

How to influence the EU decision-making process from a womens organisations perspective

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Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre



is a grassroots, non-profit, non- governmental organisation with the aim to advance gender equality in all spheres of life.

- raises gender awareness through seminars, conferences and publications as well as promotes, co-ordinates and initiates activities to advance gender equality;
- co-operates with organizations with similar aims in Estonia and beyond.

The European Union is an integral part of Estonian democracy

Decisions made by Parliament and
Council in Brussels have significant impact
on national legislation,
on local and regional authorities, and
on our daily lives.

Most laws now originate at EU level...

which makes the European Parliament at least as powerful as any national one.



Women's organisations therefore need to know what decisions are taken in "Brussels" (or Strasbourg) and how they can influence those decisions.

Do you know?

- 50,000 Brussels-based lobbyists (consultants, lawyers, associations, corporations, NGOs etc.) seek to influence the EU's legislative process.
- Some 2,600 special interest groups have a permanent office in Brussels:
only 11 % of them are NGOs



Transparency Register

Acting at European level

- Learning to act on the European level and managing to influence the decisions made by institutions is a complex process requiring
 - good knowledge of how the EU and its institutions operate;
 - being informed about legislative processes;
 - having specific knowledge and expertise in gender issues;
 - Having personal contacts

According to the gender mainstreaming ideology/strategy

- Lobbying for women's rights and gender equality is needed in all departments of European Commission, but
- The Directorate-General for Justice, the Department of Equality (Directorate D - Equality) is responsible for gender equality policies and drafting legislation

The Directorate-General for Justice, the Department of Equality (Directorate D - Equality)

- Among other functions:
- gives support to NGOs, equality bodies, etc. to improve their ability to combat all kinds of discrimination.
- supports the development of equality policies on a national level and
- promotes the exchange of good practices amongst Member States.

European NGOs and umbrella associations

- provide a way for women's organisations to channel their concerns, opinions etc. to influence the European political process;
- Lot of them have been developed a networks of women's NGOs in EU member states and ensure their representation in the European institutions, especially in the European Parliament.



European Women's Lobby



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

- the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union,
- representing a total of more than 2000 organisations from all 28 EU MS and candidate countries

EWL as a communication channel

Usually when preparing different publications reports, statements and position papers, the national members of the European Women's Lobby are invited to submit country-specific assessments, recommendations and proposals.

- EWL makes it possible to coordinate and manage the viewpoints of organizations and nationals in order to include them in the decision-making process of the EU
 - Estonian member of EWL - Estonian Women's Roundtables Association

In all agencies, networks or expert groups collaborating with the Directorate-General for Justice are representatives of MS

- Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (formulating, implementing and evaluating European policies on gender equality)
- Governmental expert groups (seminars on good practice exchange, organised twice a year)
- Equinet - European network of equality bodies;
- European Network of Women in Decision-making in Politics and the Economy
- Network on Employment and Gender Equality Issues (Expert Group on Gender and Employment)
- Network of Legal Experts in the field of Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality



How can an NGO influence European gender equality policies?

- 1. By participating in the thematic consultations that the Commission initiates

Example:

- In 2012, the Commission held a public consultation inviting the public - individual businesses, social partners, interested NGOs and citizens - to comment on what kind of measures the EU should take to tackle the lack of gender diversity in boardrooms.
- Estonian ENUT and some other organisations sent their opinions as well.

Influencing European gender equality policies...

- 2. If the European Commission publishes a **Green Paper** before drafting legislative proposals to stimulate discussion on given topics at European level –
 - women's organisations and other relevant parties are invited to participate in a consultation process.
- 3. When proposals have been made available to the parliaments of the Member States.

influencing European gender equality policies...

- 4. By participating in drafting documents, own-initiative reports, requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

Example

In 2014 report “ Sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality”, prepared by Estonian MEP,
– Estonian Womens Lawyers Association (established in 2013) took part in drafting the report

Influencing European gender equality policies...

- 5. by participation as speakers in committee or parliament hearings...

Example:

March, 2014 : Parliament hearing on family-life balance



The best way to legitimize and influence EU decision-making is through the **European Parliament** by directly contacting MEPs and requesting them to support issues relating to gender equality.





Representatives of women's organisations can work very well with MEPs on their legislative work

by providing information, arguments and evidence on specific reports, proposing amendments to reports that they can table etc.

Example :

Estonian MEP Siiri Oviir is a member of FEMM committee, and all women's organisations and individual experts can send her e-mails, take a phone calls etc.

Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

- instruct legislative proposals through the adoption of reports,
- propose amendments to plenary...
- Committee also adopts own-initiative reports, organises hearings with experts and scrutinises the other EU bodies and institutions.

Personal contacts are most useful!

- Estonian womens organisations have been successful at opening a dialogue with female parliamentarians mostly through
 inviting them to participate in seminars,
 conferences, events as key speakers..



How Estonia looks in EP in spring 2014



...and Estonian government during 2011-2014



Majority of the members of the Estonian parliament are male - 80,2 %

After 25 May 2014?

europarltv.eu



Problems and barriers to overcome

- Despite increased activism, women's NGOs remain limited in their ability to mobilize public support and influence **national government** policy substantially;
- The slow progress in gender equality is sometimes due to resistance, which delays the rapid incorporation of international agreements in national legislation and actual life;

Problems...

There is general lack of understanding of and interest in gender equality issues, also among women.

This is the matter of deep-rooted traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

Please, watch a video...

- how stereotypical gender perceptions influence people's lives...
- <http://www.stereotyp.ee/en/>





ET EN RU

Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse teavituskampaania

Tüdrukute päev

Poiste päev

Kontakt

Does it have to be like this? Or can we change it together?



▶ VIDEOS. DO YOU SEE THE STEREOTYPES?



NGOs with limited resources can be as influential as rich multinational companies to make Europe better for women!

THANK YOU FOR ATTENTION