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PARTICIPATION OF BERLIN IN THE GENDER FLAGSHIP PROJECT

2022-2025



GENDER FLAGSHIP

GENDER MAINSTREAMING
IN PUBLIC POLICY
AND BUDGET PROCESSES

The Gender Flagship Project is funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by Expertise France in cooperation with the European Commission.

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About the project

This case study was prepared as part of the project “**Gender mainstreaming in public policy and budget processes**” (hereafter referred to as the “**Gender Flagship Project**”, funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument (TSI). The project is implemented by Expertise France (EF) with the support of the European Commission, SG REFORM, in partnership with the European University Institute (EUI) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).



Implementation period: 49 months (June 2022 to July 2026)

Beneficiary Member States: Cyprus, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Spain

Key activities: Technical methodological support, capacity building through trainings, workshops and study visits, dissemination and capitalisation

Implementation:

Funder: EU (SG REFORM) through TSI

Implementer: Expertise France, in collaboration with European University Institute (EUI) and European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

The Gender Flagship Project aims to support Member States in understanding how to advance gender equality by better mainstreaming gender into their policies and budgeting, as well as address any related gaps. It offers technical support for analysing policies and budgets with a focus on gender mainstreaming, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of gender, have the opportunity to fully participate in and contribute to a fair society.

The project works with twelve Beneficiary Authorities (BAs) across nine Member States over a 49-month period (2022-2026). Each BA receives:

- In-depth analysis of current practices and development of tailored Gender Action Plans;

- Technical support from dedicated Local Experts and core Gender Flagship Project team experts to build capacity and implement tools, such as developing and improving their equality-related programmes and indicators, enforcing gender mainstreaming through developing specific processes (e.g. circulars), developing gender-responsive budgeting methodologies.

In addition, the Gender Flagship Project provides capacity development through general online training and specific in-person training on the latest trends, methodologies and tools for effective gender mainstreaming. The project also facilitates peer learning and exchanges between countries through study visits and workshops, helping Member States to enhance their targeted approaches in specific sectors, policy areas and/or regions.



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASGIVA Senate Department for Labour, Social Affairs, Equality, Integration, Diversity and Antidiscrimination (Senatsverwaltung für Arbeit, Soziales, Gleichstellung, Integration, Vielfalt und Antidiskriminierung)

BA Beneficiary Authority

EF Expertise France

EIGE European Institute for Gender Equality

EUI European University Institute

GAP Gender Action Plan

GIA Gender Impact Assessment

GRB Gender-Responsive Budgeting

GeComT Gender Competence Toolkit

GEFP Gender Equality Framework Programme

GM Gender Mainstreaming

SG REFORM Reform and Investment Task Force of the European Commission

TSI Technical Support Instrument

Executive summary

The Federal State of Berlin, through its Department of Women and Gender Equality within the Senate Department for Labour, Social Affairs, Equality, Integration, Diversity and Antidiscrimination (ASGIVA) participated in the Gender Flagship Project to strengthen its gender equality framework. Technical support focused on revitalising Gender Mainstreaming (GM) and Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) mechanisms, disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and political transitions.

The support focused on two workstreams. First, the project provided insights on strengthening the Gender Check (Berlin's mandatory Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) for Senate proposals). The project produced an Implementation Analysis Report with recommendations to clarify and streamline the tool and support earlier use. The project also developed a concept and technical specification for moving the Gender Check into an online format (Online Gender Check). The project support covered the concept/design only, not software development or implementation.

Second, the project developed the Gender Competence Toolkit (GeComT) as a concept for a modular, digital guidance resource to support staff in applying a gender perspective more consistently and with stronger evidence. Under the project, two exemplary pilot chapters (Education; Participation/Decision-making) were prepared to demonstrate the intended structure and content. GeComT was conceived to complement the planned Online Gender Check, with the intention that users could access relevant guidance while completing an impact assessment of Senate Bills.

These tools collectively aim to institutionalise gender equality practices, reinforce administrative capacity, and enable data-informed, coordinated policymaking across all levels of Berlin's governance.

The State Secretary for ASGIVA is planning to announce the revised Online Gender Check in autumn 2025, and it is planned to integrate it into the Joint Rules of Procedure for the Berlin Administration, which are currently under negotiation. The rollout of the Online Gender Check will be accompanied by awareness-raising measures and the introduction of the GeComT to support the impact assessments of Senate Bills in the Online Gender Check.

Section 1

CONTEXT AND
RATIONALE FOR
SUPPORT

This section is mostly informed by the in-depth gender analysis undertaken in the beginning of the project, led by project's local experts Dr. Andrea Leitner and Dr. Angela Wroblewski. 2023.

1.1. Beneficiary Authority (BA)

The Federal State of Berlin is the official beneficiary of the Gender Flagship Project. Technical support is provided through the Department of Women and Gender Equality, which operates within the Senate Department for Labour, Social Affairs, Equality, Integration, Diversity and Antidiscrimination (ASGIVA). This department functions as the central coordinating body responsible for the implementation and oversight of the project across Berlin's administration, ensuring its alignment with city-wide gender equality strategies.

1.2. Context when joining the project

At the time of joining the Gender Flagship Project, Berlin had already demonstrated a longstanding and institutionalised commitment to gender equality. This commitment is anchored in a dual approach combining gender mainstreaming with targeted measures for the advancement of women. Since 2002, GM and GRB have been systematically embedded within Berlin's policy framework, drawing on earlier women's policy initiatives that extended into previously overlooked sectors such as housing and urban development. A key milestone was the introduction of the Gender Equality Framework Programme (GEFP), implemented as a series of successive programmes aligned with legislative periods—GEFP I (2008–2011)¹, GEFP II (2011–2016)², and GEFP III (2016–2022)³. These programmes consolidated cross-government priorities and measures for gender equality and reaffirmed Berlin's sustained political commitment across successive administrations.

Nonetheless, Berlin's decentralised governance structure, characterised by the autonomy of individual Senate departments and twelve districts, has posed persistent challenges to coordinated and consistent implementation of gender equality measures. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted ongoing initiatives, networks, and coordination mechanisms. These setbacks were compounded by the re-run of the Berlin government election in February 2023, which led to further delays or scaling back of planned gender equality actions. This convergence of factors created a timely opportunity for the Gender Flagship Project to support the reorientation and revitalisation of Berlin's gender equality strategy, including its contribution to the initially envisaged conceptual development of the Gender Equality Framework Programme IV (GEFP IV).

¹https://www.mvz.fu-berlin.de/lehre/abv-gender-und-diversitykompetenz/warum-gender-und-diversity/linkliste-gender-diversity/pdf_gleichstellungpolitische_Rahmenprogramm.pdf

²<https://www.berlin.de/sen/frauen/senatsdokumente/2014/>

³https://www.berlin.de/gleichstellung-weiter-denken/_assets/rahmenprogramm/gpr-iii/vzk_d18-1050_gpr-iii.pdf?

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

Berlin's governance is characterised by a multi-tiered administrative structure comprising the Senate Chancellery, ten Senate departments, and twelve districts. Each Senate department oversees various subordinate departments, while districts enjoy fiscal and policy autonomy within the limits of global budgets from the state. Key institutional actors in the gender equality framework include:

- **The State Secretary's Committee on Gender Equality (StSAG)** - defines strategic priorities, steers implementation, and monitors the Gender Equality Framework Programme. It includes state secretaries from all Senate departments, district mayors, gender equality officers, and representatives from higher education and disability councils.
- **The Working Group of Gender Officers** - coordinates the implementation of GEFP measures across the Senate and districts. Officers serve as key liaisons, ensuring policy coherence, information exchange, and operational continuity.
- **The Working Group on Gender Equal Budget Steering (formerly Gender Budgeting Working Group)** - led by the Senate Department for Finance in collaboration with ASGIVA, this group develops strategic guidance for GRB implementation and coordinates innovation through activities like the Gender Budgeting Competition.
- **The "Equality Policy Framework Programme (GPR), Public Relations, Digitalization"⁵ department (formerly the Equality Office)** - provides technical and strategic support, manages project resources, and facilitates public communication on gender equality policy.

This structure enables Berlin to integrate gender perspectives at both central and decentralised levels, although consistent coordination remains an ongoing challenge due to structural autonomy among departments and districts.

⁵*Gleichstellungspolitisches Rahmenprogramm (GPR), Digitalisierung, Öffentlichkeit*



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LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Berlin's commitment to gender equality is grounded in a robust legal framework. Article 10 of the Berlin Constitution (1995) guarantees gender equality and permits affirmative action to address structural imbalances, providing a constitutional foundation for proactive equality measures.

The Equal Opportunities Act (Landesgleichstellungsgesetz, LGG) of 1991 requires public institutions—and since 2010, also majority state-owned companies—to promote gender equality in public sector employment, in particular by increasing the representation of women, through advancement plans and designated representatives. In addition, § 2 of the Joint Rules of Procedure defines gender equality as a guiding principle for all administrative action, to be taken into account across all measures of the Berlin administration. In higher education, the Berlin Higher Education Act mandates gender mainstreaming and targets increased female representation in academic leadership, supported by performance-based incentives.

The 2020 Anti-Discrimination Act (Landesantidiskriminierungsgesetz, LADG) reinforces protections across a broad range of identities within public institutions, addressing both individual and structural discrimination and embedding diversity as an administrative principle.

Complementary measures since 2002 have embedded gender mainstreaming through cross-departmental structures, gender-disaggregated data, and training. The 2005 introduction of the “gender check” ensures all Senate bills are reviewed for potential gendered impacts.

In parallel, Berlin has institutionalised GRB, focusing on equitable resource allocation. Initiatives such as the Gender Budgeting Competition incentivise innovation and promote shared learning across districts. These combined instruments reflect Berlin's integrated and evolving approach to gender-responsive governance.

1.3. Reasons for the beneficiary's participation in the project

Berlin's participation in the Gender Flagship Project aimed at building upon and reinforcing its established gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting systems. The project provided crucial support to concretise the next implementation phases, particularly to revitalise gender equality activities that were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and political transitions. The overarching goal was to foster a reflexive, evidence-based gender equality policy that integrates empirical analysis, clearly defined objectives, resource allocation, and continuous monitoring and evaluation—thereby enabling iterative policy improvements.

A decisive factor for participation was the opportunity to build on existing tools rather than start from scratch. This choice reflected a strategic intention: to modernise instruments already embedded in Berlin's administration, making them more practical, user-friendly, and impactful.

1.4. Project objectives and aims

During the Gender Flagship Project, Berlin aimed to strengthen and streamline its gender equality framework by focusing on the following key objectives:

- **Enhancing institutional capacity and coordination.** Strengthen leadership within the Department of Women and Gender Equality and improve interdepartmental cooperation to ensure consistent implementation of gender equality policies across Senate departments and districts.
- **Advancing practical tools and methodologies.** Develop, adapt, and embed gender mainstreaming (GM) and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) tools tailored to Berlin's governance structure, promoting their integrated and coherent application.
- **Improving evidence-based policymaking.** Enhance data collection, monitoring, and evaluation systems to support informed decision-making and continuous assessment of gender equality outcomes.
- **Revitalising and sustaining gender equality initiatives.** Reactivate activities and networks interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, fostering ongoing capacity building, knowledge sharing, and political prioritisation.
- **Supporting strategic policy development.** Contribute to the design and implementation of the forthcoming Gender Equality Framework Programme IV (GEFP IV) by providing evidence, tools, and recommendations aligned with current challenges.⁶

Through these focused aims, Berlin aimed to build a resilient and adaptive gender equality system capable of delivering measurable progress and embedding gender perspectives effectively across all levels of governance.



We joined the project at a time when gender mainstreaming had become less visible within the Berlin administration, partly due to competing priorities and workload pressures. The project helped to renew focus and bring the topic back onto the agenda.



Project beneficiary

⁶As of July 2025, preparatory work on GEFP IV had been delayed. According to the Berlin administration, this reflected competing priorities linked to the partial re-run of the 2021 Bundestag election in Berlin in February 2024, combined with limited staffing resources in the unit responsible for coordinating the framework programme. As a result, the Gender Flagship Project did not implement the envisaged support to develop the monitoring concept for GEFP IV within the project timeframe.

Section 2

GENDER
MAINSTREAMING
SUPPORT
PROVIDED

Building on a long-standing yet uneven practice of gender mainstreaming, Berlin's tailored support under the Gender Flagship was intentionally designed to modernise rather than create new tools. The city prioritised two complementary workstreams - improving the mandatory Gender Check and developing a practical Gender Competence Toolkit (GeComT) - to ensure that gender impact assessments are carried out earlier in the policy and legislative drafting process, are easier to apply, and are more consistent across Senate departments and districts.

Box 1. What are the Gender Check and the Gender Competence Toolkit (GeComT)?

Gender Check (pre-existing tool; mandatory for Senate bills)

Berlin's Gender Check is the administration's established gender impact assessment for Senate proposals. It was introduced by Senate decision in 2005 and requires drafting departments to assess and document whether a proposed measure has gender-relevant implications. The process follows a two-step logic:

- Relevance check – determines whether the proposal is likely to affect women and men differently and identifies affected groups.
- Main check (where relevant) – requires a more substantive assessment, including the evidence base (e.g., sex-disaggregated data where available), expected differentiated impacts, and whether the proposal contributes to advancing gender equality or reducing gender-based disadvantages; it also prompts reflection on implications for public spending and gender-responsive budgeting.

Gender Competence Toolkit (GeComT) (developed with Gender Flagship support)

GeComT is a practical guidance resource developed with support from the Gender Flagship Project to help staff carry out gender impact assessments more consistently and with stronger evidence. Within the project, two exemplary pilot chapters were developed (Education; Participation and decision-making) to demonstrate the format and approach. Each chapter provides a brief policy framing; plain-language explanations; Q&A sections addressing common misconceptions; fact-checks with sex-disaggregated statistics and sources; and illustrative good practice examples.

How they work together

The Gender Check sets the required procedural step for Senate proposals; GeComT provides the practical content and evidence prompts to improve the quality and consistency of assessments.



In the beginning, we had different ideas about what to focus on. The Gender Flagship experts helped us shape it and define a clear path. The in-depth gender analysis at the very beginning of the project helped us reflect on our own situation, on what we had done, where the gaps were, and how to move forward. This kind of structured reflection is something we usually don't have time for in our day-to-day work.



Project beneficiary

2.1. Tailored support and results achieved

2.1.1. GENDER CHECK: ENHANCING USABILITY AND STANDARDISING GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT ACROSS DEPARTMENTS

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The first workstream of the project consisted of a rigorous evaluation of Berlin's Gender Check, introduced in 2005 to assess the gender impact of Senate bills. From August to November 2023, the local experts conducted a mixed-methods study combining systematic document analysis of Senate proposals from 2015 and 2022 with qualitative interviews involving gender equality officers, departmental experts, and heads of liaison offices responsible for bill submissions across Senate and district administrations.

The analysis focused on understanding how consistently and effectively the Gender Check was applied in practice, exploring practical challenges in its implementation, gender competence levels to apply it, and the integration of gender considerations within the legislative workflow. The project engaged stakeholders to capture varied perspectives on the tool's implementation, timing, and relevance.

The findings provided a shared evidence base for discussions with Berlin stakeholders and informed a concrete modernisation agenda. Prioritising the Gender Check reflected Berlin's strategic approach of strengthening an existing mandatory instrument—so that it supports early, usable, and defensible gender impact assessment in day-to-day drafting—rather than creating additional parallel tools. In this sense, the workstream aimed to reinforce the Gender Check's function as a meaningful decision-support step within the legislative process, aligned with current administrative realities.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The technical support provided to Berlin resulted in two main products to address the identified challenges and advance the Gender Check's role within Berlin's legislative process.

First, an **Implementation Analysis Report** synthesised the findings from the document review and stakeholder interviews. It found that while the Gender Check is formally included in nearly 90% of Senate bills, substantive engagement is often limited, occurring late in the legislative process and unevenly across departments. It provides targeted, evidence-based recommendations to clarify the tool's objectives, simplify its structure, and encourage earlier, more meaningful integration of gender impact considerations.

Second, the support produced a **concept and technical specification for moving the Gender Check into a web-based format (an "Online Gender Check")**. The concept set out a step-by-step online questionnaire to support preparation of Senate bill submissions, including low-threshold access, the ability to pause and resume completion, filter questions that skip non-relevant sections, and the option to save/export the completed form as a PDF. It also envisaged clear links between the Online Gender Check and a complementary Gender Competence Toolkit, so that users can access definitions, examples, studies and facts while completing the assessment. Importantly, the Gender Flagship support covered the conceptual design and requirements only; it did not include software development, programming, or implementation of the online tool.

The State Secretary for ASGIVA is expected to announce the revised Online Gender Check in autumn 2025. Crucially, the new version of the Gender Check is planned to be embedded in the Joint Rules of Procedure for the Berlin Administration, thereby strengthening its institutional status. Its rollout should be paired with awareness-raising and training measures, underscoring that gender impact assessment is not only a legal requirement but also part of Berlin's broader agenda of modernisation and digitalisation.



The Gender Check has been mandatory since 2005, but over time, its application became less consistent. We wanted to renew it - not by creating something entirely new, but by making it easier to use and more professional. That's why we decided to improve and digitalise it.



Project beneficiary



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CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The process of evaluating and redeveloping Berlin's Gender Check revealed distinct challenges across its two phases. During the evaluation of the existing instrument, the primary difficulty lay in its superficial application: although formally included in the majority of Senate bills, the tool was frequently employed too late in the legislative process to meaningfully shape outcomes. The depth of analysis varied widely across departments, reflecting differing levels of gender competence and capacity within administrative units. This inconsistency limited the tool's strategic value and underscored the need for clearer guidance, earlier integration in policy cycles, and more robust training.

Transitioning to the development and implementation of the upgraded online tool introduced a separate set of operational challenges. Delays arose from limited staff capacity within the beneficiary administration, which affected the turnaround of feedback and slowed coordination with technical partners. Additionally, efforts to extend the tool's use to district-level administrations, such as Spandau, were hindered by similar resource constraints, postponing essential stakeholder consultations. The technical complexity of the digital tool itself - designed to include adaptive questioning, user guidance, progress saving, and automated reporting - required multiple iterations to ensure usability without compromising analytical rigor.

For further details, see *Annex. Spotlight Practice: Gender Check*.

2.1.2. GENDER COMPETENCE TOOLKIT (GECOMT): BUILDING PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The Gender Competence Toolkit (GeComT) was developed as a concept for a modular, digital guidance and learning resource designed to strengthen staff capacity to apply a gender perspective in day-to-day administrative work—for example by providing topic-specific prompts, definitions, sex-disaggregated data, and practical examples that can be used when drafting measures and when completing the Gender Check. This initiative is firmly embedded in Berlin's legal and policy commitments to promoting gender equality and ensuring equal participation of women and men across all sectors of public life, including education, employment, politics, and administration.

The development process began with an extensive needs assessment to identify gaps in gender awareness, skills, and practical application within the public administration. The main aim of the GeComT is to provide easily accessible information for staff in several Senate departments. GeComT was conceived to complement the planned online version of the Gender Check. The concept foresees that the two tools should be linked so that users completing a Gender Check can easily access relevant explanations, statistics and examples from GeComT (e.g., via embedded links or prompts). This will give Gender Check users direct access to explanations, further information, statistics, and examples of good practice.

The concept for the toolkit's content was designed to combine essential gender concepts with practical, Berlin-specific applications of gender mainstreaming. Based on the current state of research and recent statistics for the topic areas addressed by the GeComT, their gender relevance is described and potential areas of intervention for the Berlin administration are outlined. This is complemented by case studies (good practices) which describe successful gender equality interventions. For the chapter education inspiration was drawn from the Viennese programme "Gender Matters!" or the Berlin's "Girls' Day" and "Boys' Day", which effectively challenge traditional gender stereotypes and promote equal opportunities. Emphasis was placed on typical forms of resistance argumentation against gender equality in the topic areas which are addressed by an answer-question-dialogue. As a didactic element, this dialogue differs visually and in terms of the language used from the rest of the GeComT.

Under the Gender Flagship, the support focused on developing the concept, structure and pilot content. Technical implementation (i.e., programming, hosting and roll-out within Berlin's IT environment) was not part of the project scope and remained a subsequent step to be taken forward by the Berlin administration, potentially with external technical support. The concept anticipates modular deployment so that individual chapters can be used flexibly and integrated into internal training and professional development.



We want to bring forward gender mainstreaming with real competence—qualified work with qualified information. And maybe even make it a bit more fun, a bit easier. Because gender mainstreaming is still seen by many as too abstract.



Project beneficiary

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The activity resulted in a detailed and robust concept for the Gender Competence Toolkit, providing a strong foundation for its future development and implementation within Berlin's public administration. The concept features a modular training structure that addresses both theoretical understanding and practical skills, tailored specifically to Berlin's institutional context and gender equality objectives.

A key strength of the toolkit concept lies in its integration of localised data and real-world examples, which enhance relevance and learner engagement by illustrating concrete manifestations of gender inequality—such as the barriers women face in accessing and thriving in management positions, the impacts of stereotypical gender roles, and legal obligations under State Equal Opportunities Act.

Moreover, the toolkit aligns closely with Berlin's broader gender equality policies and strategic goals, ensuring consistency and facilitating institutional buy-in. The inclusion of multimedia and interactive elements is designed to improve learner motivation, retention, and the practical application of knowledge in daily administrative work.

As a first step, two chapters (Education and Participation/Decision Making) have been finalised and are already available on the Berlin Administration's internal website, although they have not yet been activated. An additional nine chapters are still at the conceptual stage. However, the Gender Competence Toolkit is strategically positioned to become a valuable resource for supporting the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming throughout Berlin's Senate and district administrations. It offers the potential to raise awareness, build capacity, and foster a culture of proactive and informed gender equality action, ultimately contributing to more equitable policies and administrative practices across the city.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Two key challenges arose during the technical implementation of the toolkit. Firstly, a partner had to be found to implement the tool within the Berlin administration's existing IT environment that could also be linked to the internal training programme. Secondly, the lack of expertise in gender equality policy and training measures among the implementing partner posed a challenge. The implementation process therefore required intensive support and ongoing, in-depth feedback to develop the necessary competences (e.g. on the potential bias linked to the selection of illustrations, linguistic design and underlying didactic objectives). Therefore, technical implementation became an iterative and time-consuming process.

Experience of the technical implementation to date highlights the significant challenges faced by the Senate Administration in supporting the implementation process and subsequent maintenance. In particular, the necessary time and personnel resources remain limited for the future implementation process.

The experience also showed that technical partners alone cannot guarantee the quality of gender equality instruments, making close cooperation and in-house expertise essential. While the process has been resource-intensive, it has laid the foundation for a practical, digital resource that supports gender mainstreaming in a more consistent and professional way.

2.2. Capacity-building activities

As part of its capacity-building efforts under the Gender Flagship Project, Berlin carried out a series of targeted activities to advance gender equality across administrative structures. These included internal workshops with gender experts from the Senate Administration to present the draft Gender Action Plan (GAP) developed under the project, which served to prioritise and guide the project's technical support activities and to discuss recommendations from the in-depth gender analysis carried out under the project (February 2024).⁷ Additional working meetings were held with the Verwaltungsakademie Berlin (Berlin Public Administration Academy), the District of Spandau and the contractor for the technical implementation of the Gender Check and the GeComT.

⁷The Gender Flagship Project's work followed a clear sequence: an in-depth gender analysis of the status quo of gender mainstreaming in Berlin was carried out at the start of the support, and its findings were used to develop a project-specific Gender Action Plan (GAP) setting out the priority areas of work.

A highlight of the capacity-building programme was the exchange workshop between the Berlin and Vienna administrations, held on 28 June 2024 in Vienna. The workshop brought together gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting experts from both cities to share experiences and discuss challenges in an informal, peer-learning setting. For Berlin, a key objective was to receive feedback on its Online Gender Check and the concept for Gender Competence Toolkit, drawing from Vienna’s experience with similar tools. Vienna, in turn, presented its plans for an internal, IT-supported gender fairness check and a monitoring system for gender mainstreaming and budgeting implementation. The event led to a rich exchange of ideas, with key insights and feedback documented for future reference. It strengthened institutional ties and provided valuable perspectives to further develop digital tools and administrative processes supporting gender equality.



The capacity-building sessions were always inspiring. They gave everything a European touch—it was motivating to know that Berlin is part of something bigger, working on the same ideas as others.



Project beneficiary

In addition, Berlin co-organised and hosted the final German symposium “Effective Implementation of Gender Equality” on 11 February 2025⁸. The event was jointly organised by the three German beneficiaries of the Gender Flagship Project - Berlin, Hamburg, and Saxony-Anhalt - in cooperation with Expertise France and the Federal Foundation for Gender Equality. It brought together around 50 participants from federal, state, and municipal levels, including representatives of the European Commission and civil society. The symposium served as a platform to present project outcomes and foster exchange among German beneficiary authorities’ stakeholders. The Berlin delegation showcased the development of its Online Gender Check and the Gender Competence Toolkit. The event highlighted the added value of cross-city cooperation and underscored the importance of sustainable, transferable tools for institutionalising gender equality in public administration.

⁸Bundesstiftung Gleichstellung, “Gleichstellung wirksam umsetzen – Präsentation der Projektergebnisse des EU-Projekts, Gender Mainstreaming in Public Policy and Budgeting (2022–2024)” <https://www.bundesstiftung-gleichstellung.de/rueckblicke/gleichstellung-wirksam-umsetzen/>



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Section 3

FUTURE
DIRECTIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS



Looking ahead, the Gender Flagship Project in Berlin is entering a critical phase—shifting from the development of instruments to their institutional anchoring and operational integration. While the design of the Gender Check and the Gender Competence Toolkit is well advanced, several structural, technical, and administrative elements still require resolution to ensure their long-term usability and strategic impact.

The immediate priority for 2025 and 2026 is the successful technical implementation, piloting, and refinement of both tools. A comprehensive testing phase will be essential to assess functionality, user-friendliness, and relevance across Senate departments. The feedback collected should inform final adjustments prior to full deployment.

The State Secretary for ASGIVA is expected to announce the revised Online Gender Check in autumn 2025, with formal integration into the Joint Rules of Procedure for the Berlin Administration currently under negotiation. Its rollout will be accompanied by awareness-raising measures and the parallel introduction of the GeComT, ensuring that guidance and capacity-building support are available for staff.

At the same time, the extension of the Gender Check to Berlin’s districts remains an important yet unrealised goal. A district-specific version of Online Gender Check - such as the draft for Spandau - has been prepared, but formal engagement with district-level stakeholders has been delayed due to local capacity constraints. Advancing this aspect will require renewed inter-administrative coordination and a tailored approach to decentralised implementation, ensuring that gender mainstreaming is applied uniformly across all levels of governance.



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Annex

ANNEX. SPOTLIGHT
PRACTICE: GENDER
CHECK

Purpose and added value

The **Gender Check** is a structured assessment tool introduced by the Berlin Senate in 2005 to ensure that all legislative proposals are systematically reviewed for their potential gender-specific impacts before adoption. Its fundamental purpose is to embed gender equality considerations directly into the legislative process, making sure that the needs, realities, and outcomes for women and men are considered from within the state's policymaking structures.

Its added value lies in transforming high-level political commitments to gender equality into a **concrete procedural requirement** for law and policymaking. By institutionalising gender reflection in every Senate bill, the tool enables the administration to:

- Identify potential gender-based disadvantages early in the policy cycle;
- Make policy design more inclusive and equitable;
- Build administrative capacity for consistent, data-informed gender impact assessment.

Novelty

From its inception, the Berlin Gender Check represented an innovative and operationally pragmatic approach to gender mainstreaming.

It was among the first gender equality tools in Europe to be **legally mandated** for all legislative proposals at the state level. Its procedural integration ensures that each Senate bill includes a dedicated section addressing gender equality impacts, thereby embedding the tool in administrative routines.

What makes the Gender Check particularly novel is its **two-step design**:

1. A **relevance check**, prompting officials to determine whether the proposed measure is likely to have a gendered impact.
2. A **main check**, which, if relevance is established, guides users through key questions related to sex-disaggregated data, differentiated impacts, links to equality objectives, and budgeting implications.

Designed as a universally applicable checklist, the tool was intentionally simple to operate and applicable across all policy domains - from housing and education to economic development and climate policy. This operational simplicity allowed for broad uptake and quick integration across Senate departments, making it an early model for routine, scalable gender mainstreaming.

Implementation in practice

The Gender Check was introduced via Senate resolution in 2005 and built into the standard template used for Senate bill submissions. Each department is responsible for completing a section on gender equality as part of the legislative drafting process. The assessment starts with a relevance check and proceeds to a more detailed main check where applicable. While the tool is mandatory and checked for completion by liaison offices, the quality and depth of assessments are not evaluated, and the tool is often applied during the **final stages** of drafting - when most substantive policy content is already decided.

As part of the **Gender Flagship Project**, a rigorous evaluation was carried out to examine how the Gender Check functions today and how it could be improved for greater impact.

The evaluation consisted of:

- A systematic analysis of more than 500 Senate bills from 2015 and 2022, focusing on the presence and quality of gender impact statements.
- Qualitative interviews with gender equality officers, departmental staff, and liaison office representatives to identify usage patterns, barriers, and institutional conditions.

The findings show that the Gender Check is formally used in approximately **90% of all Senate bills**, demonstrating broad procedural adoption. However, **substantive engagement is limited**. Many submissions contain minimal or vague justifications - often asserting “no gender impact” without supporting data or reasoning. The tool is frequently used too late in the legislative process to shape the actual content of proposals. Additionally, gender competence is uneven across departments, and new staff are often unfamiliar with the tool’s purpose.

To address these shortcomings, the project produced two key outputs:

1. An **Implementation Analysis Report** with targeted recommendations for restructuring and re-timing the tool to improve its effectiveness.
2. A **conceptual design for a new Online Gender Check**, which introduces digital features such as guided workflows, adaptive questioning, progress saving, and automatic summary generation to accompany formal submissions. The goal is to make the tool more accessible, standardised, and embedded earlier in the policy cycle.



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Guidance for adaptation

The Berlin experience illustrates that simply formalising a gender impact assessment tool is not enough - its **placement, clarity, and operational support** determine its practical value.

First, the tool must be applied **early in the policymaking process**, not during final drafting. In Berlin, late-stage application significantly reduced the potential of the Gender Check to influence the substance of proposals. For the tool to be effective elsewhere, it must be used during the **conceptual and planning stages** when policy goals and instruments are still being shaped.

Second, there must be a **clear and shared understanding** of what the tool is meant to assess. The evaluation found that many users misunderstood its purpose, leading to generic and often superficial responses. To improve relevance, the tool's questions should prompt concrete, context-specific reflection on how a measure may affect women and men differently, without demanding exhaustive analysis.

Third, **gender competence is essential**. In Berlin, variation in the quality of Gender Check submissions was closely tied to differences in staff knowledge and experience. Targeted training - practical and relevant to specific policy areas - must accompany implementation to ensure users can meaningfully assess gender impacts.

Finally, **digital support can significantly enhance usability and consistency**. Berlin's aim to move toward an online version of the Gender Check - complete with built-in guidance, adaptable forms, and automated reporting - demonstrates that technology could potentially reduce procedural burdens while raising the quality and reach of the tool.

Expertise France is the French interministerial agency in international cooperation and development, part of the French Development Agency (AFD) Group.



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