task the Ministry of Finance with assessing the impact of proposed amendments on gender equality
Examination of selected draft laws from a gender equality perspective	Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Spain, Sweden	Mexico, Slovenia	Latvia: The Committee has the right to task the Ministry of Finance with assessing the impact of proposed amendments on gender equality
Ensuring that all draft laws include gender analysis	Greece, Sweden	Mexico	Denmark: The examination of selected draft laws and budgets from a gender equality perspective is assigned to the government, specifically the Minister for Equal Opportunities and Nordic Cooperation (not parliament)
Government scrutiny from a gender equality perspective	Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Spain, Sweden	Mexico	Canada: The Committee on the Status of Women studies the policies, programs and expenditures (budgetary estimates) of government departments and agencies that conduct work on the status of women Germany: As part of parliamentary scrutiny, the Committee assesses the executive's compliance with standards Latvia: The Committee has the right to request information on gender equality from competent institutions Poland: As per article 95 para 2 of the Constitution
Gender equality advice to the government	Canada, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Sweden	Mexico	Canada: The Standing Committee on the Status of Women can conduct studies and produce reports, with recommendations directed to the federal government, on topics relevant to the status of women
Examination of complaints related to	Hungary, Latvia, Slovenia		Latvia: The Committee has the right to request the Ombudsperson, the relevant ministry or other competent institutions to address the issues

gender-based discrimination and violence				contained in such complaints
Dissemination of gender-equality related information	Canada, Greece, Portugal	Denmark, Latvia	Mexico	<p>Canada: The Standing Committee on the Status of Women distributes its reports to the Canadian public and publishes the minutes and evidence from its public meetings</p> <p>Denmark: The Gender Equality Committee disseminates gender-related information to the public</p> <p>Portugal: Votes, Press Releases</p> <p>Latvia: The Committee, in cooperation with the Public Relations Department of the Saeima, provides information about the Committee's decisions and discussed issues, including matters pertaining to gender equality</p> <p>Mexico: Legislative proposals</p>
National debate on the status of women	Austria, Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal	Canada, Germany, Hungary	Mexico, Slovenia	<p>Canada: The Committee on the Status of Women invites witnesses to provide testimony on subjects for ongoing studies</p> <p>Latvia: The Committee has the right to organize local-level conferences on gender equality</p> <p>Portugal: Conferences, Votes</p>
Other:				<p>Canada: The Committee on the Status of Women has the mandate to "study the policies, programs, expenditures (budgetary estimates) and legislation of departments and agencies, including Status of Women Canada [the federal agency that promotes equality for women and their full participation in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada], that conduct work related to the status of women."</p>

Gender Equality Committee Composition, Leadership and Resources

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the composition of gender-related committees is overwhelmingly female. In lower houses, only in the case of Latvia, Luxembourg and Sweden did men outnumber women in those committees mandated to address gender-related issues (Hungary has an equal number of women and men serving on the relevant committee). In the majority of cases, the chair of the committee is female; only in Germany, Hungary and Sweden is the chair of the relevant committee male.

For those parliaments that have a dedicated gender equality (or similar) committee, some have been provided **specific powers or access to specific resources**. For example, the gender equality committees in Canada, Denmark and Germany are allocated an independent budget; in the case of Denmark, the committee has at its disposal an independent travel budget worth 235,000 DKR per year (around €31,500).

In Denmark, Germany, Greece and Latvia, gender equality committees have been granted the power to collect gender-disaggregated data. In Latvia, the committee has the right to request information and data on gender equality from all relevant institutions. In Canada, Germany, Greece and Sweden, a research/study centre has been established, wholly or in part to support the work of the committee. In Greece, this is the Department for Parliamentary Research, which supports all parliamentary bodies, including committees. In Canada, the Library of Parliament employs research analysts to assist all parliamentary committees, including the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

The Impact of Gender Equality Committees

A number of respondents provided specific examples of the **impact of gender equality committees** in promoting gender equality. For example, in Hungary, the former Constitutional Committee (now the Committee on Justice) played a decisive role in modifying the Criminal Code to recognize domestic violence as a crime. Likewise, in Belgium, the Advisory Committee for Social Emancipation advised on amendments to the Belgian Civil Code on introducing equality between men and women in the passing of a surname to a child. In Japan, the Standing Committees on Cabinet in both houses debated a bill on the promotion and advancement of women in the workplace. During the plenary session, almost all parliamentary groups supported it, leading to its adoption.

In Canada, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women tabled its third report encouraging all MPs to complete an online training course on gender-based analysis, and tabled a follow-up report providing guidance on implementing gender-based analysis across the Government of Canada. The Danish Gender Equality Committee promotes gender equality issues, hosts hearings, participates in field trips and holds the government to account.

This Committee has been particularly active in discussing progressive and emerging issues through public hearings, for example, on social control and honour-related violence, sexual harassment in the workplace and digital sexual harassment. Public hearings are planned on the issues of human trafficking and on blood donation from men who have had sexual relations with other men. Internally, the Committee is also planning to undertake an analysis of the Gender Mainstreaming Assessment, as a means to make this tool more effective in assessing legislative proposals from a gender perspective.

In Latvia, the Gender Equality Committee works closely together with the Ombudsperson's Office, which specializes in anti-discrimination. The Ombudsperson is invited to participate in the Committee's meetings within its scope of competence and has the right to submit proposals for draft laws. Likewise, the Committee cooperates with NGOs, including those specializing in the promotion of gender equality. The Saeima also hosts conferences dedicated to gender equality; one such example was the Business Opportunities for Women and Sustainable Development "From Challenges to Shared Success Stories" conference and an international conference on "How to prevent domestic violence".

Gender Equality Mechanisms: Women's Caucuses

Only Mexico indicated that it had a formal **women's caucus** in its Upper House. Mexico's caucus is composed only of women and it performs a variety of functions, including: debating gender equality issues to influence legislative processes; promoting affirmative actions for women's empowerment and gender equality within the parliament; coordinating with other governmental bodies on gender equality issues; raising awareness on gender equality; facilitating networking among female MPs; lobbying in support of gender equality issues; and creating a social space for women and men to foster a sense of solidarity. The Mexican women's caucus has succeeded in lobbying for the creation of legal frameworks to recognize and protect the human rights of women, for example, by designating femicide (a sexual/gender hate crime conventionally understood as the killing of women) a crime.

Canada indicated that an informal all-party women's caucus exists, which welcomes members from both the House of Commons and the Senate. It has encouraged debate and

held informal discussions on the development of family-friendly and gender-sensitive parliamentary initiatives. An informal networking body has been established in the Danish parliament as well, composed of both female and male legislators, as a means to promote awareness of gender equality as well as create a social space for both women and men to foster a sense of solidarity.

Gender Mainstreaming in Parliaments

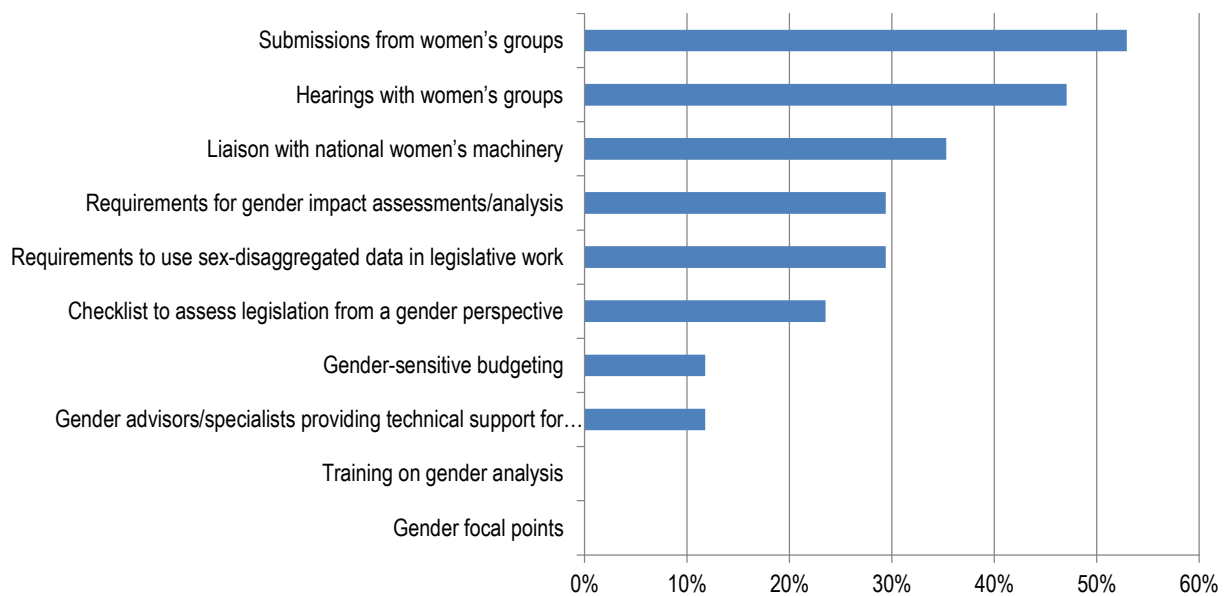
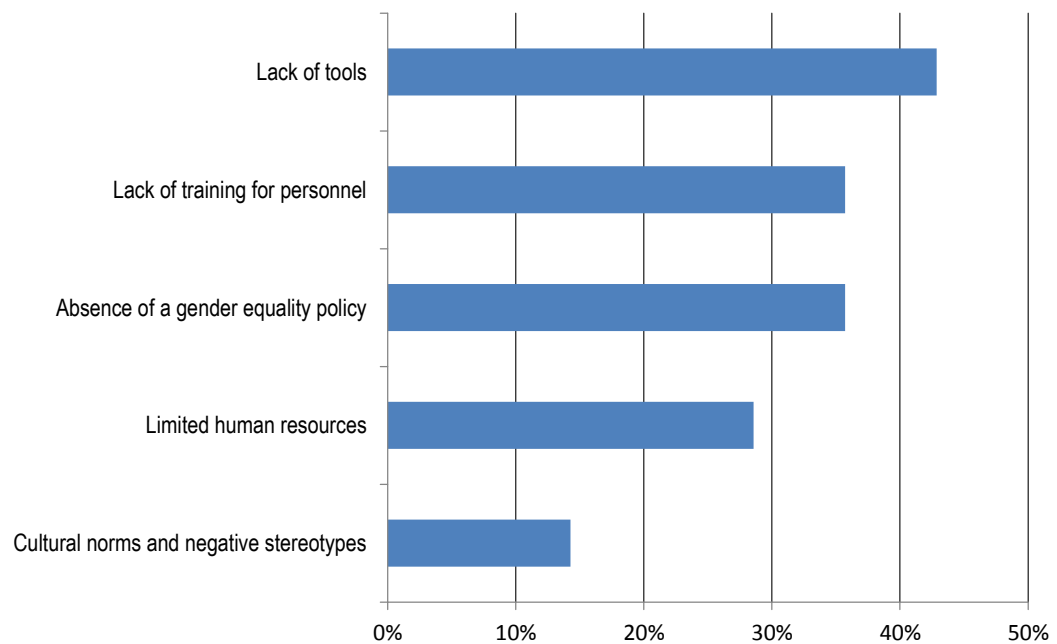
Parliaments/legislatures have introduced a range of **mechanisms to mainstream gender across parliamentary work** in their lower houses. For example, from April to December 2016, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women conducted a study on violence against women and girls in Canada, with a view to providing recommendations for follow-up to the government. The Committee conducted hearings with women's groups, inviting witnesses to provide testimony either orally or in writing. This testimony was compiled into a report that included 45 concrete recommendations, presented to the House of Commons and submitted to the Government of Canada for an official Government Response. In its response, the Government detailed the actions its ministries had taken or planned to take in order to address the Committee's recommendations.

Table 2.3. Gender Mainstreaming in Lower Houses of Parliament

Gender Mainstreaming Mechanisms	Lower House	Examples
Gender advisors/specialists providing technical support for legislative work	Latvia, Spain	Latvia: Technical support is provided by sectoral experts from institutions other than the parliament
Gender focal points		
Gender-sensitive budgeting	Austria	Canada: The Fall Economic Statement says that "To ensure that the government continues to deliver real and meaningful change for all Canadians, it will submit Budget 2017, and all future budgets, to more rigorous analysis by completing and publishing a gender-based analysis of budgetary measures."
Hearings with women's groups	Austria, Canada, Denmark, Greece, Latvia, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain	
Submissions from women's groups	Austria, Canada, Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain	
Checklist to assess legislation from a gender perspective	Austria, Denmark, Latvia, Spain	Latvia: All newly adopted laws and amendments must comply with the principle of gender equality enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and other major sectoral laws and regulations Denmark: Gender Mainstreaming Assessment of legislative proposals
Requirements to use sex-disaggregated data in legislative work	Austria, Denmark, Latvia, Spain, Sweden	Denmark: Gender Mainstreaming Assessment of legislative proposals
Requirements for gender impact assessments/analysis	Austria, Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Sweden	Denmark: Gender Mainstreaming Assessment of legislative proposals
Liaison with national women's machinery	Denmark, Greece, Latvia, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain	
Training on gender analysis		

Several respondents provided **examples where parliamentary gender mainstreaming mechanisms were able to advance gender equality** within the parliament. In Latvia, for example, in the process of drafting amendments to the relevant laws aimed at combating domestic violence, a range of sectoral experts from ministries, and women's rights and gender advocacy organizations were involved. The amendments were also directly informed by gender-disaggregated data, including the sex of domestic violence victims. The amendments not only allowed Latvia to reduce the number of domestic violence victims, but also reinforced the protective measures available to victims, most of whom are women.

Mexico's Upper House has also introduced a number of gender mainstreaming mechanisms. These include the introduction of gender advisors/specialists in the form of technical secretaries and advisors as well as gender focal points. The Upper House holds hearings with and receives submission from women's groups and also works with civil associations and academia to deliver training on gender analysis. Internally, the Mexican Upper House applies a checklist to assess legislation from a gender perspective and has established within its legal framework the requirement to use sex-disaggregated data in its legislative work. It also liaises with the national women's machinery as relevant.

Figure 2.3. The use of gender mainstreaming tools by the parliaments**Figure 2.4. Barriers to mainstreaming gender in work of parliaments**

Parliamentary Gender Analysis

Of 17 respondents, three (17.6%) indicated that there is a requirement in place for the parliament to systematically take into account the impacts of legislative proposals on women and men, i.e., to conduct **gender analysis** at all times in the lower house (Denmark, Spain, Sweden). Two respondents (11.8%) indicated that gender analysis is required in some cases (Austria, Latvia) and two indicated that there are plans to do so (Mexico, Portugal). For those with an upper house, this requirement is always in force in Spain and Sweden, in some cases in Austria, and is planned in the case of Mexico.

Several respondents provided examples of **laws or motions that have been subject to gender analysis** in the last five years. These include a draft law before the Portuguese parliament on ensuring the balanced representation of women and men in the administrative and supervisory boards of companies, in the corporate sector and on listed companies. Likewise, a Belgian bill adopted in April 2012 with a view to decrease the gender pay gap was subject to gender analysis. In Latvia, a range of bills that touch on gender-related issues are subject to gender analysis.

In Denmark, bills have been subject to the legislative **Gender Mainstreaming Assessment** for a number of years. In 2016-2017, 19 legislative proposals were subject to a gender assessment, and in 2015-2016, 26 proposals were. In previous years, 32 proposals were subject to the assessment in 2014-2015, and 26, 28 and 11 proposals in the three respective years before that. The Ministry of Employment subjects all legislative proposals to the assessment; some of the proposals that have been subject to the assessment include bills on Danish lessons to foreigners, access to education, and amendments to legislation on marriage and divorce and unemployment.

Engaging Men in Parliamentary Gender Equality Efforts

Engaging the support of male colleagues in parliament, particularly those in leadership, is increasingly viewed as key to achieving gender equality outcomes. Respondents were asked about good practices of male engagement and support within the parliament. New Zealand provided good practices from one opposition party, where men: opened dialogue among both women and men about feminism, were mindful about the use of gender-sensitive language, ensured that women receive the same institutional benefits and support as they did, educated themselves on gender equality, and provided women a platform to be heard. Another party noted that male colleagues are supportive of work on domestic violence issues as well as pay equity, and of the need for more women in parliament. The lead opposition party also supported the introduction of a 50% quota for female MPs following the 2017 election, with proactive support and mentoring of women candidates.

Denmark reported that men and women equally participate in and contribute to the work of the Gender Equality Committee and that two of the nine spokespersons on gender equality are men. Likewise, in Germany more than a third of the members of the committee responsible for gender equality are men. In Mexico, 100% of the men in the Upper House voted for the adoption of a key initiative on gender equality, making the vote unanimous in the chamber.

Mechanisms for Gender Equality Oversight

Gender Mechanisms in Parliamentary Oversight

Only the Czech Republic indicated that the lower house of the parliament is **always required to address gender equality concerns** in exercising its power of scrutiny over the executive. Austria indicated that it occasionally exercises scrutiny over the executive, in particular as regards the federal budget process. The parliamentary budget office assists MPs in identifying issues of gender relevance to be discussed during debates on the budget, and provides material and information as guidance.

Parliaments/legislatures use a range of mechanisms to oversee government actions in relation to gender equality. The most prevalent mechanism is the practice of **questioning ministers or Cabinet members** (exercised by 14 of 18 respondents, or 77.8%), followed by the **holding of public hearings on a government initiative** or gender equality topic (utilized by 13 or 72.2% of respondents) and the **review of reports on gender equality issued by government departments** (exercised by 10 or 55.5% of respondents). For example, the Portuguese government is required to present to the Assembly an annual report on equal opportunities for women and men in employment and vocational training. In addition, mid-term evaluations of the implementation of national equality plans are required to be sent to the Assembly each March by government ministries for review.

Less frequently used were mechanisms to **scrutinize budgets and expenditures from a gender perspective**, as can be seen from the table below. For example, only five respondents engaged in either ex ante scrutiny of the budget or ex post scrutiny of public expenditures from a gender perspective, while the same respondents (with the exception of Mexico) conducted gender impact evaluations of national budgets. Significantly, Austria and Denmark used every mechanism identified by the survey.

Only two respondents (Greece, Sweden) or 11.8% of parliaments/legislatures were required to **always consider gender as a factor in approving executive appointments**. Greece has specified that bodies of the public administration, including internal councils and committees, must always contain at least three members, one of whom must be a woman.

Table 2.4. Mechanisms to Support Gender Equality Oversight

Gender Equality Oversight Mechanisms	Lower House	Upper House
Holding public hearings on a topic	Austria, Canada, Denmark, Hungary, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden	Japan, Mexico
Questioning Ministers/Cabinet members	Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden	Japan, Mexico
Examining gender audit reports	Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Sweden	Mexico
Reviewing reports on gender equality from government departments	Austria, Canada, Denmark, Latvia, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Sweden	Mexico
Ensuring that government maintains international commitments to gender equality domestically (e.g., CEDAW, SDGs etc.)	Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Sweden	Mexico
Engaging in national reporting process for CEDAW	Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Portugal, Spain	Mexico
Ex ante scrutiny of the public budget from a gender perspective	Austria, Denmark, Spain, Sweden	Mexico
Ex post scrutiny of public expenditures from a gender perspective	Austria, Denmark, Spain, Sweden	Mexico
Monitoring the impact of gender equality/non-discrimination legislation after adoption	Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Spain, Sweden	Mexico
Conducting gender impact evaluations of budgets	Austria, Denmark, Spain, Sweden	Mexico

Gender-Sensitive Parliamentary Oversight of Budgets

Respondents indicated that a wide range of mechanisms, processes and provisions have been adopted by the parliament as a means to **mainstream a gender perspective in budgets**. Austria and Sweden are the frontrunners in adopting a gender-responsive approach to budgeting. In Austria and Sweden:

- Gender is a criterion in the formulation of the national budget;
- There is a set methodology/specific gender guidelines relating to expenditure and revenue legislation;
- Sex-disaggregated data is generated and/or used to promote evidence-based decision-making;
- Funds are earmarked for gender equality;
- A gender dimension is incorporated into financial audits on expenditures and compliance;
- A gender dimension is incorporated into performance audits on outputs and outcomes; and
- The government is held to account for gender-sensitive results

Three of 18 respondents (16.7%) indicated that **gender analysis of budgets** is legally required to be undertaken, by the parliament or another official body (Austria, Japan, Sweden). For example, Japan noted that the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet

Office is required to collect information on the gender equality-related budgets of each Ministry. In New Zealand and Spain, this is not a legal requirement but gender analysis is undertaken as a practice.

Only two countries identified specific gender-related powers as regards **parliamentary approval of the budget**: the parliament of New Zealand can amend or reject the executive's budget proposal if gender analysis is missing, but lacks the capacity to formulate and substitute a gender-sensitive budget of its own. The Austrian parliament, on the other hand, can amend or reject the executive's budget proposal if gender analysis is missing *and* can formulate and substitute a gender-sensitive budget of its own. In fact, the Austrian parliament has established a specialized budget research office to conduct gender analyses of the budget. Sweden and Spain indicated that their parliaments lack the capacity to amend or reject a budget proposal if gender analysis is missing.

Four of the respondents provided information on the role of the plenary as well as key committees (gender equality, finance/budget and public accounts) in **gender analysis of budgets during the approval and monitoring phases of the budget cycle**. In the New Zealand lower house, gender analysis is considered part of the budgetary decision-making process undertaken by the plenary. None of the committees, however, undertake gender analysis as part of the approval and/or monitoring phase. In Spain, in both the upper and lower houses, the plenary and the gender equality committee take gender analysis into account throughout the budgetary process, even though there is no specific debate on gender equality. In addition, a report on the likely effects of the budget on gender is produced and issued alongside the budget.

Challenges to Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Parliaments

Respondents identified a range of **obstacles that hindered the effective use and/or application of gender-responsive budgeting in parliamentary decision-making**. The most frequently cited challenges include lack of a clearly-defined methodology and guidelines as well as lack of indicators to monitor success (four respondents of 17, or 23.5%), followed by lack of political will and support, insufficient know-how, lack of capacity to exercise GRB due to financial resources, and lack of human resource capacity to exercise GRB (three respondents each, or 17.6%). Significantly, none cited "lack of sex-disaggregated data" as an obstacle to the use of GRB in the parliament.

Background on Electoral Systems and Political Parties

Electoral Systems

Of 16 respondents, proportional representation (party list) was the predominant electoral system in place at the national level (11 or 68.8%). Four had a mixed system and eight a majoritarian system. It is important to note that some countries applied multiple electoral systems (e.g., some districts/ridings according to the PR system, others according to the majoritarian system). Of the 16 respondents, eight (50%) indicated that **electoral management bodies** (EMBs) were "independent" (Canada, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain), two (12.5%) "mixed" (Luxembourg, Greece), four (25%) "Executive" (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Switzerland) (Portugal also indicated "executive" in addition to "independent"), and one (6.25%) "judicial" (Poland).

Gender Equality Mechanisms within Election Management Bodies

Respondents were asked about the types of **gender equality mechanisms, measures, and/or processes in place within** EMBs. The majority of respondents indicated that specific measures were not in place. In fact, none of the respondents indicated that their election bodies had appointed gender advisors or focal points; included gender considerations in EMB operational procedures or policies; or emphasized gender balance in the composition of EMBs, including among commissioners and/or polling station officials. Portugal and Switzerland occasionally promoted women's participation, registration and turn-out on polling day.

Greece indicated that it always or regularly engaged in gender research and publication, with Switzerland and Portugal noting that their EMBs occasionally engaged in such research. Three respondents (Canada, Germany, and Spain) indicated that their EMBs always engaged in the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data on voter registration and turn-out; Germany specified that it does not conduct voter registration but collects data on turn-out in other ways. Canada's EMB monitors and reports on women's voter turn-out for every election. New Zealand specified that limited gender-related research and reporting is contained in its' EMB's "Voter and Non-Voter Survey" conducted after each election. Several EMBs always (Portugal, Spain) or occasionally (Greece, Switzerland) included gender considerations in election-related legislation, regulations and/or codes of conduct; in Switzerland, a guide has been published for individuals wishing to launch their candidatures.

Some respondents took the opportunity to note that knowledge on how to mainstream gender in EMBs, including their policies, processes and practices, is limited, while others stressed that none of the measures are in place, implying a major gap in promoting gender equality in political processes.

Internal Political Party Practices in Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Political Participation

As is to be expected, internal political party practices regarding the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment varied in the respondent companies, who provided details on practices for the top five political parties in their respective countries. Some trends did emerge, such as a tendency for a greater number of left-leaning parties to adopt voluntary quotas. However, there does not seem to be a correlation between those countries that have adopted legislated quotas and those that have voluntary quotas. Greece and Spain have both legislated and voluntary quotas in place in all of the top parties, but in Poland, which has adopted a legislated quota, no parties have introduced voluntary party quotas. Portugal and Slovenia have both introduced legislated quotas; whereas four of the five top parties in Portugal apply voluntary quotas, however, only one of the top five parties in Slovenia has introduced voluntary party quotas.

Nonetheless, there is evidence of a "contagion" effect, where parties without quotas are encouraged to adopt them in order to compete with other parties that may be viewed as more progressive by the electorate. In Greece, for example, all five parties on the political spectrum have adopted voluntary quotas requiring at least 33% of candidate nominees to be of each gender. In Germany, too, all parties have introduced voluntary quotas; in four parties, quotas apply to both party leadership and candidate nominees with either a 40% or 50% minimum requirement for each gender. Only the ruling Christian Democratic Party (CDU) has adopted a weaker quota – 33% applying to party leadership alone. Likewise, in Spain, the combination of voluntary quotas in place in left-leaning parties

since the 1980s and the 2007 gender parity law has led parties resistant to quotas (e.g., the People's Party) to introduce voluntary gender quotas as well. Of the 15 respondent countries, only in Canada, Latvia, Poland and Switzerland were no voluntary quotas adopted by political parties.

In terms of leadership of parties, only in the Czech Republic and Spain had no woman served as a political party leader. In all other countries, a woman at some point has headed at least one of the top five political parties. In some cases, a number of women have served as party head, such as of the Green parties in Austria, Canada, Germany, New Zealand and Switzerland.

Impact of Legislated Gender Quotas

The impact of legislated gender quotas for political parties has been highest in Greece, as can be seen in the table below. In the last elections before quotas were introduced in 2007, 18 women were elected to the national parliament; in 2009, the first elections following the introduction of the quota, 52 women were elected (a change of 189%). In Slovenia, only a modest change has been discerned; 11 women were elected in the last elections before the quota was introduced in 2004, and 12 during the first elections after the quota was applied in 2008 (a change of 9%); however, the number of women candidates increased in 2008 even though the number of total candidates decreased (24% of total candidates were women in 2004 compared to 35% in 2008).

In Poland, in the last elections before the quota was applied in 2007, 94 women were elected, compared to 110 in 2011 after the quota was introduced (a change of 17%). However, the number of women candidates jumped from 1428 to 3063; even though the total number of candidates only slightly increased (23% of total candidates were women in 2007, compared to 43.5% in 2011). Portugal also saw an increase in the number of women elected (49 before quotas were introduced compared to 63 after, an increase of 28.6%); the proportion of women candidates to total candidates also increased, from 32.5% of total candidates in 2005 to 41.8% in 2009. Spain saw a slight increase, from 36% women in parliament in 2004 to 36.3% in 2008, a year after the passage of Spain's parity law.

Table 2.5. Impact of Legislated Gender Quotas

Country	Last Elections before Quota Introduced			First Elections after Quota Introduced				
	Year	#Successful Women	#Women Candidates	Total# Candidates	Year	#Successful Woman	#Woman Candidates	Total# Candidates
Greece	2007	18	0	0	2009	52	0	0
Poland	2007	94	1428	6187	2011	110	3063	7035
Portugal	2005	49	943	2903	2009	63	1644	3928
Slovenia	2004	11	347	1395	2008	12	417	1182
Spain	2004	126			2008	127		

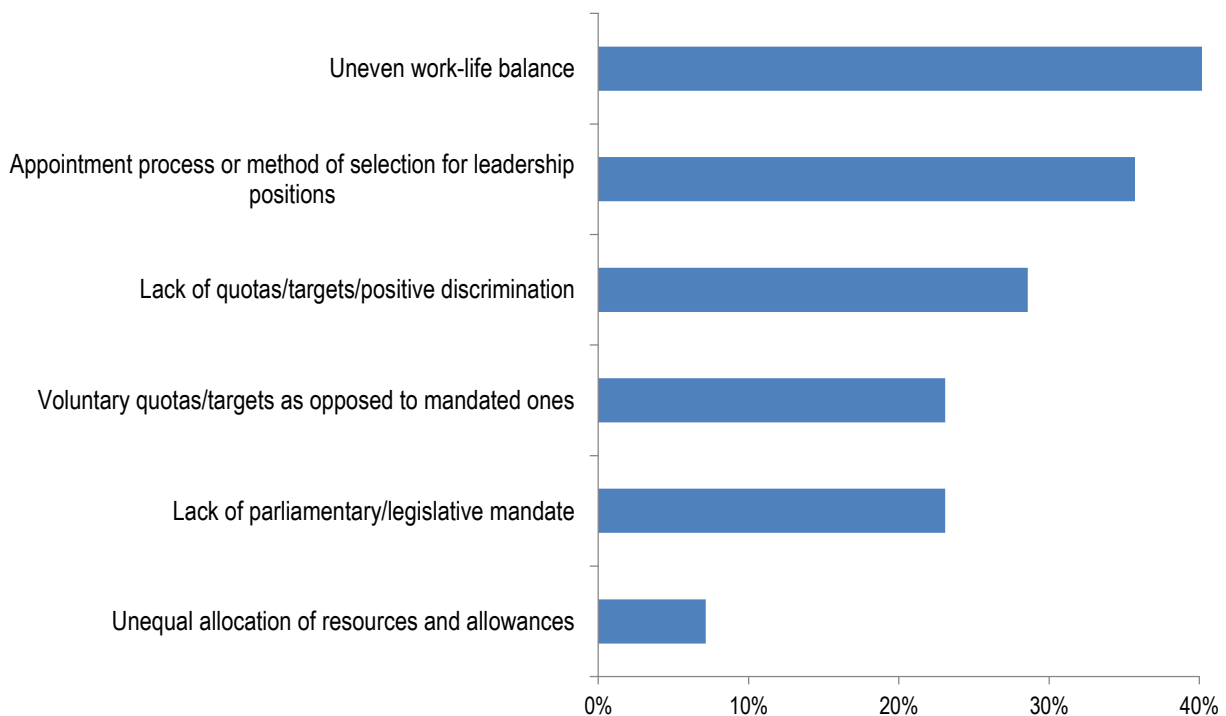
Barriers to Women Running for Elected Office

Respondents ranked surprisingly few obstacles or barriers as “important” or “very important” in terms of women running for elected office. Only Poland and Luxembourg, for example, cited a “limited supply of women candidates” as a serious barrier. New Zealand did note that early selection processes preclude women, that women are not chosen as candidates for safe or marginal seats, and that internal processes still favour men, particularly those within existing power circles. Nonetheless, in ranking the top three challenges to women running for office, most respondents listed limited supply of candidates as the most important.

The most significant barrier concerned perceived/actual lack of work-life balance, cited by Austria, Greece, Luxembourg, Poland and Portugal as a serious challenge, with New Zealand noting that there is not enough support for MPs who are mothers. This was ranked as the second most important challenge to women running for office. Only Luxembourg indicated that “lack of confidence” was a very important barrier, although Austria and Poland identified “limited political encouragement” as an important barrier. Austria and Portugal also cited gender stereotypes and limited access to capacity-building opportunities as an important barrier; New Zealand pinpointed a lack of leadership programmes and training in particular as an obstacle to women seeking career advancement within the parliament.

Significantly, no respondent cited political violence as even “somewhat of a barrier”, while only New Zealand listed political marginalization as an issue of relevance, in terms of sexism in parliament.

Figure 2.5. Barriers to leadership for women in the parliaments



Gender Equality Measures within Political Parties

Of the 16 respondents, 14 (87.5%) indicated that **political parties have adopted different gender equality measures or practices** to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in political life. Very few of these measures or practices are formalized through legislation or regulations, however; instead, such measures tend to be formalized through internal regulations or adopted as informal or voluntary practices. The most widespread measures were gender quotas (adopted by 11 of 16 respondents, or 68.6%), women's sections (adopted by ten respondents, or 62.5%), capacity building specifically targeting women (eight respondents, or 50%), and gender balance measures for the creation of electoral lists (adopted by eight of 16 respondents, or 50%). Relatively few political parties (four respondents or 25%) had introduced provisions requiring a share of party funding to be used to support women's campaigns.

Table 2.6. Gender Equality Measures within Political Parties

Political Party Gender Mechanism	Formalized through internal regulations	Formalized in legislation	Informal/Voluntary	Not Applicable
Gender quotas	Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain	Poland, Slovenia	Austria, Germany, Hungary, Switzerland	Canada, Latvia
Soft targets	Canada, Germany, Slovenia		Austria, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland	Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Spain
Gender-sensitive recruitment processes/procedures	Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Slovenia		Austria, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland	Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Spain
Recruitment and nomination processes take into account women's competencies	Slovenia, Germany		Austria, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland	Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Spain
Affirmative measures to ensure women's representation in party's leading positions	Austria, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Slovenia		Austria, Canada, Luxembourg, Switzerland	Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Spain
Women's sections	Austria, Canada, Greece, Germany, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Switzerland		New Zealand, Poland, Portugal	Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Spain
Capacity building specifically targeting women	Austria, Canada, Germany, Greece, Slovenia		Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Switzerland	Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Spain
Share of parties' funding used to support women's campaigns	Austria, Germany		Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland	Canada, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain
Special gender balance measures for the creation of electoral lists	Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Slovenia, Switzerland	Portugal	Austria, Poland	Canada, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Spain

The OECD survey also asked how **prevalent was the adoption of such measures and practices** (adopted by most parties or adopted by some parties). Here, the difference between legislated gender equality measures and internally regulated or voluntary measures becomes more evident. Whereas a number of countries indicated that political parties had adopted gender quotas, only five respondents indicated that these were adopted by “most parties”, whereas seven respondents indicated that these were only adopted by some parties.

Voluntary Gender Quotas and other Special Measures within Political Parties

Four respondents provided additional information about the types of voluntary gender quotas individual parties had adopted. Greece noted that voluntary quotas apply both to the pool of women candidates as well as the actual number of women nominees; the party executive enforces the application of the quota, which is therefore considered mandatory. The minimum threshold of women candidates for all parties is 30%, and there is no maximum. In Portugal, all party (either mandatory or voluntary) quotas apply to both the pool of women candidates as well as the actual number of women nominees. The threshold ranges from 30% to 50%. In Spain, a number of political parties have adopted mandatory party quotas, with thresholds of 40% specified for some parties. As noted, there is evidence of a contagion effect, where parties resistant to quotas have moved to introduce them either in response to the combined impact of legislated quotas and voluntary quotas adopted by other parties, or as a result of the adoption of voluntary quotas by other parties alone.

Three of the respondents indicated that additional **special measures** to increase women's participation in political parties and/or in elections are mandated by law. In Slovenia, state support is provided for the political empowerment of women and for increasing their participation in politics. In Luxembourg, a share of party funding provided by the state is contingent upon meeting voluntary gender quotas or targets for the selection of candidates; sanctions are imposed on parties that do not meet gender equality requirements. These special measures are implemented by the Ministry of State, which is also responsible for oversight. Likewise, in Portugal, 40% of party funding provided by the state is contingent upon meeting gender quotas or targets for selection of candidates and sanctions are imposed on parties that do not meet gender equality requirements. The parliament is responsible for implementing these measures, and the courts responsible for oversight.

Challenges to Implementing Gender Equality in the Work of the Parliament/Legislature

Challenges to Women's Access to Parliamentary Leadership and Gender Mainstreaming

Respondents identified relatively few systemic challenges to enabling women's equal access to leadership positions within parliaments. The greatest challenge (identified by six of the 15 respondents, or 40%) was "**uneven work-life balance**". One political party in New Zealand, for example, noted the "lack of support for women in their child-bearing years to participate fully" as well as the "lack of financial support to travel and work with small children, particularly if breast feeding". Five respondents (33.3%) identified the "**appointment process or method of selection for leadership positions**" as another key challenge. No respondent identified "harassment", "insubordination of staff towards female parliamentarians/ legislators" or "institutional sexism/working culture" as a challenge, while only Greece signalled that "unequal allocation of resources and allowances" is a problem.

New Zealand elaborated on a number of challenges not listed. For example, New Zealand noted that the **low number of women MPs** means that the pool of possible candidates for leadership positions is limited. In addition, the pervasive and often unconscious belief that men are likely to pursue and excel in leadership creates an unseen barrier to women seeking leadership roles. New Zealand also stated that an **overarching sexist mindset**

persists that women are weaker and more emotional than men, and therefore less suited to leadership roles. These perceptions are exacerbated by a **lack of concrete support to women seeking leadership**. New Zealand also stated that the dominant political parties are not committed to, and therefore do not serve as “champions” of, gender equality, resulting in a **lack of gender equality role models** for emulation by other political actors.

In terms of **challenges to mainstreaming gender in the work of the parliament**, Mexico identified eight obstacles, the most of any respondent. These ranged from the absence of a policy/ regulatory framework, action plan or mandate for gender mainstreaming, to persisting gender-based stereotypes and sexist working cultures in the parliament. Austria also focused on the lack of an appropriate policy/regulatory framework or corresponding documents to help guide gender mainstreaming efforts. A number of respondents (Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Slovenia) pointed to a lack of gender advisors or trained personnel to provide guidance as well as a broader lack of training on gender mainstreaming for parliamentary actors as a whole, leading to insufficient gender mainstreaming know-how. Likewise, a similar number cited the lack of tools (manuals, guidelines) on gender mainstreaming as an obstacle.

Respondents ranked the **absence of a gender equality policy** or regulatory framework as the greatest challenge to mainstreaming gender into the work of the parliament. This lack of an institutionalization of gender mainstreaming within parliaments means that efforts are often ad hoc and only pursued by those with an interest or will to do so. Respondents ranked lack of tools for gender mainstreaming and insufficient know-how as the second and third greatest challenges. This finding is indicative; parliamentary actors may wish to engage in gender mainstreaming but may lack the concrete knowledge and tools to apply gender mainstreaming in practice. This speaks to a capacity gap that can and should be rectified through greater investments in training and learning.

Good Practices: Impact of Gender Equality Mechanisms in Lower Houses of Parliament

Several respondents highlighted good practices that parliaments and/or parliamentary gender equality mechanisms have adopted to ensure gender equality in the operations and outputs in lower houses of parliament. In **Slovenia**, for example, one of the “tools” for promoting gender equality is the warning that can be issued by the President of the National Assembly or chairperson at meetings in response to gender-based “insults”, particularly those aimed at differentiating between the abilities of women and men. Such interventions are not very common in the Slovenian parliament; in the most recent parliamentary session, two such instances had been recorded. Such practices are prohibited by over-arching gender equality legislative and policy frameworks adopted by the National Assembly.

In **Portugal**, hearings involving governing bodies who deal with gender policy are regularly held and gender equality is regularly debated as part of legislative proposals. The Portuguese parliament also engages in awareness-raising and outreach activities, such as celebrating International Women’s Day at the Assembly and organizing as well as participating in conferences about gender equality and women’s rights. The **Danish** parliament promotes the drafting of gender-neutral legislation, specifically through the application of the Gender Mainstreaming Assessment checklist. It has also created a “culture” of gender equality through the traditional participation of both women and men in politics. This culture manifests itself in both formal and informal parliamentary practices.

All **Latvian** MPs are required to comply with the Code of Ethics for Members of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, while the staff of the Saeima is governed by the Labour Law. In March 2014, a package of amendments to the Civil Procedure Law, the Law on Police, the Law on Orphans' Courts (to protect the rights of Latvian children adopted by foreigners), the Criminal Law, and the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law entered into force, which introduced into the Latvian legal system immediate restraining and protection orders to protect victims of domestic violence. The **Swedish** parliament's adoption of an Action Plan for Gender Equality has created the foundation for an all-encompassing approach to gender mainstreaming across the institution.

Hungary has taken key institutional steps to promote gender equality, such as the creation of a Sub-Committee on the Dignity of Women and the adoption by the parliamentary administration of an Equal Treatment Plan. In addition, several key leadership positions have been held by a woman: currently the Principal of the National Assembly (the political deputy of the Speaker) is a woman, while the longest tenure of a Speaker (from 2002 to 2009) was also held by a woman.

In **Japan**, the Rules of Procedure of the House of Representatives were revised in 2001, adding a stipulation that when a woman is unable to attend House sessions for reasons of childbirth, she may give the Speaker notice of nonattendance in advance. The House has also created a woman's room, which can be used by Secretariat staff as well as parliamentarians.

Conclusion: Towards Gender-Sensitive Parliaments in the OECD Region

An important component of the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life (GEPL) aims to support OECD Member States in realizing “gender-sensitive parliaments” in practice, recognizing the key role that parliaments and legislatures play in representing the needs, interests and values of the constituencies they represent.

The results of the OECD survey for parliaments/legislatures were designed to create a baseline as regards gender equality efforts and continuing challenges in five areas, each critical to achieving gender equality in parliamentary processes, procedures, practices and working culture:

- Parliamentary/legislative gender equality frameworks
- Gender-balanced decision-making
- Mainstreaming gender equality in parliamentary/legislative work
- Mechanisms for gender equality oversight and;
- Electoral systems and political party practices as regards gender equality

It is clear from the survey results that OECD Member States have made significant progress in achieving this goal. Member States have adopted a wide range of measures to achieve gender equality commitments, reflecting unique country contexts and circumstances, providing a vast repertoire of good practices for replication and up-scaling across the region as a whole. These good practices provide examples of innovative and strategic thinking as regards gender equality, and demonstrate the concrete positive impact that greater gender equality can have on the lives of women and men.

The survey also identified remaining challenges, demonstrating that gender equality gains cannot be taken for granted. Vigilance is required to ensure that such gains are sustainable

in the long-term and cannot easily be overturned by changes in political occupants. The OECF GEPL and accompanying survey will serve as critical tools to monitor both progress as well as set-backs in achieving gender equality in public institutions such as parliaments on a regular basis.

PRELIMINARY