



Structures and Instruments

Strengthening gender equality policy structures and instruments

Modern administration uses institutional structures and instruments to implement cross-sectoral tasks. In the area of gender equality, they create important framework conditions in the context of digitalisation in order to enforce equal capabilities. They thus form the **“breeding ground” for a gender-responsive design of digitalisation**. Whether at the federal, state, or local level, various helpful structures and instruments such as gender equality officers, gender budgeting, and gender equality reports have been put in place.

Thinking about digitalisation and gender equality in a strategic and mutual way

The equal rights of women and men enshrined in the German Basic Law touch on all areas of society and on the associated responsibilities of the state. This also applies to digitalisation, which affects all areas of society. It is therefore essential to think about and implement **digitalisation strategies in conjunction with the cross-cutting task of gender equality**. This applies to all digitalisation strategies at federal, state, and municipal level. Thematic strategies such as the “Education in the Digital World” strategy by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the German Länder must also be taken into account. Moreover, it is particularly important to pay attention to a balanced gender participation in decision-making bodies.

The Expert Commission recommends:

Interlinking gender equality and digitalisation

- » The interdepartmental gender equality strategy must be reviewed, updated, and adapted to the digital transformation. The targets and indicators must be updated and defined on the basis of the (policy) recommendations in the Third Gender Equality Report.
- » The guiding principle of gender equality must be implemented in the national implementation strategy (“Shaping Digitalisation”). The strategy must be scientifically evaluated and the implementation of the cross-sectional task of gender equality must be accompanied by a project.
- » It should be examined whether the digital bodies at federal level should be designated as essential bodies within the meaning of the Federal Act on Appointment to Bodies (Bundesgremienbesetzungsgesetz; in particular section 5 (1) BGremBG). This would also mean that all bodies dealing with digitalisation should have an equal number of male and female members.
- » The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth – being the lead ministry for gender equality – needs adequate staffing and funding to be able to support department-specific and cross-departmental processes.

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Gender equality policy structures and instruments must be used more effectively and adapted to the requirements of a digitalised society..

Gender budgeting

Budget decisions can have a significant impact on gender equality. **Gender budgeting** aims at **raising and using government revenues and expenditures in a gender equality-oriented way**. This is particularly relevant in the context of digitalisation, as considerable financial resources are made available for this field.



For instance, the economic stimulus and crisis management package “Combating the consequences of COVID, securing prosperity, strengthening sustainability” made it possible to bring forward investments in the digitalisation of public administration, security as well as new armament projects to the tune of up to ten billion euros. This tends to benefit sectors which predominantly employ men. In contrast, the care sector with its high proportion of female employees hardly receives anything in the billion-euro package, even though it too has catching up to do in terms of digitalisation – and in fact plays a central role in the fight against pandemics. This example shows: without a systematic, impact-oriented, and gender-responsive budget policy, there is a serious risk that existing gender inequalities will be consolidated or even exacerbated. Therefore, digitalisation-related expenditures in budgets at federal, state, and municipal level should by all means be examined within the framework of gender budgeting.

When it comes to the **allocation of public funds** by state agencies – for example ministries and public bodies such as the promotional bank Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, or by private organisations such as the Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft (German Research Foundation) – gender equality-oriented assessments have so far been inadequate. A different distribution of funds for **research and business promotion measures in the field of digitalisation** could help reducing gender-related inequalities in this regard. To do this, the current distribution of funds would first have to be analysed in order to identify areas in need of action.

In this field, one can draw on experience from Austria as a starting point: following a study on the Austrian research funding landscape in the field of digitalisation from a gender perspective, Irene Pimminger and Nadja Bergmann propose in their expert opinion for the Third Gender Equality Report of the German Federal Government three sub-divisions for an initial analysis of research funding: first, divisions according to specifically gender equality-oriented funding on the one hand and funding without a gender equality reference on the other; second, division between the single (male- or female-dominated) sectors that are being funded; and third, division according to the number of women and men reached with these funds.



The Expert Commission recommends:

Allocating funds for digitalisation support in a gender-responsive way

- » Funds for digitalisation support have to be allocated in a gender-responsive way. Digitalisation-related expenditure in the 2021 federal budget should be examined within the framework of a gender budgeting analysis. The goal should be to develop guidelines for future budgeting. An obligatory gender equality check should be developed to ensure gender equality-oriented allocation of funds even in the case of short-term measures such as economic stimulus packages which are developed and adopted under time pressure.

Creating better data bases

- » Better data bases for gender budgeting analyses must be created: the collection and processing of gender-differentiated data for a genuinely gender equality-oriented analysis of the budget allocation is currently often lacking.

Fostering structures for a gender equality-oriented allocation of public funds

- » Structures for a gender equality-oriented allocation of public funds have to be strengthened. The Expert Commission welcomes the “update of the guidelines for gender mainstreaming in (non-statutory) funding measures” announced in the Gender Equality Strategy.

Gender equality-oriented impact assessment of legislation and technology

Impact assessments are important for good legislation in general, and for the promotion of equal capabilities in particular. However, **gender equality-oriented impact assessments** have so far been carried out only irregularly and often superficially. For this reason, the Federal Government has implemented guidelines on equality-oriented legislative impact assessment in accordance with section 2 of the Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries (GGO) in the electronic application of the legislative procedure “e-legislation” as an independent module in legislative impact assessment.

In the context of digitalisation, technology impact assessment is gaining in importance, as technological innovations in particular can bring about unintended risks. One example is smart home devices being used by stalkers to terrorise and observe ex-partners. In this regard, a socio-technical perspective that takes into account power asymmetries between the genders would have been necessary already during the initial development of such devices. In the field of technology assessment, however, there have so far only been selective engagements with gender research approaches; there are a few empirical studies. The Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag, for instance, examined the role of digital media in education, the connection between new electronic media and addictive behaviour, and online participation formats in parliamentary work.

The **quality of technology impact assessment** should – in addition to technical aspects – be measured by whether political and social framework conditions as well as people in all their diversity are taken into account. This does not always have to be about (life-)threatening risks, as with regard to the stalking apps mentioned above. Rather, even supposed trivialities can lead to an unnecessary waste of resources. An example: a municipality buys software with which citizens can digitally handle municipal services in the future. However, the software does not take into account the requirements of the Civil Status Act or legal regulations on linguistic equality standards. In this case, the corresponding input fields would have to be redesigned and reprogrammed – which causes unnecessary costs and delays.

The Expert Commission recommends:

Strengthening gender equality-oriented legislation impact assessment

- » The Expert Commission emphasises the recommendations of the Second Gender Equality Report, which call for the application of the guidelines for gender equality-oriented impact assessment to be made binding for the respective responsible department as well as for the provision of the necessary technical support.

Integrating a gender equality perspective into technology impact assessment

- » Standardised procedures for gender equality-oriented technology impact assessment, such as checklists, should be (further) developed and made compatible. In addition to technical aspects, technology assessment should take into account political and societal framework conditions and include gender aspects already during the design and development of such technologies. Gender equality-oriented technology impact assessment should keep pace with the accelerated technology development by being widely applied, including in basic research.

Structurally embedding the gender perspective in the institutions and in procedures of technology impact assessment

- » A gender perspective should be structurally embedded in the existing institutions and within the procedures of technology impact assessment. This also applies to parliamentary regulatory technology assessment. For example, the Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag should take gender competence into account and promote it among its staff as well as among external experts.



The guideline on equality-oriented impact assessment of legislation, according to section 2 GGO provides support in the preparation of legislation and for an equality-oriented impact assessment. It can also be used for other cabinet proposals. The guideline (in German) can be ordered and downloaded at: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/186980/a10748daf-8d3a4bc5194bc41bd-507bc0/arbeitshilfe-gleichstellungsorientierte-gesetzesfolgenabschaetzung-nach-2-ggo-data.pdf>



Institutional knowledge transfer

Knowledge about the complex and extremely dynamic digital transformation is predominantly available in disciplines such as computer science. However, the connections between gender equality and digitalisation as well as the associated opportunities and challenges often remain unknown. In this respect, **knowledge transfer** between the disciplines as well as with politics, administration, business, and civil society is necessary.

In order to sustainably implement gender equality, institutions are needed which on the one hand ensure this necessary knowledge transfer and, on the other, provide accompanying advice to administrative bodies. In other policy fields, such institutions are the norm (for instance via subordinate authorities). Similar structures have existed and still exist at international and EU level, such as the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

Federal Foundation for Gender Equality

The new Federal Foundation for Gender Equality – as a federal foundation under public law with legal capacity – is intended, among other things, to process the knowledge of specialist fields that is highly relevant to society, to strengthen practical gender equality work by providing advice, as well as to link and network the Federal Government, the Länder, local authorities, civil society, academia, and business.

The Expert Commission recommends:



Making digitalisation a priority at the Federal Foundation for Gender Equality

- » With a Federal Foundation for Gender Equality that is up to the tasks of networking, providing information, strengthening gender equality practice locally, and developing innovative equality approaches, gender equality can also be sustainably implemented in the digital world.
- » The Federal Foundation for Gender Equality should establish a digitalisation unit and provide this unit with the appropriate staff and sufficient resources to fulfil its tasks.



Further reading

- » Agency for the Third Gender Equality Report of the German Federal Government (2021): Shaping digitalisation in a gender-equitable way. Summary of the Expert Opinion of the Third Gender Equality Report of the Federal Government. Berlin: Agency for the Third Gender Equality Report. Download at: <https://www.dritter-gleichstellungsbericht.de/de/topic/50.english.html>
- » Chapter C on “Strengthening gender equality policy structures and instruments” in the Expert Opinion for the Third Gender Equality Report of the German Federal Government. The Third Gender Equality Report is available (in German) at <https://www.bmfsfj.de/gleichstellungsbericht>
- » Pimminger, Irene/Bergmann, Nadja (2020): „Gleichstellungsrelevante Aspekte der Digitalisierung der Arbeitswelt in Deutschland“. Expert opinion for the Third Gender Equality Report of the German Federal Government.
- » Hummel, Diana/Stieß, Immanuel/Sauer, Arn; assisted by Anna Kirschner (2020): „Technikfolgenabschätzung und Geschlecht: Bestandsaufnahme und Identifizierung von Diskurschnittstellen mit besonderem Fokus auf Digitalisierung“. Expert opinion for the Third Gender Equality Report of the German Federal Government.

Both expert opinions are available (in German) at www.dritter-gleichstellungsbericht.de/de/topic/62.expertisen.html

IMPRINT:

Fact Sheet by the agency for the Third Gender Equality Report
 Publisher: Institut für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik e.V.
 Agency for the Third Gender Equality Report of the German Federal Government
 Sebastian Scheele and Dr. Ulrike Spangenberg (heads of management)
 Lahnstraße 19, 12055 Berlin
www.dritter-gleichstellungsbericht.de
 Currently effective version of: November 2021
 Year of publication: 2022